# Leveraging the Neudesic Solution Center to Accelerate the Delivery of a New Feature-Rich Mobile Application

## The Client

Founded in 2014, VASA Fitness is a full amenity gym and fitness chain serving more than three hundred and forty thousand members. Their high value, low price model allows them to offer a big box gym combined with a boutique studio experience at affordable prices. VASA Fitness has 45 locations in 6 states across the west and midwest, offering three different membership levels tailored to individuals' needs.

## The Challenge

VASA Fitness recognized the need to create a better mobile experience for its client base to stay competitive among a variety of high value, low price players in the fitness marketplace. Their existing mobile application, however, was inadequate and not scalable. It was built by a third-party provider atop a basic template that was reskinned for competing gym clients which made customization difficult, limited the roll-out of new features, and posed integration challenges with important back-end data that would support enhanced functionality. As a result, many of the application features launched into a separate web view, which created a poor user experience and VASA was unable to fluidly track client goals, rewards, and referrals. Studio class and child care scheduling was redirected to a different website altogether, and billing inquiries could only be handled over the phone through a call center, which frustrated users and increased VASA's operating costs.

VASA Fitness knew they needed a fresh start to create a more modern, fully functional mobile application that reflected their unique brand and drove greater value and engagement with its active, on-the-go clientele. But they were also on a tight timeline; they started planning in mid-2019 with a goal to have a new app released by November to capitalize on the post-holiday, fitness-related New Year's resolutions made by current and prospective members. To meet that schedule, VASA needed to engage a new partner who understood their business with a strong mobile development competency, strategic advisory capabilities to ensure additional investment would directly affect the bottom line, and an ability to deliver high-quality design quickly to meet their go-to-market timeline goals.

> " Previously, we were using a third-party mobile app which hindered the customization and flexibility that we needed. Now, we have our own custom-built app and we're able to continuously improve and add new features quickly. "
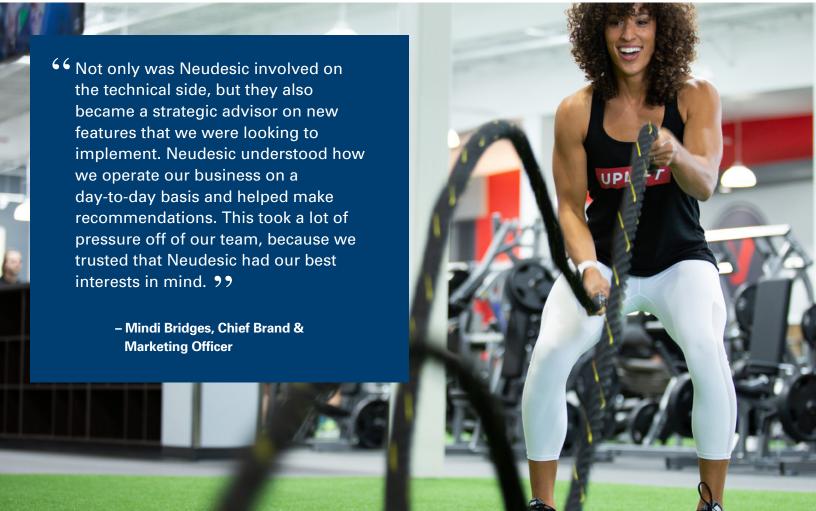>
> – Mehul Chaudhari, VP of Strategy and Analysis, VASA Fitness

## The Solution

VASA Fitness chose to partner with Neudesic, a national solution provider with extensive experience leading the strategy, design, development, and deployment of mobile applications across both iOS and Android devices. Having previously worked alongside VASA Fitness on other projects, Neudesic had a keen understanding of their business model and was able to provide the strategic guidance that would enable VASA to make the most of their mobile technology investments over the near-and-long term. Neudesic also offered another key differentiator – a fully onshore solution center with a dedicated team of cost-effective resources who could provide disciplined delivery with increased velocity, enabling VASA to meet their accelerated deadline that otherwise might not be achievable.

