

Attractions.io

# You don't have to build it to win

Delivering standout attraction apps,  
without building from scratch



# Executive summary

Today’s digital leaders are under more pressure than ever. Budgets are tighter, talent is harder to retain, and expectations—from boards and guests alike—are sky-high.

That’s why, when the conversation turns to guest satisfaction, revenue growth, or operational efficiency, a mobile app often rises to the top of the list. It’s a powerful lever. And one that touches every part of the guest journey.

The instinct to build a mobile app platform, especially for tech-savvy teams, is understandable. It feels safer. You picture complete control over budgets, timelines, features, and functionality. A solution perfectly tailored to your attraction and your guests.

But building in-house gives you ownership of the code—not necessarily control of the outcome. Think about the tools you rely on every day—email, project management, documents. You don’t own the code, but you still get exactly what you need from them. The same logic applies here.

Some attractions will build. Others will buy. The best will do both. They’ll build where it creates differentiation, and partner where it brings speed, resilience, and scale.

This guide shows how attractions can use platforms to reduce risk, accelerate outcomes, and keep their teams focused on what truly matters; creating the kind of day guests can’t stop talking about.



**Mark Locker,**  
Founder & CEO



# Buy vs build: What are you solving for?

Building suggests control, flexibility, and a solution tailored to your exact needs. But the real question isn't "Can we build it?". It's "Should we?"

It's likely that your requirements around ticketing, queue times, food and beverage ordering, or wayfinding are shared by dozens (if not hundreds) of other attractions. These aren't novel challenges. They've already been solved, tested, and optimised by platforms built specifically for your industry.

Which is why trying to reinvent them internally doesn't necessarily lend an advantage. Instead, identify where your needs are genuinely unique. Focus your energy and resources there and you'll be able to create an experience that's genuinely differentiated. And if a custom build is what unlocks something truly special for your guests—go for it.

You're one of the few people in your organisation who can truly connect the digital dots; the tech stack you've built or inherited, how and when your guests engage, where revenue peaks. You also have visibility of the broader strategy and goals. Do you want to grow revenue while scaling your team? Reduce operational overheads? Start with those goals. Decide what makes your experience unique. Then focus your team's energy there.

"It's not necessarily about the tools you use to make your guest experience platform. It's about how they're integrated into everything you do. Just because you've got the same hammer as someone else doesn't mean you'll build exactly the same house."

– Peter O'Dare, Head of Product at Attractions.io.



## Kennedy Space Centre Visitor Complex

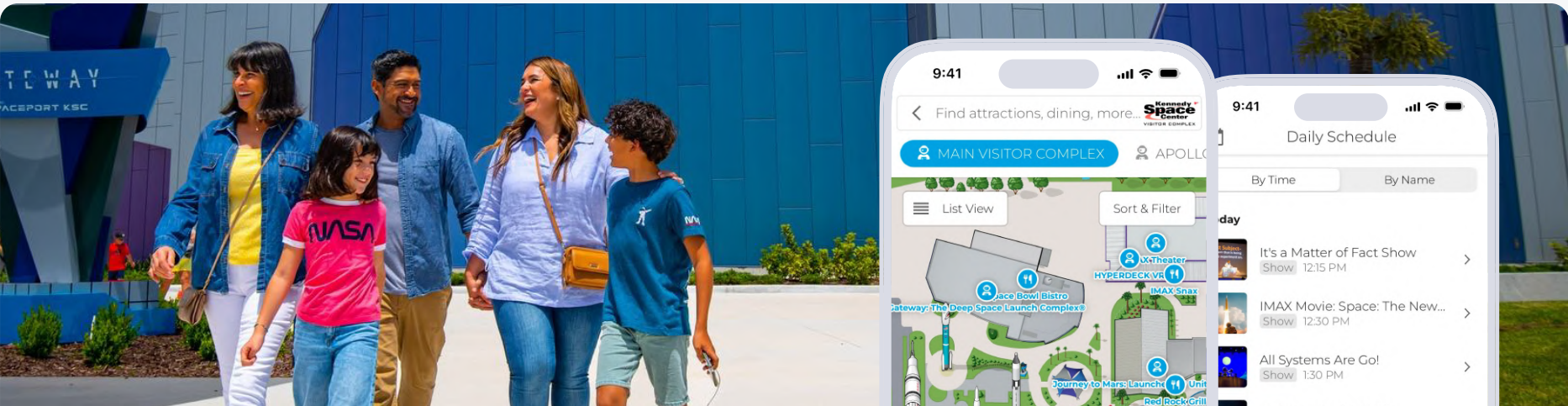
Kennedy Space Centre Visitor Complex built their mobile app in-house with a strong internal team. But when their lead developer left, along with the system knowledge, routine updates became impossible. What started as a custom solution turned into a maintenance burden.

