

COLUMNS

## How will you support your new mobile app after launch?

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Are you ready to build or launch a new mobile application? Keep in mind that a mobile app is only as good as the number of people returning to it.

In other words, you can have the prettiest mobile app in the world, but if no one ever uses it, then it is not helping you achieve your business goals.

So how do you make sure that people return to your app, time and time again?

One way is by planning ahead of time for how you will support your app after it launches.

The best way to do this is to build a support plan for your app in advance. But even if you have already launched your mobile app, or are in the process of building it right now, it is not too late. You can still plan for app support, using these simple guidelines.

Plan for life after the new mobile app launches

Too often, we see our customers launch a mobile app with absolutely zero planning for what comes next.

Meet with the key stakeholders at your company before app development, if possible, and determine your business goal for this app, just like for any new product release. Who will use this app? How will they use it? What would make it a success? You might set a goal for:

Bringing new customers to your store

Winning brand loyalty

Selling new products

Remember that designing and creating the mobile app is only the beginning. It is what comes next that counts.

Get everyone on board

Many times, a mobile app fails simply because all departments at the company are not ready for it. Before building your app, take an honest assessment of your company. Ask yourself:

Is my organization ready for this?

Which departments need to be involved?

Do they currently support this initiative? If not, why?

Are the right procedures in place for launch?

Put the right procedures in place

Once people are using the app, who will handle all the new responsibilities that come with sales and customer service requests?

Brainstorm a list of possible situations that will come up, and map out who in your organization will handle each one.

Remember, this is not just a marketing initiative or an IT initiative it is a new product that requires the support of the entire company. You will also need the full involvement of customer service, operations and accounts receivable.

Create a communications calendar

A good mobile app communicates regularly with users. Even if they do not use the app, you can still nudge them with push notifications.

Create a weekly or monthly communications calendar for engaging each target user. Plan when you will interact with each group and what you will say. Ask yourself:

Who am I targeting with each message?

What will I say?

When will I deliver this message?

What method will I use to communicate it?

Your calendar does not need to be fancy. It can be as simple as:

April 5

Females, Ages 16-21

15 percent off all shoes

Push notification

April 12

Males, ages 31-36

Reminder spring sale on 4/20

Text message

Optimize your app with fresh content

Too often, companies build a mobile app and then it sits on the shelf for a year or longer before realizing that no one is using it.

If an app is not regularly optimized with fresh content such as products, images, cool functions, rewards or news, then users avoid it.

Create a content plan up to one year in advance, and decide which content you will change, and when.

Quarterly changes are good, but monthly or weekly updates are better.

Measure your usage rate

Usage rate is the ultimate measure of an app's success. The return rate of users is also important. You should know from reports:

How many users are interacting with the app?

How often do they interact with it?

What content do they interact with most?

Do not be afraid to hire a managed service provider to do the legwork

We know it is hard to manage the day-to-day functions of a mobile app, especially when you are already full with regular job duties.

If you are too busy or do not have the knowledge to support the app after launch, do not be shy about hiring a managed service provider to do the legwork for you.

Yes, this service does exist. A good managed service provider can:

Create a communications plan

Refresh your content and design

Deliver messages to key end users

Execute a rewards program

Monitor user engagement

Measure effectiveness of a communications program

Even if you think your mobile app has totally failed, it is not hopeless. It is never too late to increase engagement by putting the right support in place now.

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