



STRATEGIC MARKETING ORCHESTRATION IN THE GLOBAL *FORTUNE* 300: DEFINE, DIFFERENTIATE, AND LAUNCH THREE NEW BUSINESS ASSETS

June 2021

KDDI Corporation is a leading Japanese telecommunications company and a member of the Global *Fortune* 300. Worldwide, KDDI maintains a diverse portfolio of managed networks, data centers, cloud, security, and system integration services, which also includes 40 million Japanese mobile network subscribers.

Its US-based subsidiary, KDDI America, mainly provided ICT solutions including datacenter, colocation, peering, network, and systems integration services to several different industries since launching in the USA in 1989.

As a formidable but still relatively unknown technology mainstay in America for 30+ years, KDDI America tapped Merit Mile via its go-to-market consultancy, [Channel Ready!](#), in 2020 for the development, launch, and business lift it needed to support several ambitious and strategic initiatives including:

- 1) **Cloud and digital transformation services launch**
- 2) **Omnichannel communications services launch**
- 3) **Channel partner program launch**



SERVICES PROVIDED

- Go-to-market planning
- Messaging and positioning
- Web design & development
- Social media marketing

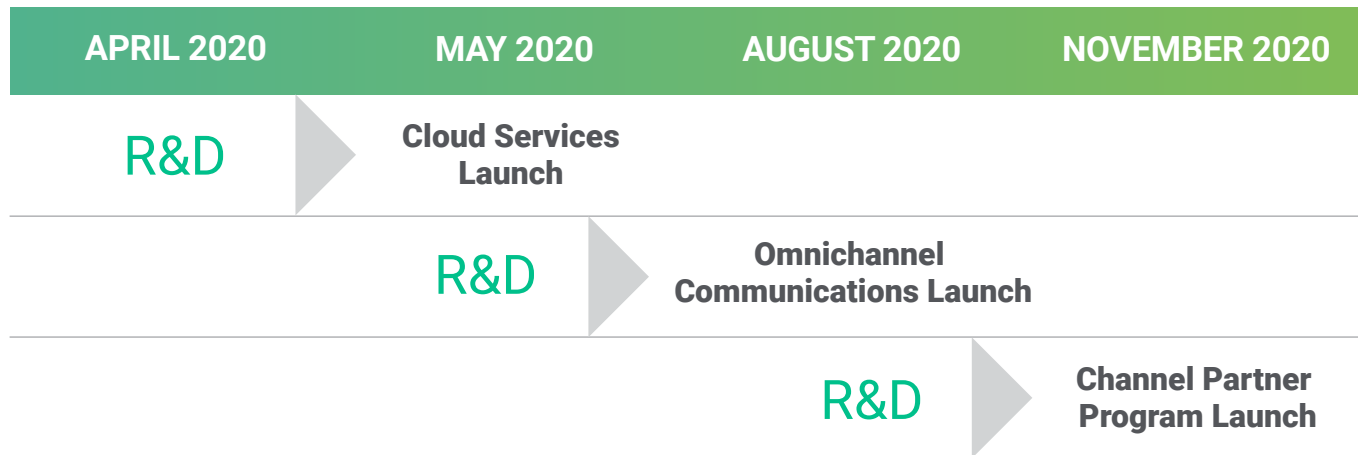
HOW MERIT MILE HELPED:

- Sales training, readiness & enablement
- Lead generation & content marketing
- PR, media & analyst relations
- Channel marketing

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With three significant launches in the 2020 KDDI America strategic plan, Merit Mile first created a workstream that was designed to deliver against line of business priorities, but also cater to the research and development needs of secondary business assets and associated launches nearly simultaneously.



Given the existing awareness and marketplace footprint of the KDDI America datacenter business, it was determined that prioritizing the launch of the entity's cloud services business made the most practical, tactical, and strategic business sense. Similarly, the KDDI America cloud services business would then serve not only as the bridge and enabler of datacenter customer (and revenue) evolutions, but also the conduit for omnichannel communications and channel partner program launches.