"We found the app hard to update because you needed deep coding skills. We realised we needed something easier to manage that still gave us the flexibility we wanted."

– Christine Selby-Reagan, Head of Consumer Marketing

They turned to Attractions.io for a more flexible platform—one that empowered their teams to manage content and guest communication without relying on developer time. The results speak for themselves:

- 95% Guest satisfaction
- 80% Retention
- 70% Guest reach



# The Illusion of control

Building your own app is like plumbing your own house. You get to decide where everything goes. But once the walls are up, every change gets harder. A leak in one pipe affects everything and if something breaks, you're the one under the floorboards with a spanner (or wrench for our North American readers).

Even if you do call in a plumber, they've got no clue how your system works as it's not standard. Fixing one thing risks breaking another. And adding anything new is even harder.

We've seen the pattern. Teams start with bold plans and good intent. But when they try to plumb their own app, the leaks appear. Guest impact takes a backseat to maintenance, and what once promised differentiation becomes a drain.

Leak	Impact
 <b>People risk</b>	Lead developer leaves → undocumented logic → weeks of delay
 <b>Platform churn</b>	iOS/Android updates = dozens of developer days p.a → rebuilds required → delivery stalls
 <b>Stack sprawl</b>	Disconnected tools → brittle integrations → more bugs, more firefighting
 <b>Delayed value</b>	Priorities pile up → slow launches → guests disappointed
 <b>Opportunity cost</b>	Best devs maintain infrastructure → no time for innovation or revenue-driving features
 <b>False differentiation</b>	MVP built → time and budget go to maintenance → no capacity to innovate



## Chester Zoo

Chester Zoo first tried an in-house app—but it lacked the stability, support, and features they needed.

“We built our first mobile app from scratch but it quickly became unsustainable and needed constant maintenance...Attractions.io stood out because they listened to our needs, reduced the resource we needed to manage our app and helped us develop an experience that truly works for our guests.”

– Jon Petty, Head of Digital Transformation at Chester Zoo

52%

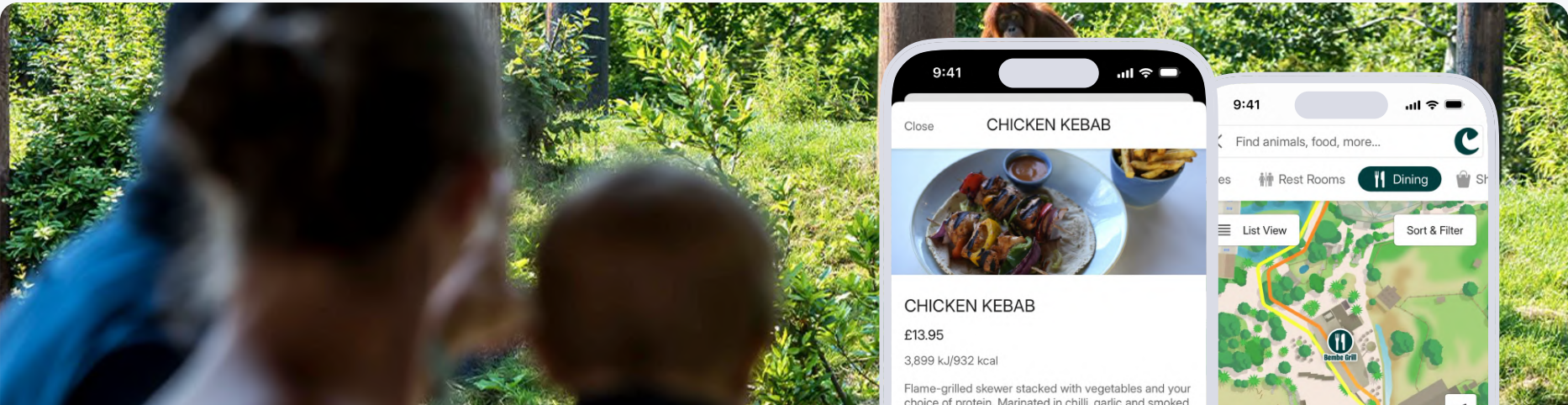
Increase in average transaction value

49%

Increase in year-on-year F&B revenue

65%

Of registered users consent to marketing



# The scaling problem with bespoke software

As we’ve seen, the problem with in-house builds isn’t just maintaining what you’ve built, it's the compound cost of every decision that follows and how that scales with your growth.

