

**Skill Launch: November 2017**

**Case Study: April 2020**



# Heads Up!

*The Ellen DeGeneres Show*

Powered by VaynerMedia



**VAYNERMEDIA**

# Case Study – Heads Up!

## Problem

*Heads Up!* is a popular game created by the Ellen Degeneres Show, used primarily as a mobile app. Interested in connecting with customers in a new channel and expanding the *Heads Up!* brand, the producers of the show wanted to bring the game into a voice-first context with an Alexa Skill.

However, the popularity of the mobile app meant fans were used to playing with the phone screen as a focal point in a heavily visual game design.

## Opportunity

VaynerMedia worked with the Ellen Digital Team to translate *Heads Up!* into a voice-first experience, reimagining the gameplay to be driven by audio clues.

Fans of the game and show loved the voice-first game, however played through content quickly and wanted more.

That's when VaynerMedia introduced the In-Skill Purchasing (ISP) functionality, allowing customers to purchase additional premium content from within the Skill.



# Case Study – Heads Up!

## Solution

VaynerMedia first analyzed the game functionality in the Heads Up! mobile app, identifying what worked well in a voice-first experience and what needed to be redesigned. This included identifying opportunities to use audio cues for in-game user feedback.

VaynerMedia and the Ellen Digital Team coordinated to develop custom content for the skill. And to ensure the content stayed fresh, the team built a custom content management system for easy editing, adding and releasing new game content on an ongoing basis.

As one of the first Skills to leverage ISP (in-skill purchasing) on Alexa, this helped lead the charge in monetization, which in turn incentivizes developers to create better skill experiences and explore more innovative use cases.



# Go-To-Market

## Go-To-Market Approach

In addition to making announcements on *Heads Up!* social profiles and Ellen DeGeneres' owned channels, they coordinated with Ellen's PR team for a major push to let fans know that their favorite game was now on Alexa.

This continued for subsequent announcements, including additional feature adds the availability of *Heads Up!* For Echo Auto.

Have a little fun today.  
#ellen15

season  
15

Tweets 15.6K Following 36K Followers 76.5M Likes 631 Moments 9

Follow

Ellen DeGeneres

@TheEllenShow

Comedian, talk show host and ice road trucker. My tweets are real, and they're spectacular.

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Ellen DeGeneres @TheEllenShow · 17m  
"Alexa, play Heads Up!"

45 70 922

Heads Up!

December 14, 2017 ·

Have you tried saying "Alexa, play Heads Up!" yet today? We think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

AMAZON.COM

**Heads Up!**

Introducing "Heads Up!" for Amazon Alexa! "Heads Up!" is the fun and hilarious game from Ellen DeGeneres you play on your own by guessing Alexa's clues!

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### Amazon's Alexa now lets you pay for premium voice apps

Mind you, Amazon's off to a slow start. Today, it's just a handful of specific app partners pushing out some quiz show-style games — plus Ellen DeGeneres' popular *Heads Up!*, where one person has to guess what's on a card they hold up to their head based on clues from the rest of the group. (You can say, "Alexa, ask Heads Up! to buy a pack" to get additional cards now.)

## BUSINESS INSIDER

In-skill purchases will enable developers to sell premium content or digital subscriptions within their skills, and the extension of Amazon Pay will allow third-party developers to accept Amazon Pay for in-skill purchases. Several skills — including *Sports Jeopardy!*, *Match Game*, and *Heads Up!* — are already planning to adopt the in-app payment capability through Amazon's developer preview, which will be available broadly in 2018.

## DIGITAL TRENDS

### Heads Up!

From the beloved app and created by Ellen DeGeneres *Heads Up!* is the perfect game for a group of people. You'll choose a category and Alexa will provide three fun facts and clues for each card. See how many you can get in 90 seconds, and the person that gets the most wins. The categories you can choose from include superstars, blockbuster moves, animals gone wild, just for families, and more.

# Results

Top 25

Named in Top 25  
Skills of the Year 2018  
by Amazon

Source:  
*Amazon*

3.7 stars

Rated 3.7 out of 5  
stars by customers

Source:  
*Amazon Alexa  
Skills Store*

>15,000

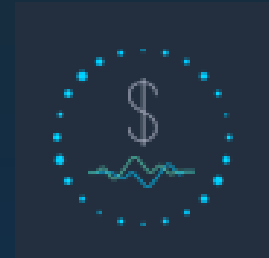
Number of reviews  
as of March 2020

Source:  
*Amazon Alexa  
Skills Store*

100+

Premium content  
decks sold each week

# HeadsUp's Learnings



Customers responded to a variety of content being available. The skill launched with only three “decks” or categories. However, VaynerMedia built a custom CMS that allowed them to continuously introduce new content over time to keep customers interested and anticipating more.

This not only made it possible to introduce new content for purchase, as part of the in-skill purchase program, but also allowed The Ellen Show to introduce seasonally relevant content over the course of the year.

This skill allows users to provide open-ended answers based on clues from Alexa. With answers ranging from proper nouns to popular culture, it was necessary to continuously provide alternative pronunciations and phonetic spellings to ensure that utterances from customers would be understood.

Decks for purchase were a popular element with sales tending to increase around seasons and occasions when families are spending time at home together.