When successfully executed and landed, this cadence of strategic business launches would then firmly support the broader vision of KDDI America differentiation by showcasing a true **Dx-to-Cx suite of services and solutions**, all designed to support existing customer needs and growth while creating pipeline and demand for onboarding new, prospective customers.

For Merit Mile, the business and marketing orchestration challenges were clear: define, design, differentiate, launch, and land critical business assets while navigating international acceptance from far east corporate leadership, do so amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, and execute on an aggressive schedule.

Challenges accepted.

Launching KDDI America cloud services with Microsoft, AWS, and Ingram Micro

Situation

With strategic plans in place, it was now time to get to work, beginning with the design, development, and launch of the KDDI America cloud services business.

For background context, KDDI America owns and operates Telehouse, a global provider of data centers and carrier peering exchanges, with three US locations. Seeking to accelerate their data center customers' demands for hybrid and multi-cloud services and reach new customers, KDDI America needed to establish themselves as a **differentiated cloud services provider**.

By leveraging their carrier-grade datacenter and network infrastructure, KDDI America could act as a **single source partner for cloud, connectivity, colocation, and communication services**. However, achieving this vision and successfully entering the US market required a strategic and well managed go-to-market strategy. Merit Mile was called upon to lead the go-to-market plan and drive the launch of their Microsoft Cloud Service Provider (CSP) and AWS cloud services businesses.

Approach

For over a decade, Merit Mile has been helping technology companies and channel partners develop, launch, and grow their product and service offerings. Using a **proven and repeatable, Pragmatic Marketing influenced approach**, Merit Mile began by workshoping with KDDI America to develop a go-to-market strategy in support of the macro-level business, sales, and customer goals. Through this exercise, the unique differentiators of KDDI America, customer profiles and needs, and key use cases were defined.

During this time, KDDI America and Merit Mile also recruited a Microsoft CSP Indirect Provider, also known as a Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider distribution partner. The recruitment interviews were rigorous but necessary as the indirect provider would need to understand both the Microsoft CSP business as well as the AWS cloud services business. After reviewing proposals and business pitches from industry leading distributors, Ingram Micro was selected as the KDDI America indirect provider of record.



Ultimately, the outcomes of these exhaustive exercises served as the foundation for content creation and ongoing project/launch governance which included a:

- Go-to-market strategy and execution plan
- Sales enablement strategy and execution plan
- Messaging and positioning framework

Solutions

Once the strategy and messaging were defined, Merit Mile shifted into launch mode, developing the digital, marketing, communications, and suite of sales and marketing collateral in support of the launch. To establish a **differentiated and uniquely ownable digital footprint** for cloud services, www.kddiacloud.com was designed, developed, and hosted by Merit Mile. Owing to KDDI America's strong relationship with Asia-Pacific enterprise customers operating in the US, the mobile-responsive site was designed for localization (L10N) in Japanese. The site's goals are direct: **tell the why KDDI America for cloud services story**, educate on high-value use cases, and provide a simple outlet for lead conversion. At the product marketing level, Merit Mile also authored and produced a [video](#), customer presentations, and collateral [brochures](#).

To empower the KDDI America sales team, Merit Mile, in partnership with Ingram Micro, designed and developed a cloud services sales training program and presented a series of real-time training sessions. Hundreds of sellers from across the US were trained by Merit Mile to:

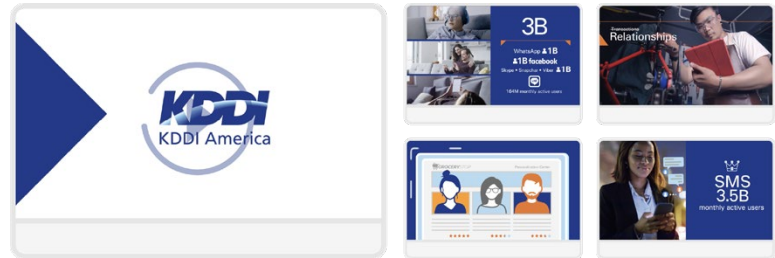
- Understand the KDDI America cloud services strategy
- Learn about the cloud services offerings from Microsoft and AWS
- Discover how their indirect provider, Ingram Micro, could support their efforts
- Identify the existing and new customer opportunities to land, up-sell, and cross sell
- Communicate and position the high-potential use cases for KDDI America cloud services

At launch, Merit Mile introduced the US market to the new KDDI America cloud services program through an integrated communications plan, which included industry and analyst outreach, PR, social media, digital awareness, and customer communications.