An example: an attraction decides to switch to digital membership cards. It will reduce printing costs, improve sustainability, and streamline the guest experience. Seems simple — but enabling that “one feature” means touching ticketing, CRM, POS, app infrastructure, email systems, and finance. Suddenly, you’re knee-deep in integrations, dependencies, and testing cycles.

And because everything is bespoke, no one else is solving these problems for you. You own every sprint. Every bug. Every regression. Every delay.

Every feature you release and every integration you connect adds to your maintenance overhead. Over time, that backlog becomes a tax on your team’s focus and velocity.



## Hunderfossen Eventypark

After launching a bespoke mobile app through an external agency, routine updates and stability issues for Hunderfossen began draining their marketing team’s time and energy. They needed a solution built for their industry—one that wouldn’t eat up internal resources.

“After meeting with the sales and delivery teams, we felt 100% confident that Attractions.io was the right choice. The team had both the technical and industry knowledge to meet our requirements, and they made us feel completely at ease throughout the process.”

– Espen Rønning, Marketing Manager at Hunderfossen

99.9%

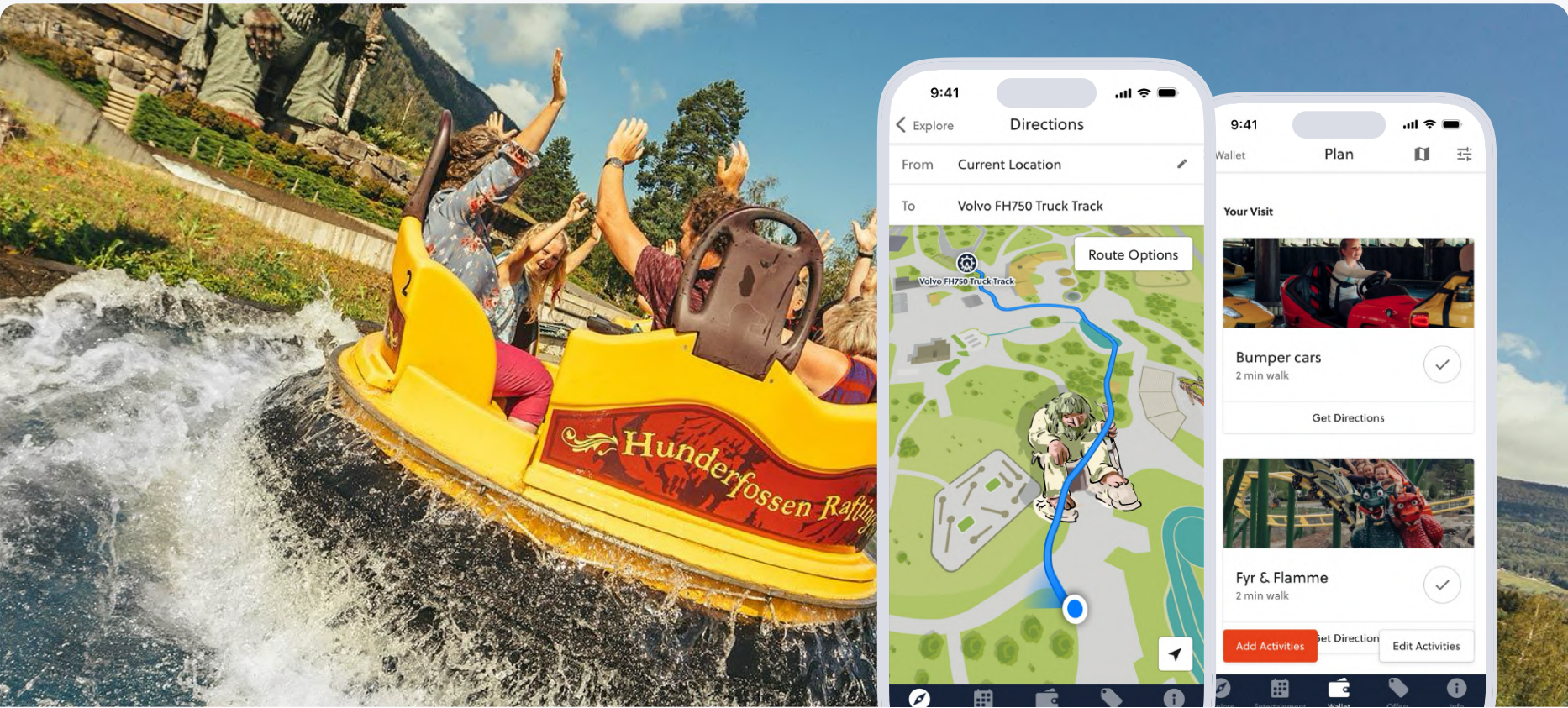
Uptime

15%

Cost saving

A team

free to focus on anything but firefighting the tech stack







