

COLUMNS

How to successfully navigate the world of app creation

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By [Matt Lehman](#)



It does not take an expert to tell you that the mobile industry is growing at a rapid pace.

The number of mobile media users grew by 19 percent in the last year alone. Today, more than 116 million people nationwide use their mobile phones to browse the Web, access applications and download content.

Aptly said

While hearing those numbers is music to the ears of mobile developers, it also makes for a crowded and competitive marketplace.

Since the first app was launched in 2007, 40 billion iOS and Android apps have been downloaded.

The massive and rapidly growing market appears to be on an upward trajectory, with no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

This provides new challenges for brands to engage with consumers in unique ways via mobile apps and devices by producing interactive and practical content and functionality that meets a customer's needs for immediacy.

Building a successful app is no easy task.

In a mobile-oriented world, marketers need to anticipate what consumers want before they are even aware of their needs. App developers must be in the driver's seat, leading the next generation of mobile innovation.

Below are a few guiding principles to successfully pilot the world of app creation:

- Provide exclusive content on other mediums

According to mediabistro.com's AllTwitter, 86 percent of people use their smartphones while they watch TV.

Brands can use applications such as Shazam and QR Codes to interact with customers and offer them exclusive, downloadable content while they are engaging with these other mediums.

Progressive added Shazam tags to commercials, enabling us to interact with customers by providing free branded content.

Instagram also recently created QR code magazine ads made from user-submitted photos.

- Think about the features

Use the phone's innate features to simplify processes.

Progressive's mobile app offers a feature called Image Capture that enables consumers to get an insurance quote using the camera on their mobile phone. They simply take a picture of their driver's license, Vehicle Identification Number or existing insurance ID card, and the app auto-populates the necessary fields to get a quote.

Also, think about inherent viral and shareable content that can create buzz. These can include photos, messages, videos and location-based services.

- Know what your audience wants

With so many apps in the marketplace discoverability is a significant issue.

According to ABI Research, global app downloads are expected to hit 44 billion by 2016, compared to 9 billion in 2010.

To avoid getting lost in the clutter, it is important to create an app that meets customers' demands rather than simply creating a promotional tool. Only build an app when it addresses an existing customer need.

- Create the lifestyle

Make the app a simple, quick and instantaneous experience.

Eliminate unnecessary features, excessive screens and sign-ins. Mobile users demand quick information on-the-go. Fit into that lifestyle by making your most important content highly visible, engaging and easy to access.

With our apps, you can pay a bill, file a claim, or get an auto quote in minutes.

THE FUTURE OF mobile will continue to link human interactions with products and brands.

As we move into the next generation of mobile, consider the ways you can use the latest technologies such as voice activation, the phone's built-in camera, GPS , cloud storage and Wi-Fi to create apps that are simple to use and meet users' needs.

In the end, remember to mobilize your current offerings, not just miniaturize.

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