Results

Merit Mile led KDDI America through their entire cloud services launch **in only three months**, from the strategy workshops all the way to go-live. Within this time span, key highlights included:

- Led the entire go-to-market plan
- Launched the new www.kddiacloud.com
- Developed a complete marketing and sales bill-of-materials
- Trained approximately 200 KDDI America sellers
- Established market presence with a press releases and media relations
- Drove awareness with digital, social media, and email nurture campaigns



Landing the KDDI America omnichannel business and creating awareness, thought leadership, and pipeline with InfoBip

Situation

While the KDDI America cloud services business unit entered the US market, Merit Mile commenced the research and development phase of the KDDI America omnichannel business in preparation for the next 2020 strategic milestone.

Being at the forefront of various industries is not new to KDDI given their historical relevance in telecommunications and technology. And with a significant footprint as a mobile network operator (MNO) with millions of cellular subscribers in Japan, entering the growing industries of advanced messaging, **rich communication services (RCS)**, and what we'll define as "omnichannel communications" in the US was strategic and important to KDDI America.

However, this was not our first foray into this [burgeoning industry](#). With previous lessons learned, largely related to marketplace education, Merit Mile knew exactly where to start. Industry jargon and acronyms aside, Merit Mile first needed to define or "de-clutter" the category, before carving out KDDI America's role within it. Omnichannel communications or messaging is defined as creating more mobile-centric engagement opportunities for businesses through a **Communications Platform-as-a-Service (CPaaS)**, and KDDI America was looking to showcase its new offerings in its efforts to serve as the hub of this experience.

KDDI America began offering enterprise business customers a leading SaaS API-based advanced messaging solution that is fully customized to help businesses reach their customers with marketing through a litany of multimedia messaging channels. Despite this, KDDI America's suite of omnichannel offerings, along with its unique approach of leveraging digitally transformative cloud-based technologies for customer messaging solutions was not well-known throughout their targeted industries.

41%

B2C organizations say developing a CPaaS strategy is a significant area of focus in the next 12-24 months.

20%-30%

IT budget allocated to CPaaS in the next 12-24 months.

Source: Merit Mile research 2021

With data firmly in hand, Merit Mile focused on building a comprehensive go-to-market strategy and awareness campaign for the KDDI America omnichannel business encompassing editorial, thought leadership, analyst briefings and social media content.

Approach

Merit Mile's strategic approach to achieving awareness objectives for clients is driven by the agency's deep experience in developing messaging strategies, identifying unique industry positioning, and its long history of working with editors, reporters, and analysts. **Merit Mile worked with KDDI America to build its external narrative to ensure** it was emphasizing not only the company's legacy of telecommunications and technology offerings, but also its unique industry offering through the cloud and digital transformation.

Similar to the cloud services initiative, KDDI America needed a CPaaS provider, to build their omnichannel services with and go-to-market with a uniquely differentiated vision of true Dx-to-Cx solutions. After nearly a dozen interviews and partner evaluations, KDDI America selected InfoBip as the omnichannel services delivery partner.