# But if I buy, who controls the roadmap?

It's a fair question. When you partner, you need to know you're not handing over the keys.

We invest millions each year building a platform tailored to the operational challenges and digital ambitions of attractions like yours. Our scale means faster releases, broader functionality, and fewer distractions for you. But it doesn't mean you're sidelined.

## You keep full control where it counts:

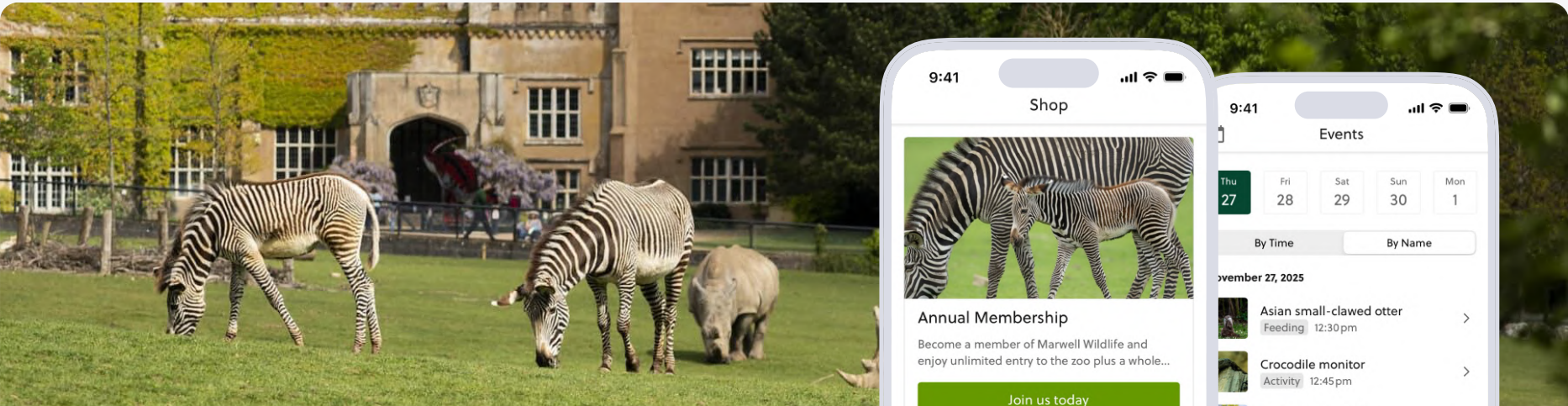
-  **Your data is yours** Accessible, exportable, and fully integrated with your CDP and CRM.
-  **Brand experience stays unique** Fully customisable with your logo, colours, and design system—plus configurable features, open integrations, and support from Solutions Teams.
-  **You own your roadmap** Through direct input, shared priorities, and co-development opportunities.
-  **Proven ROI** Partners have achieved up to £7 return for every £1 invested in the platform.



## Marwell Zoo

"I don't remember when I was so 'hands-off' with a development project"

– Sean Mannie, Commercial Director of Marwell Zoo




And when you need something truly bespoke, our professional services team is there to help. From building unique integrations to implementing entirely new features, we work with your team to extend the platform. When a leading UK attraction switched a second gated product from web to native, conversions **increased by 197%**.




