



How Craven + Co. **Capitalized on COVID Downtime** to Build The Drink Calculator

In mid-2019, Tiffany Craven, CEO and Founder of Craven + Co. – a full-service event production and consulting agency in Austin, TX – approached Simpat Tech to assist in the creation of a new drink calculator tool.

However, the Craven + Co. team's ability to provide the input needed to move the project forward was intermittent, due to the small firm's need to focus on paid client engagements – that is, until the COVID-19 pandemic brought all of the company's live event work to a halt.

Recognizing the silver lining in the unexpected shutdown, Craven and her team used their newly found free time to double-down on The Drink Calculator – not only finishing an initial version of the tool, but reimagining the business model associated with it in order to capitalize on new commercial opportunities.

CREATING THE CALCULATOR

“We already had a vision for how we wanted the tool to look and flow for the user,” explained Craven. “So when we started with Simpat, we had a strong foundation, but we needed to fine-tune the real-life expression of it. Simpat was very patient with us, posing questions from a systems perspective and allowing us time to digest it and propose our solution.”

“There are versions of the basic industry-standard formula that tell you the total number of cocktails you need for an event,” shared Craven. “I’ve been producing events for 20 years, and for every client, I start with that same formula. However that result is incomplete and unusable without further calculations. To make it usable, you need to be able to account for the format and needs of the specific event.”

Ashish Patel, Simpat Tech’s Founder and CEO, emphasized how important it was for his team to understand the thought processes that would power the tool’s calculations. **“Often, when ideas are converted into systems, key elements can get lost in translation,”** he explained. “From our perspective, we wanted to take the process Craven used every day and to systemize it, but to not lose the overarching vision in the process.”

The result of the collaborative process was a tool that, according to Craven, “mirrored how we, as event planners, listen to our clients’ vision for their event and guide them to spend their bar budget efficiently.”

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BUILDING A BUSINESS MODEL

While working with Simpat to develop The Drink Calculator, Crave and her team began to see additional opportunities to expand the business model associated with it. She explained, **“My first vision for the calculator was that it was going to be a free tool that would drive prospective clients to the Craven + Co. site; it would be a lead generator.”**

However, a meeting with a mentor helped Craven to identify an opportunity to monetize The Drink Calculator through brand and retail liquor store partnerships. “As soon as we got back to Austin, I reached out to Simpat to get started,” Craven explained. “Hearing their excitement about the project gave us even more reason to feel good about our decision to contract with them, and it felt like they understood our vision.”

Today, the company is in the early stages of negotiating with one of the 17 alcoholic beverage control states in the United States to feature The Drink Calculator on its newly launched e-commerce site; a business model it hopes to expand to other control states early next year.

According to Patel, “From the start, we focused on building the core algorithm behind The Drink Calculator with scalability in mind. Now, no matter what commercial models Craven + Co. decides to pursue, they’ll be able to tailor and tweak the algorithms as needed, without a lot of rework.”

BUILDING A BUSINESS MODEL

Craven is quick to acknowledge the role the strong partnership between Craven + Co. and Simpat Tech played in the project’s success. “I just felt really lucky to have a great team like Simpat behind us the whole way,” she shared. “We were figuring a lot of things out as we went with their guidance. If we’d not partnered with them from the start, it could have been a very stressful situation, at best – and at worst, a situation where someone could have taken advantage of us.”

“Simpat was great at communicating to us their needs to move the project forward, and brainstorming on our creative ideas and how best to make them a reality within the Calculator. Having that level of trust was so important to us.”



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