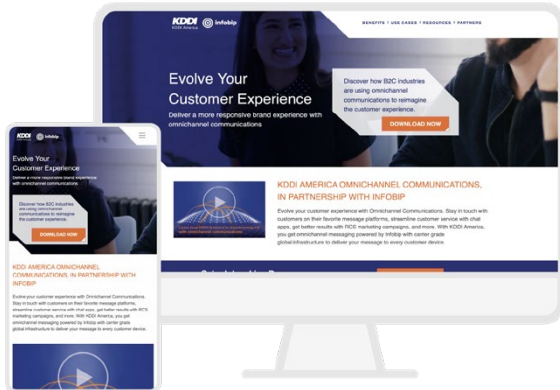
With the vision, plan, and now partner selected, a comprehensive go-to-market strategy, demand generation campaign, and awareness program was built.

Solutions

After solidifying a messaging strategy, communications plan, and targeted media and analysts, Merit Mile issued a press release announcing KDDI America's entrance into the omnichannel communications and advanced messaging space. KDDI America was positioned as providing a uniquely differentiated omnichannel communications solution for businesses in a number of vertical industries.

This successful launch created an entryway for KDDI America to author a series of by-lined thought leadership articles that provided in-depth insight into the issues and challenges businesses face in leveraging mobile messaging to reach consumers. It also paved the way for Merit Mile to embark on a series of analyst briefings with KDDI America leadership about the company's unique industry position and service offerings.

The PR complemented Merit Mile's design and hosting of KDDIAmessaging.com, a site designed to educate and energize businesses and partners interested in working with KDDI America on omnichannel communications initiatives. The site showcases videos, eBook, and infographics about omnichannel communications. Additional thought leadership was created by developing educational content for Tech Target and Tech Forge, heavily trafficked repositories of technology research.



All of this was bookended by Merit Mile running ongoing **demand generation and social media campaigns to drive brand awareness and lead generation**. The campaigns further reinforced KDDI America as a leading authority figure in omnichannel communications on LinkedIn, Twitter, Tech Target, and Tech Forge.

LinkedIn



TechTarget

TechForge

Results

Merit Mile's comprehensive external awareness campaign resulted in the following highlights for KDDI America over 12 weeks:

- Press release secured in leading tech and business media outlets
- By-lined thought leadership articles secured and placed in 10 targeted trade media web sites, including Telecomm Reseller, and Telemedia
- Four analyst briefings completed with IDC, Dell' Oro Group, 451 Research, and Mobile World Live
- More than 325 social media postings on Twitter and LinkedIn
- Total campaign impressions on social media in excess of 35,000
- Approximately 500 total landing page views through social media efforts
- Over 100 marketing qualified leads (MQL) for pipeline development



Enabling KDDI America growth through the power of the channel

Situation

Having successfully launched cloud and omnichannel communication services into the US market, KDDI America set its sight on growth through scale. With Gartner estimating that IT spending will reach a staggering \$3.92 trillion in 2021, with some \$1.4 trillion tied to communication services, KDDI America recognized that in order to capture the biggest slice of the pie, they needed to scale the reach of their salesforce through IT channel partners.

Merit Mile has been providing **strategic advisory, go-to-market strategy, and execution to some of the world's largest and strongest channel programs and partners for over a decade**. From global scale Microsoft and Citrix channel programs to strategic alliance and regional partners, Merit Mile was well positioned to lead KDDI America through the development of their own channel program.