# How to stay ahead

When guests open your app, they bring expectations shaped by every great mobile experience they’ve had—from ride-hailing to restaurant booking. Competing means keeping pace not just with the industry, but with the digital products they use daily.


These are the capabilities that will define the next generation of guest experience:

 **AI-driven personalisation**


Drives conversion, loyalty, and lifetime value. Combine mobile usage data with generative AI and you unlock hyper-personalised journeys. Early adopters are already seeing 3x higher conversion rates vs. web.

 **Smart yield and crowd management**


Dynamic pricing. Flow balancing. Capacity visibility. These are no longer nice-to-haves, they’re how parks will, and are currently, maximising revenue and guest experience.

 **Digital passports and bundling**

As attractions consolidate into “living leisure” portfolios, expect more demand for cross-venue bundles, shared memberships and unified loyalty.

 **Sustainability and transparency**

Tomorrow’s guests want visibility. Expect pressure to show progress on carbon, waste and conservation, digitally and in real time.

 **Accessibility, wellbeing, and inclusion**

Plan for quiet zones, group planning tools, mental wellness nudges and accessible journeys. It’s the right thing to do, and it broadens your market.

We’re already investing millions a year in developing these functionalities—so when they hit your roadmap, you’re not behind. And adding them is as simple as switching on a new module.

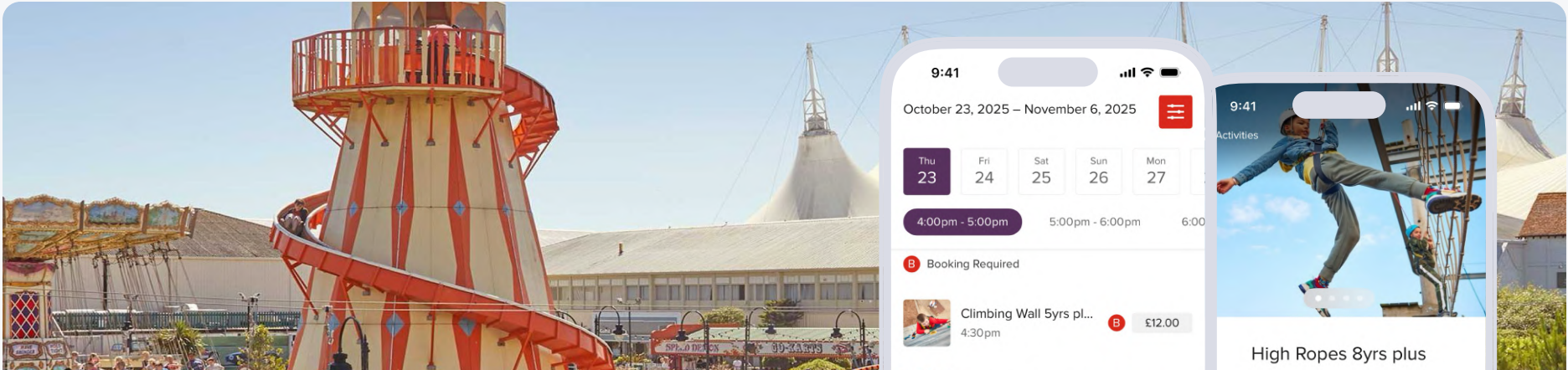


Butlin’s reimagined how guests plan and experience their break. By working with Attractions.io to add tailored features like pre-arrival booking for free and paid activities, real-time itinerary updates, and on-site notifications, they unlocked entirely new guest behaviours.

Guests now spread their spend earlier, plan with confidence, and make fewer in-resort enquiries, all while the Butlin’s team gains better operational foresight and control.

“One of the things we value most about Attractions.io is their ability to look ahead, evaluate guest needs and develop the product in line with changing expectations – which takes the pressure off our internal teams having to do that scoping work... Now we’ve partnered with Attractions.io, our digital guest experience is far more agile and constantly evolves using a guest-centric approach.”

– Jacqui French, Digital Product Manager, Apps at Butlin’s



# Even when you build, you don't have to go it alone

Build if it unlocks something unique. Partner to get you results faster.

