

# Devin Sinclair on Mr D Food's digital turnaround

Mr. Delivery was born in 1992, when ordering was done via the phone from printed menus on the fridge. After a technology-led transformation, the analogue Mr Delivery became Mr D Food, an online food delivery business reporting over 100% year-on-year growth.



There are currently more than 700,000 monthly active users on the Mr D Food app, with 2 million downloads to date.

The business's digitalisation journey started in 2015 and has resulted in the startup delivering to more doors than any other company. How? 35-year-old Devin Sinclair, CEO of Mr D Food, says the transformation relied on speed, prioritisation, simplicity and a high-performance team.

Here, Sinclair shares the strategy behind the digitalisation journey for others hoping to emulate its success.

## 1. Make the right decisions from the start

The new Mr D Food was predicated on:

- Building all the new technology from scratch;
- Changing the structure of the business to align with what the technology could power.

The biggest problem with the old Mr Delivery business was service. The new Mr D Food cut delivery time by more than half, to an average time of 34 minutes. This called for a massive technological step change for all three sides of our business – customers, restaurants and drivers.

"We made the game-changing decision to go app-only for our customers and be cloud-based, with a microservice model to allow for scalability. These were controversial decisions at the time, but we were able to look ahead and forecast what foundations we'd need to facilitate our hypergrowth phase. Today 95% of all orders are placed on our mobile apps," says Sinclair.



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3 Dec 2019



## 2. Test, learn and fail fast

"We were given three months to bring a minimal viable product to market. We used learnings from the old system to inform our design. The company has always had a culture of test, learn and fail fast right from the start. Everything has been about speed, detail and data.

"We are a business that's obsessed with analysing everything we do. While we've never shied away from big strategic step changes, we also don't let any of our business aspects stand still. Small movements on a number of things all add up over time. We're constantly looking to iterate and improve where we can."

## 3. Simplify

Sinclair says the challenge is always to simplify – what's the simplest thing you need to do to move a project in the direction you're envisioning?

"The success of our business is defining the minimum building blocks of each iteration. Prioritisation is critical. Strategy is important, but speed, prioritisation and simplicity are key to getting things done."

## 4. Get the structural business strategy right

"There's no way food delivery can be done, on the scale we do it, at the level of service we do it at, without technology at every step in the process. However, getting the right structures in place was equally important. We needed internal and operational support teams for our customers and restaurants. We also developed a hybrid, franchise model, whereby our network of owner-manager franchisees manage our drivers across the country," he explains.



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## 5. The people with the best people win

Sinclair says that despite Mr D Food's growth, the online food delivery market in SA is still in its very early stages. he adds that it's important to recognise the growth on the horizon and proactively manage talent accordingly.

"We spend a lot of time searching for the right people to add to our team. We look for smart, hard-working, high integrity

individuals who are looking to take ownership and put their name behind something. It is a young, entrepreneurial environment with a dynamic leadership team that has a broad range of local and international experience. One thing we tell all potential hires is that we can guarantee they will not be bored!"

He adds, "While technological innovation is crucial to continued success, so too is having great people. We have added more than 200 people to the head office team in the last two years, we are currently targeting an additional 50 hires in the next 6 months across various teams.

"We're looking for passionate individuals across our all of our divisions and in particular are hiring data scientists, data analysts, software engineers – and other numerically oriented minds. As part of Takealot.com, we are at the forefront of e-commerce in SA, so this is the best environment for people looking for an opportunity to grow in e-commerce in this country."

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