Do It Yourself: How to Build a Custom Barcode Scanner In-House

Bryan Alderson, e-commerce specialist at NORMA Group, will be the first to tell you that he is impatient. When he has an idea to improve his company's workflows, customer experiences, or products, he wants to do it — now.

NORMA Group is a global distributor that sells plumbing and irrigation components to retail hardware stores through online and in-person warehouses. One of the first things Bryan noticed was the ordering process seemed overly complicated. First, customers have to go to a physical location and note the products they need to order. Then, they have to go back, search for those items on the NORMA webshop, add them to the cart, and check out. "It's a fairly time-consuming task," he says.

Bryan knew a custom mobile barcode scanning app could streamline the process but the issue wasn't the idea — it was the execution.

"Being a global organization and having a very rigid IT philosophy, the restrictions on [building the app] were difficult to overcome, and I couldn't get agreement to move forward with the project using traditional development channels."

So, Bryan decided to do it himself.

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CONSTRUCTING A BARCODE APP

He looked at ten no code/low code platforms, but Thunkable was one of few that had a built-in barcode scanner feature. Once he was set up, within the Thunkable app builder, he constructed an i-frame that contained his company's web store so that when a barcode is scanned, the query goes directly to an API and comes back with the URL for the product and brings up the product on a customer's screen. They've got the price, product availability, and can add to their cart instantly after scanning.

"By the end of the first week, I had an MVP [minimum viable product] where I was able to walk around the warehouse and scan products and show people that it worked. At the end of the second week, I was able to have it on the Apple store and the Google Play store and our first beta for internal testing. At the end of the third week, I actually had my first live customer order from customer testing, and at the end of the next week, I had deployment on Google Play."

BUILDING ON THUNKABLE

Bryan is now a Thunkable expert and is already on the hunt for his next Thunkable project. He shares, "I'm so impressed with the platform, just absolutely in love with it. It's so intuitive and easy to use. I'm looking for other ways I can use Thunkable to improve what we're doing and how we're working."

BRYAN ALDERSON

Bryan Alderson is an Australia-based E-Commerce Specialist. He works for NORMA Pacific, a leading manufacturer and supplier of joining technology solutions, serving a diverse range of industries across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. It is a subsidiary of NORMA Group, a global leader in engineered joining technology. Bryan has a background in web-based development like PHP, MySQL, and HTML.

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