

COLUMNS

Forgetting user engagement during app development leads to failure

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We see a new application launching practically daily. With some, we see the hype, but then they disappear. Why? This pop and fizzles is, in part, due to the fact that most app publishers forget to include user engagement within the app development process.

An app needs to engage with the user, add value and become a part of their lives, leading to ongoing usage or purchases.

If engagement is an afterthought, or simply forgotten, your app launch is likely to result in bad reviews, lost growth opportunities, bad press and angry users who disengage and eventually uninstall the app.

Pitfalls of forgetting engagement

The development process is just that: developing both the code and how users will interact and use your app. Thinking about engagement as an afterthought is a failure, resulting in:

Lots of downloads, but not a lot of usage

According to a Nielsen analysis, United States smartphone users accessed 26.7 apps per month, on average, in 2014, and this is only increasing. That is a great opportunity for any app to be successful, but if your app is not keyed into engagement or initiating the next interaction, it will not be used.

Poor push messaging opt-in rates

If you request permission for push notifications, user location and other information accessed before the user understands what you have to offer, you will lose that user. Ask for permission when it is relevant to the user's action.

No transactions seven days after install

Our data shows that seven days is the average time between download and first purchase. This critical time after download is a prime opportunity to encourage mobile engagement using email, push notifications and in-app messages to maximize the number of engagements and boost first-time purchases.

Customers choose to use the mobile Web version of your site instead of your app

If your app users prefer to use your mobile Web site rather than your app, this may be a sign that you have not

achieved parity between your mobile Web and native app experience. Flaws such as this will greatly reduce overall app engagement as the value of the app has been compromised.

You forgot engagement, now what?

Do not worry. There is a fix. It is not too late. You can create an engagement plan after the app has gone live. Start with the basics and then create three to five goals tied to revenue-driven checkpoints.

Here are some example goals for a retail mobile app:

50 percent of user visits result in 5-10 viewed items

75 percent of active users share an item on social media

75 percent of registered app users are receiving promotional emails

50 percent of active users have placed an item in a shopping cart

5 percent of users complete a purchase

Create automations to meet these goals. Test and tweak your marketing content and timing to achieve optimal results.

If your app is in the design stage, simply integrate this approach into your development process.

Making pre- or post-app development work

There are a few steps to take with making engagement work:

Break down the business critical paths of your app

Converting anonymous users to known users is a key path to success

Leverage data from anonymous users, such as: OS type, time zone, etc.

Trigger in-app messages which encourage push notifications, opt-in, and allow marketing platforms to target individual users

Drive users to account creation using social networks

Unify existing email clients with mobile app data

Reward, encourage and delight your premium users with the goal of increasing the rate of engagement

When unifying existing email clients, you can continue using push notifications to highlight the benefits of repeat purchases (loyalty), new products and additional savings.

It is highly recommended that this process be applied before the launch of your app, as you will otherwise spend more money trying to catch up with engagement.

TECHNOLOGY HAS enabled us to connect and communicate, and mobile is an opportunity for deep engagement with the goal of transforming a user's experience.

Mobile is the only medium than has the power to span generations, geographies and socio-economic boundaries.

Through well-planned app engagement, app publishers can create an experience that creates loyal and repeat customers.

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