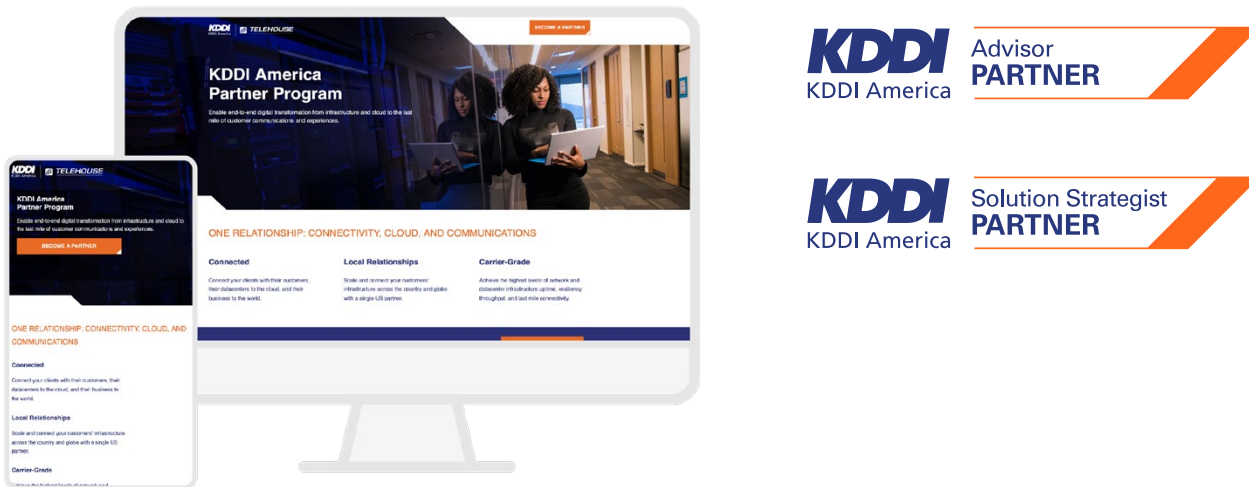
Approach

Merit Mile drew from our proven experience in the IT channel to consult KDDI America on the best practices of developing a compelling channel program that resonates in the marketplace. As a relatively new entrant into the US channel market, KDDI America needed to **instill a message of maturity, margins, and differentiation** in order to attract new partners. Merit Mile advised KDDI America on the programmatic elements of a winning channel program, who to target for recruitment, and ultimately how to launch a channel program. Once the programmatic framework of the KDDI America channel program was defined, Merit Mile turned focus to the go-to-market strategy and launch.



Solutions

As with any new product or service, Merit Mile started at the messaging level, developing a winning value proposition for the channel program. Focus was given to demonstrating how becoming a KDDI America channel partner would dovetail into a channel prospect's existing lines of business, how it would provide a competitive advantage, and of course, what's in it for the partner – growth, revenue, and customers. To showcase the KDDI America channel program, Merit Mile developed the brand identity, brand guidelines, and suite of logos and industry badges for the channel program and associated channel marketing content.



Results

Merit Mile launched the new KDDI America channel program in 2020, less than 3 months from the time of initial planning. The program went live on kddiacloud.com/partners, a site designed by Merit Mile for channel partner recruitment and enablement. Here, prospects learn about the program and service offerings, connect with KDDI America, and begin the program enrollment process. During this time, key highlights included:

- Consulted executives on the KDDI America channel program strategy
- Developed the channel program value proposition and messaging
- Defined the partner type classifications
- Designed the branding and creative
- Launched the [program microsite](#)
- Developed the [program overview brochure](#)

Conclusion

It's no secret that the KDDI America, [Channel Ready!](#) and Merit Mile teams accomplished quite a bit in nine months, without letting aggressive timelines nor a global healthcare crisis impact our efforts.

Collectively, we learned many valuable business and marketing lessons in this process. Mainly that developing, launching, and landing enterprise-class strategic initiatives on time is largely reliant on the orchestration and synthesis of proper planning and proper execution.

In stand alone or integrated fashion, Merit Mile remains proud of the accomplishments with KDDI America at the program milestone launch level. But even more importantly, the strategy yield has afforded KDDI America a uniquely differentiated and holistically connected value proposition for many years to come. We look forward to KDDI America evolving these freshly launched business assets into positions of sustained category leadership for many years to come.

For more insights or to start a conversation with Merit Mile, please email us [here](#).



About Merit Mile

Merit Mile is an award-winning integrated marketing, PR and advertising agency. As a team, we're a resourceful and energetic collection of business-minded strategists, eccentric artists, and technology enthusiasts, passionate about building brands, generating leads, and measuring the impact of our work. Our approach is deeply rooted in first understanding the business model. Stripping brands down to their essence and identifying the "why" then enables the type of positioning and true differentiation that fuels creative, PR and interactive execution. This standard rhythm of business is a fundamental aspect of every Merit Mile client engagement, regardless of industry or focus.

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