

First in Aberdeen and Nestrans
'Real Time Information proves a real time boost for customers'

TRAVEL INFORMATION AND MARKETING SUBMISSION

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The provision of real time travel information to the residents of Aberdeen via an online portal has proved massively successful in the city with the marketing campaign behind the launch resulting in growth of 750% in hits between month one of launch and month four.

Introduction

Realttimebus.com was launched in September 2010 as a joint initiative between First in Aberdeen and Nestrans. The website was the result of over a year of work between the two companies and a real desire to make bus information access as simple as possible for customers.

The objectives of the project were as follows:

- provide improved information for customers over and above timetable information provided at stops, published timetable leaflets and online;
- provide an easy to use platform for customers to access real time bus information from any internet-connected device; and
- widely market the new service to ensure its benefits were well-known among the target audience.

The success of this approach can be evidenced by both anecdotal and statistical evidence from customers and the number of customers visiting the site.

Background

Real time bus information has been provided historically at bus stops within Aberdeen by Aberdeen City Council for over ten years. However, both First in Aberdeen and Nestrans were aware of the potential benefits that could be achieved in providing this information to passengers before they leave home or work to get to the bus stop.

The idea for realtimebus.com was borne out from discussions around this method of provision. With the profusion of internet usage including the massive increase in the use of mobile devices, an online portal seemed the ideal way to improve travel information provision for customers – indeed the portal would increase the reach of real time bus information well beyond the traditional shelter information which had been confined largely to key corridors and the city centre.

Marketing and Awareness Drive

Having reached a decision as to how to present the information to end-user customers, a site design was implemented while a branding exercise was carried out to identify the best name and to design the brand for the site going forward.

Using market intelligence and research, the name 'real time bus' was identified as having most resonance with customers given its 'does what it says on the tin' approach. The URL 'realtimebus.com' was secured and a simple brand and visual identity was created which followed the same straightforward approach and complemented the branding already in place for the region's travel awareness brand 'Getabout'.

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Welcome! Real Time Travel is an exciting new service from Nestrans, Aberdeen City Council and First in Aberdeen

From this site you can get real-time bus departure information quickly and easily.

Real time information on all First in Aberdeen bus services is available on this site.

You can check when your bus is expected at the bus stop before you leave work or home by using one of the search options below.

Please use one of the following options to find your stop:

- Enter stop reference number:
- Enter your service number:
- Enter your full postcode:
- [Navigate by map image](#)



Image 1: Home page design of realtimebus.com

The design of the site was just as important given that it needed to be as useful to customers as possible and as easy to use. Employing a specialist real time information provider allowed research to be used in terms of designing a simple-to-use interface which would allow customers to access real-time information based on their preferred stop, bus route and time of day. The opportunity to expand the partnership approach and include real time bus information for Aberdeenshire services in the future was also taken into consideration in the design of the site and a neutral, region wide design was adopted.



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Stops on service **1** going to **Danestone**.

The major stops on the selected service are listed below. You can view other stops on the route by expanding the list around a major stop. To expand the list to include other stops, click on the '+' next to a major stop. To contract an expanded list, click on the '-' next to an expanded major stop.

To view real-time departure information for a listed stop click on the Stop Name. Clicking on the Stop Name will open a departure board containing real-time departure information.

A limited part of the service area is covered by the real-time vehicle and stop display. If a stop is within the covered service area a 'map' link will be displayed after the stop reference number. Clicking on a 'map' link will open the real-time vehicle and stop display window. This display shows a map containing the selected stop and the features of the surrounding area, which includes other stops and the actual location of buses in real-time.

Stop Reference	Stop Name
639001832 (map)	Grays School of Art
639001822 (map)	Garthdee Road
639001812 (map)	Gateside Drive
639001802 (map)	Inchbrae Road South
639001792 (map)	Craigsvar Road
639001782 (map)	Montrose Drive Path
639001772 (map)	Bridge Of Dee
639001762 (map)	Bridge Of Dee
639001742 (map)	Ruthniston Road
639001733 (map)	Ruthniston Church
639001732 (map)	Craithie Terrace
639001722 (map)	Grain Terrace

639006402 Castle Str...

http://aberdeen.acislive.com/ppp/stop_simulator

Stop Reference: 639006402 [Bookmark](#)

Castle Street - 12:22

2	Ashwood	7 mins
1	Danestone	8 mins
2	Ashwood	12:35
1	Danestone	12:41

Later departures >>>

[View Map](#) [Services from nearby stops](#)

Internet 100%

Image 2: Customer view of real time bus stop information

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Following these elements being agreed, First in Aberdeen and Nestrans formulated a joint launch plan to ensure that the URL was as widely known by the target audience as possible both before the launch and then consolidating this after the launch.

The marketing plan included the following elements:

- A countdown timer to the launch date on the First in Aberdeen website;
- Posters and coves displayed on all First in Aberdeen vehicles;
- Links and further information provided on First, Nestrans and Aberdeen City Council websites and intranets for employees;
- Public relations activities including an official launch event at the Bon Accord Centre;
- Letter to businesses and key stakeholders in the Aberdeen area to highlight the new service and its benefit to employees;
- Promotion at all face to face events including freshers' weeks at local universities, First's 'Meet the Manager' sessions and all 'Getabout' partnership events; and
- Timetable adverts within printed timetable leaflets and at bus stops.

Each of these marketing activities were planned in such a way as to deliver the message about realtimebus.com to as wide a section of the target market as possible no matter their touch point with the sector. Despite being relatively low-cost, the opportunity for bus customers to see the messaging and be aware of the project was massively high.

Results

Realtimebus.com has been met with massive success since its launch in September 2010.

The project has clearly met each of its stated objectives and continues to add to its success with continued promotion and positive customer reaction.

The amount of travel information which is now provided direct to customers has increased significantly in relation to that which was provided on bus shelters.

Customers can now access the information from a location convenient to them as long as they have access to the internet. This has a number of benefits including customers being able to better plan their leaving the office at night for their journey home, being able to plan connecting journeys while travelling on its first leg and accessing 'your stop' information similar to that which has been available to rail passengers for some time.

The website itself has used a simple interface designed for use via PCs and mobile devices which, via anecdotal evidence, customers have found intuitive and easy to use since its launch with very little required in way of learning.

The marketing plan and execution including the simple branding has led to wide customer knowledge within the target market of bus customers. Since launch, figures show an average of over 650 hits on the site per day. The number of hits on the site per month increased by a massive 750% between September (pro-rata) and December 2010 which clearly demonstrates the strength of the continued marketing campaign and positive word of mouth from customers as well as demonstrating the real customer need for this information particularly during spells of particularly bad weather.

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Indeed comments from customers who use the service have focussed on how much the site has improved their ability to plan journeys and feel confident in their use of bus services in Aberdeen.

"Since this new website was launched, I have used this service as often as possible prior to travelling.

"As a regular First bus service user I am delighted with its accuracy. It means that I can better utilise my time and enables me to better plan my lifestyle.

"I hope this is a service which will continue, as prior to it being implemented I often found myself at the mercy of timetables which are not accurate due to unforeseen circumstances.

Realtimebus.com user

Since launch, the system has gone from strength to strength with increasing numbers using the service. What this demonstrates – to the credit of both First and Nestrans – is the real power of marketing which was responsible for communicating this previously non-existent product to a wide target market.