Neudesic started the project with a four-week discovery engagement. The goal was to conduct user tests with both VASA clients and employees, gain insights into existing pain points, create initial wireframes and architectures, and develop a fully informed development roadmap to define and prioritize new features that would maximize client value. When talking to app users, the team learned that there was frustration with the lack of flexibility to manage accounts in a streamlined way; this included upgrading and downgrading memberships and obtaining billing records and service support quickly and easily. VASA employees, however, expressed a desire to reduce client attrition, increase facilities use, maximize cross-sell potential for value-added services such as fitness classes and child care, and improve management of the rewards system that would enable them to provide highly-personalized experiences and increase overall brand engagement.

> " Not only was Neudesic involved on the technical side, but they also became a strategic advisor on new features that we were looking to implement. Neudesic understood how we operate our business on a day-to-day basis and helped make recommendations. This took a lot of pressure off of our team, because we trusted that Neudesic had our best interests in mind. "
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> **– Mindi Bridges, Chief Brand & Marketing Officer**

As the team moved toward development, Neudesic recommended an initial focus on creating a device native application for the iOS platform. Because 70% of VASA's user base came from Apple devices, this approach would benefit the broadest audience, enable them to take full advantage of the hardware and operating systems, and continue with a phased approach to feature enhancement that tied into Apple Watches, HealthKit, fitness monitors, and more. Engaging Neudesic's Ideation and Design team from the start was key to ensure that the application would be not only meet key goals, but that the overall experience application was intuitive and user friendly. To accelerate the application development, Neudesic leveraged dedicated resource teams from their solution center located in Phoenix, AZ. The teams' highly specialized skills in modern software architecture and mobile development, as well as their significant experience in delivering projects as a single, co-located unit, enabled them to accelerate delivery and meet a timeline that would likely not be achievable within the same budget utilizing traditional resources.

Phase one of the development started in July 2019, and with the help of the Neudesic solution center teams, they met the deadline; the iOS application was launched in the Apple Store in mid-November, with a corresponding Android application released soon thereafter. With the new application, users were able to join the club and upgrade/downgrade memberships easily from within the app, and an updated billing tab provides members with their statements for current and previous months with details around fees, restrictions, and recurring charges. A locations tab provides local gym and amenities information, and Neudesic was able integrate a scheduling system to allow users to book child care or studio classes directly through the app, which also includes functionality to sign all associated waivers and legal documents. Because the apps were built from the ground up using Swift and Kotlin, they take full advantage of the underlying hardware and operating systems to provide rich, user friendly experiences across both platforms.

## The Benefits

VASA Fitness saw near-immediate benefits from the app release, with nearly 200,000 new user installs in the first three months and a four star plus rating in the iOS app store. In the first three months, they recorded a sales increase of nearly $150,000 that came in directly through the mobile app, and by enabling users to manage membership changes, billing inquiries, and scheduling within the application, they were able to save significant administrative and call center costs. Adding functionality that enabled members to upgrade their membership directly in the app also translated into over $100,000 in new revenue coming from bookings for studio class and personal training.

And this is just the beginning. VASA is continuing their work with the Neudesic Solution Center and the broader team, working toward phase two features for the app that will include first-release enhancements and a reward system to add gamification and push notifications to maximize fitness community engagement. Members will be able to change their profile pictures, view class details, and send referrals to friends, which will create a new revenue stream for the organization. Keeping with the VASA Fitness brand and mission, an animated reward system will be added with monthly check-ins incentivizing members to use the gym and stay healthy for the long term.

> " Our executive team here at VASA agreed that we have never seen an app launch as fast as the mobile app Neudesic built without significant issues. We are very impressed, having gone from start to finish in under six months. "
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> **– Mehul Chaudhari, VP of Strategy and Analysis, VASA Fitness**