You might have truly unique requirements. You might have a seasoned team and strong in-house capabilities. If that's your reality, we're not here to talk you out of building.

But even with all that in place, some parts of the guest experience are still complex, high-risk, and time-consuming to build from scratch. For example mapping and wayfinding.

Even the best digital teams don't need to build everything from scratch. Our SDKs help them ship faster, integrate smarter, and deliver guest-ready features with less effort. Whether you're using Attractions.io's full platform or just a module, we help you deliver enterprise-grade experiences faster, without rebuilding the basics.



## Six Flags

Six Flags had already committed to a custom mobile app. But when it came to mapping, they faced a choice: build their own wayfinding engine or plug in something tried and tested.

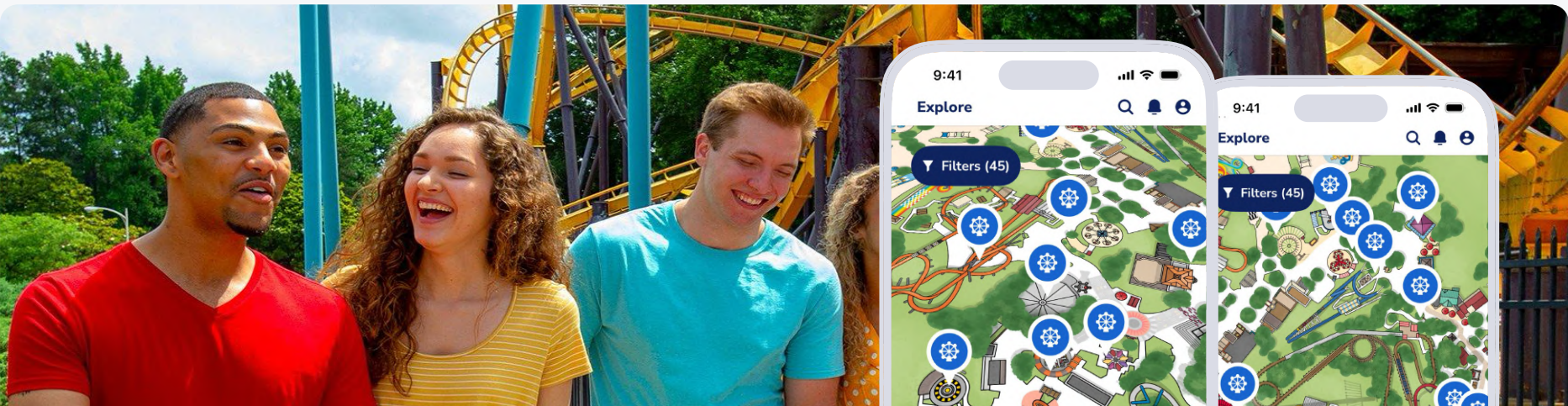
"I had spoken with Attractions.io in the past and the team had always been very willing to share their insights and learnings, so I got back in touch with a quick message saying, 'Hey, we are building a new app; it's going to be custom. Can we chat about maps?'"

– Jim Denny, VP of Digital, Six Flags

That conversation turned into a collaboration. Jim and the team decided to integrate MapLayr—Attractions.io's mapping SDK—into their new app platform. The results were immediate. It gave Six Flags beautifully branded, interactive maps tailored to each park. Complete with tilt, zoom, real-time orientation, and turn-by-turn guidance. It worked offline, scaled effortlessly across 11 parks, and slotted neatly into their existing infrastructure.

"When guests use the Carowinds app, they tell us mapping and wayfinding is the easiest tool to use. The overwhelming sentiment is that it's a huge improvement over our previous experience."

Now live in 15 parks and rolling out to more in 2025, MapLayr has become a cornerstone of Six Flags' digital strategy—helping millions of guests find their next ride, show, or snack with zero friction.



