



Your New App: where do you start?

Neil Edwards

You've decided an app's the next step, but where do you start? There are so many fun and clever functionalities you can add to your list of app must-haves, but the key is to identify what's relevant and ultimately value-adding for your customers.

So before you hire a developer or agency to start building your app, here are some key considerations to help you plan your features list.

1. Who is your target audience?

Before any development plan takes place, think about your customers and prospects. How many use smartphones and how many would download your app? If the answer is not many, you might want to consider investing your budget, and time, elsewhere in the business plan - perhaps mobile advertising is the happy middle ground.

2. Think about the services needed by your customers and prioritise them

Do they need timely industry news or a useful tool? A finance company might think about a repayment calculator, an accountant could provide tax calculators. What could you provide? How about alerting them of upcoming events or deadlines? Perhaps they need the ability to transfer payment online?

A restaurant, for example, could provide customers with the opportunity to pay their bill via their app, making the whole interaction a lot quicker - something we all desire.

Be disciplined in your choice of features by always keeping the needs of your customers and prospects in mind.

3. It shouldn't be a replica of your website

Focus on relevant content that you can't necessarily get from your website. This will incentivise users to download it.

Keeping as much content within the app as possible has the added benefit of it being viewable without an internet connection - something that can be extremely helpful when a connection is out of reach.

You can always add a menu button back to your mobile friendly website for users to visit your site as and when they want to.

4. Push notifications

These are designed to keep users up to date with the latest news and offers relevant to them. They are free for users to receive and can be displayed as a message or a simple update against your app icon.

The higher the level of personalisation, timeliness and relevancy of your messages, the more receptive your audience will be. They may even begin to look forward to them.

Be aware however, no matter how tempting it may seem to flood this channel, sending unsolicited messages, or spam, can result in your app being removed from the app store!

So, really plan your communications thoroughly and get it right first time so you're not alienating users and risking your app being deleted altogether.

5. Promotion

Building your App is only the start - you then need to encourage people to download it.

You can incorporate banners on your website and email campaigns, add QR codes to printed literature and share it extensively in your social media updates. A really good app could attract the attention of the review sites. These sites will receive thousands of solicitations a day, but don't let this discourage you if you think you have something valuable to share.

Keep an eye on your analytics, if downloads are slow or drop off, review the content of your app or up the ante with the promotion.

6. Final checks

Make time for a final team discussion to ensure all the unnecessary features have been identified and removed from the plan. It might be possible to add some of these as an update later down the line.

Remember, if your app is relevant and answers a genuine customer need, not only will you receive more downloads, but you'll have opened a new channel of communication via quality content, alerts and notifications - a win win!

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About the Author

Neil Edwards is a Chartered Marketer and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. He has worked on a number of well-known brands in the UK and overseas during a varied career with The Royal Bank of Scotland Group. He is an accomplished speaker and blogger as well as being a CIM mentor for careers and marketing qualifications. Neil now owns and runs The Marketing Eye Limited, a results-driven, inbound marketing agency.

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