

Mobile App Development for the Connected Economy Allowing Enterprises to Reach Customers via New Digital Channels, Wearable Apps and Smart TV



Deepak Chopra
Founder & CEO
Clearbridge Mobile

CEOCFO: *Mr. Chopra, big and bold on your site is “solving complex problems for the connected economy.” Would you tell us what that means for Clearbridge Mobile?*

Mr. Chopra: Clearbridge is a product engineering firm with heavy emphasis on designing and developing products for the connected economy. We are working with world-class clients and brands trying to extend their reach to their consumers or partners through mobile applications, wearable devices, smart TV and new digital channels that have emerged over the past seven or eight years. Clearbridge is focused on helping our clients reach their customers and solve organizational challenges via those channels. Our clients include Fortune 500 companies and rapid-growth startups. A wide range of clients that we work with that are enterprise companies range in a number of different verticals but they all have the same challenges. They need expertise in the field to reach people via the new digital channels like mobile, wearable apps and smart TV. We are helping them do that.

CEOCFO: *Would a company come to you knowing what they are looking for or would they come to you saying they want to move things up a notch and ask for advice?*

Mr. Chopra: When companies approach us, it could be in many different stages of their lifecycle in terms of their mobile strategy. Some of our clients are well versed in mobile; they have been developing mobile applications for a number of years. We have had the opportunity to work with them to bring their strategy up to the next level. Some of our clients are new to mobile and are looking for that mobile strategy piece in addition to mobile development. We help our clients understand their target market, what product would appeal to that target market, and then actually execute that vision for them by building out that mobile product. It is a wide range and it depends on the lifecycle of the company, the industry, and where they are with mobile apps.

CEOCFO: *What do you understand about the mobile world that gives you an edge?*

Mr. Chopra: It is our people. Our team is a focused group of 35 plus individuals focused on mobile. That includes all the facets of delivering great mobile and connected apps: strategy, design, development, QA, delivery, and all the nuances of an integrated approach to product development. That is what helps differentiate us versus our peers – we’ve assembled a talented team that has expertise in a number of different verticals in how to implement mobile strategy. We work with clients in the media space, banking, financial institutions, insurance, traditional enterprise field service, and retail. We have a deep understanding of how mobile is affecting and transforming these industries, and we are helping our clients execute their mobile vision within those verticals.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us a few examples of what you do that is atypical for competitors?*

Mr. Chopra: We are willing to take on risky projects with a degree of uncertainty. For example, we worked recently with one of the world’s largest oil and gas companies and largest emerging payment providers to create a seamless solution that allows a driver to drive up their car to a gas station and pay with their phone without ever taking it out of their pocket. There were uncertainties associated with that because it was a first-of-its-kind payment solution, so it was not as simple as replicating the wheel. Many companies do not want to take on that risk. We have the talent, the capability and the skills to take on projects where there is uncertainty around technology development. I think that is something different about what we do. Given the skill sets of the people we have, we are able to build successful products that are unique and unprecedented.

CEOCFO: *How would a potential client find Clearbridge?*

Mr. Chopra: In terms of our approach in the marketplace, we have a multifaceted strategy. We attend a number of tradeshows where we have expertise and skill sets in those different verticals. We have an aggressive marketing strategy that includes SEO, advertising and paid search. We also provide a great deal of educative content into the marketplace. That has gotten the word out and is helping us drive brand awareness. To add to those initiatives, we actively pursue and maintain direct relationships and partnerships, and we have generated a number of inbound leads that have heard about us through our partners.

CEOCFO: *Are there services you are offering that people are not embracing?*

Mr. Chopra: In terms of the services we offer, we are very busy across the board. I think our clients are getting it but every industry is different. Some industries have been very early to mobile and have seen the impact right away; for example, companies in the media space are probably some of the early adopters in mobile, as they needed to adapt to the new ways media content is being consumed. Over the past two or three years, retail has also been very aggressive in the mobile space. People like to shop online from their mobile devices at home, on the go, and in-store. There are some industries that have not used mobile yet but are starting to do so. It is more of a timing issue.

CEOCFO: *How do you handle the security issue?*

Mr. Chopra: Security is one of the most important things that we think about whenever we are creating our software. Our clients care about it and we use different techniques to secure the data and the transmission of that data from devices to their servers. Security is about confidence. We work with our clients to understand the potential issues and take the necessary steps to safeguard sensitive data for both our clients and their users.

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CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a little bit about your work in wearable technology?*

Mr. Chopra: Wearables is a rapidly emerging space. Apple launched the Apple Watch earlier this year, and Google has worked with their partners to launch a number of smartwatches. We are working with our clients in a number of ways: sending notifications to smartwatches, allowing users to get stock quotes, pushing content and news articles to their wearable devices. If you have a connected watch and you are in a retail store trying to locate a product, that device can find where in that store you can pick up that item. This also extends to The Internet of Things, where you are providing connectivity to mobile beacons and machines to interact and communicate with devices.

CEOCFO: *What industries might be next for you?*

Mr. Chopra: In our core verticals – such as media – there tends to be a tremendous amount of opportunity. Financial services is a huge market that is developing rapidly. Retail is still relatively early but is advancing rapidly as people are thinking about how to use mobile not just to buy products and services, but also enhance the in-store experience. We are working with a number of clients in the retail space to transform smartphones into a productivity tool within the store. Can that mobile phone help me find the service rep? Can the mobile phone help me get product information on the spot? We are working with a number of clients creating not just a mobile app that can buy products and services, but a solution that can enhance the in-store experience. Those are three key markets.

CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time?*

Mr. Chopra: The discussion around mobile strategy and connected apps has evolved and moved up the food chain. Our projects typically dealt with limited C-level exposure three or four years ago. Today, it is the highest levels within an organization thinking about how mobile will impact or disrupt business and how mobile can be used to differentiate brands. People are realizing there is a disruptive threat with mobile to their potential business, but they are asking how they can flip it into an opportunity to differentiate themselves versus competitors or peers in the market. We are dealing with more senior executive and management teams. They realize that mobile is strategically very important to their business and we are working with them to understand what solutions can help them succeed in the marketplace.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Chopra: Business is very good. Clearbridge Mobile has been around for four and a half years. We hit a critical mass in terms of maturity of the company. We have a portfolio of products in the marketplace, a number of awards under our belt, and a network of people that would continue to refer us as good partners. We are very busy and our brand has

grown. Before we had to knock on doors for business, and we continue to do that today. But many people are knocking on our door now as they are looking for help to execute their mobile strategies. There are always challenges we are navigating through, but generally we are moving upwards.

CEOCFO: *Why use Clearbridge Mobile?*

Mr. Chopra: If you are a company looking to execute a results-focused mobile strategy, we believe we are the best team around to make it a reality, given our experience, our professionalism, as well as the work we have done before. All these things combined allow us to help our clients create great mobile products. We are based in Toronto and all of our team works on-site in our offices. We do not outsource anything overseas. We provide not just development services, but a mobile strategy and product delivery system for our clients. It is a high engagement, high touch model in which we help our clients execute strategies that work. It is not an outsource development methodology where you are throwing something overseas. We are continually working with our clients to get products to market. That is what we do extremely well.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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