# You don't have to build it to win

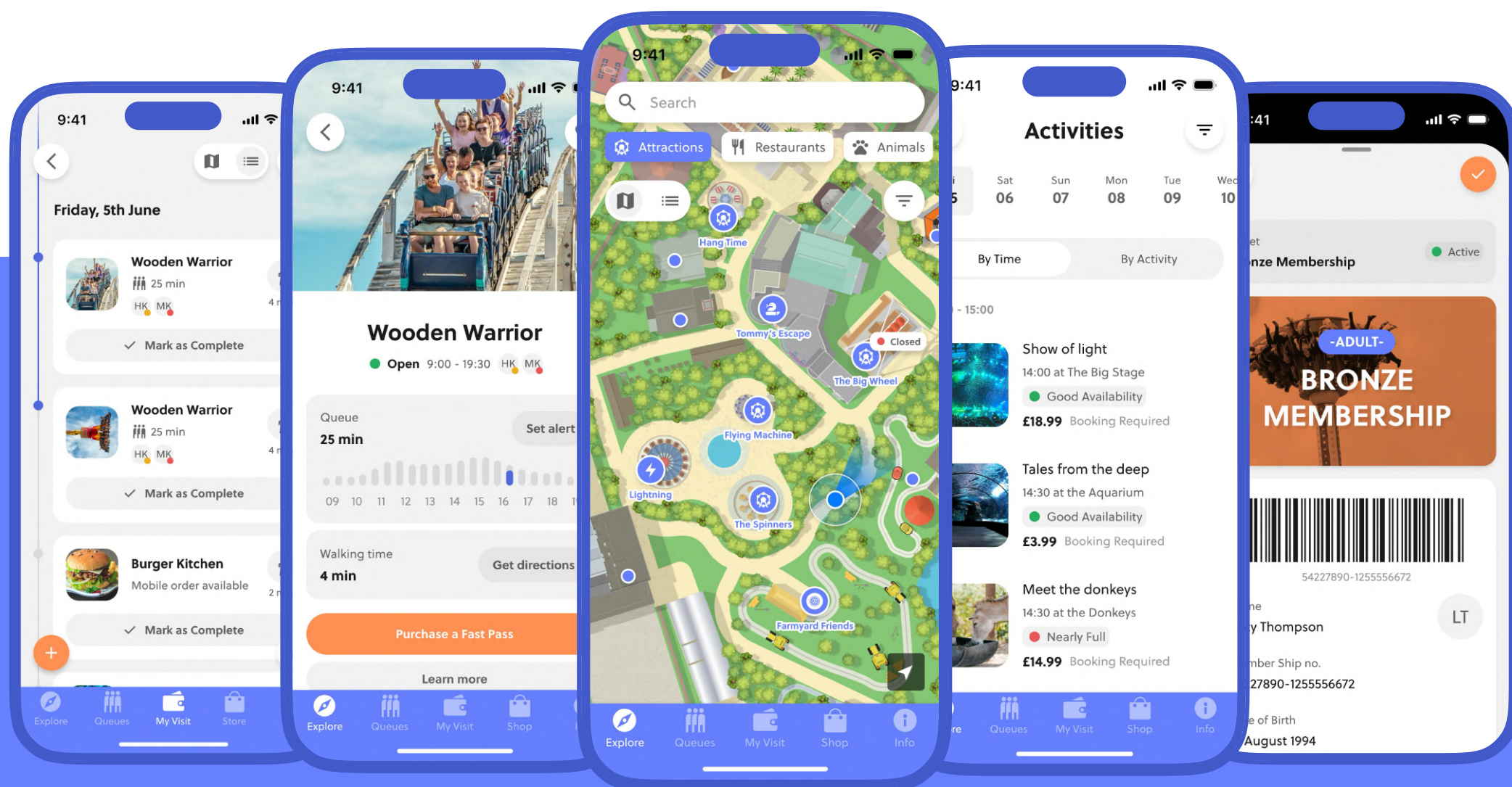
This isn't a small decision. You're not choosing a vendor—you're deciding how your attraction will deliver digital value for at least the next five years.

And yes, building can work for some teams, in some contexts, with the right talent and time. But it's a long, complex road that often pulls focus from where you actually drive guest impact.

The strongest digital leaders we work with didn't give up control. They focus their teams on where they could make a difference—on the guest experience, the data strategy, the moments that build loyalty and revenue.

Because what matters most isn't who writes the code. It's who delivers the outcome. You don't need to prove you can build everything. You need to prove you can deliver results—fast, reliably, and at scale.

That's what we're here for. We've worked with digital leaders facing the same decision, and If it helps to compare approaches, we're happy to talk.



## We can help you get your digital transformation right.

If you're rethinking your stack, let's help you get it right.  
Not just built.

Let's talk

Attractions.io