adidas Running races into voice with App Actions powered by the Google Assistant

Opportunity

The adidas Running app allows users to track workouts, join challenges, and share their progress with a global fitness community. Adidas enjoys being a first mover in product innovation, and decided to explore voice as a way to infuse adidas Running with a new layer of interactivity.

Robert Hellwagner, Innovation Manager at adidas Running explains, "There was a clear benefit to voice, and it was something that naturally made sense to us. As runners, we saw the value in being able to start or stop a running session without the need to pull out our phones. If we can be there for our users at all possible touchpoints, they'll have a better running experience and a better perception of our product and brand."

Approach

Hellwagner shares, "There were many reasons to build for the Google Assistant. We knew the hands-free experience was going to be great for our use case of running and our developers wanted to try out App Actions, and we were excited to have our team working on the latest technology."

From a user's perspective, App Actions behave like shortcuts to specific functionality in an Android app. For apps like the adidas Running app, it takes numerous steps to complete a certain activity, like for example starting a run. Step1: Pulling out the phone, step 2: searching and finding the adidas Running app, step 3: opening the app, step 4: pressing the 'start a run' button to start a run.

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> **Robert Hellwagner**
> **Innovation Manager**
> **Adidas Running**
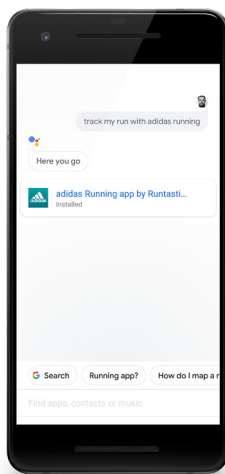
Adidas Running Action
being invoked
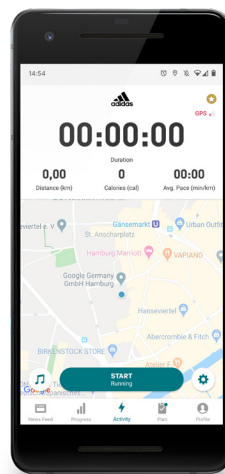
Adidas Running app
starting a run

By limiting the number of steps it takes to complete an activity, App Actions remove this unnecessary friction between a user's query and the desired outcome. For example, just saying "Hey Google, track my run with adidas Running" lets a user open the app and start tracking a run with the adidas Running app, with just their voice.

App Actions was the perfect fit for adidas Running especially as it helped the team get started with voice quickly by taking advantage of already existing assets and technologies, in this case app deep links. The company had already implemented over 30 deep links (amongst others, to track, pause and stop a run), and was using these in email campaigns, in-app push notifications, and on social media. Hellwagner shares, "When we heard about App Actions and how we could take advantage of existing deep links, we were convinced that this was the right path for us. This is a natural way for our users to interact with our app in ways they're already familiar with."

The adidas Running team assigned one Android developer to work on App Actions. He implemented a number of the fitness built-in intents (BIIs) that matched the existing app functionality, such as tracking, pausing, resuming and stopping a run. "When looking at BIIs for Fitness apps, we saw that a lot of what we wanted to build with voice was already available. It made our job easy," says Hellwagner.

To get started, the Android developer studied the online documentation and YouTube videos about App Actions from Google I/O. These resources, paired with familiar technology and a familiar building environment (Android Studio), helped him to implement all of adidas Running's desired BIIs in a single workday, with no outside help from agencies. "It was fairly obvious what needed to be done," says Hellwagner. "We needed to choose which activities we wanted to support, and ensure we had deep links to support them. With our simple setup, we were able to add deep links in no time. Once that was done, we added the actions.xml file for our app, where we specified our selected built-in intents (BIIs) and their corresponding fulfillment."

Best Practices

In developing their Action, adidas Running has learned some key lessons, the first of which was to start simple. They decided to implement App Actions to take advantage of existing deep links in their app. By doing this, they were able to integrate with the Google Assistant in a single work day using one developer, who was able to complete the implementation without outside help.

Adidas Running is just getting started on marketing their new integration, including sharing their App Action through existing marketing channels, such as their email newsletter. They were able to do this through implementing links from their web and mobile assets to the Google Assistant Explore page. Users who click on these links are directed to the Google Assistant Explore page on their device, from where they can get more information on how to interact with the corresponding App Action. "By linking to the Explore section, we're able to help our users see the possibilities voice has to offer, and then they're more encouraged to try it on their own in the app," shares Hellwagner.

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Robert Hellwagner
Innovation Manager
Adidas Running

What's next

The adidas Running team is excited to start spreading the word about their App Action integration and are working on ways to integrate App Actions into other efforts, such as upcoming purpose campaigns to support sustainability and social responsibility.

Next steps:

Check out our App Actions code sample or get started right away with a codelab.

Engage with our Actions on Google community on Reddit at r/GoogleAssistantDev or follow @ActionsOnGoogle on Twitter for more of our team's updates.

Get started with Actions on Google at: **developers.google.com/actions/app**