

How to Build An App in 7 Steps

Your guide to building a killer app that will sky-rocket your bottom line.



Introduction

You've got a great idea. Now it's time to turn it into a killer app. But where to start? Who to engage? How do you determine a 'good' developer from a 'meh' one? Most importantly, how will you attract - and retain - users? (And how do you ensure you don't go broke doing so?)

You've come to the right place. In this **7 Step Guide to Building a Killer App**, you'll get an actionable checklist of steps to take, questions to ask, decisions to consider and tips to get your app ready for market. Whether your app is intended to make your business money, save money or make your customer experience easier, we've got you covered.

Let's start.

1

What will your app do?

Great ideas do NOT always equal great apps. Just scroll through any of the 5 MILLION apps currently available on the App Store and Google Play and you'll see a bunch of vanity projects going nowhere, fast.

Before you even think of design or launch strategies, you need to nail the basics:

- What exactly do you want your app to do?
- What problem is it going to solve?
- Who is your target audience?
- What pain points does your app solve for your users? (And are those pain points harsh enough to make them download your app?)
- Who is your competition? What can you do better? Why will users choose and use your app?

Do not skip this step! Do not pass Go, do not collect \$200, do not believe that you already 'know' this stuff. The finer details will trip you up. They will contribute to scope creep. They will delay the launch of your app when you have to re-work critical elements. Take the time, do this properly, and you're one step closer to fast-tracking your app development.

Tip: Get our [App Planning Worksheet](#) to start building a rock-solid app development plan. Then come back here for the next step.

2

Who are you building it for?

Develop a persona for your ideal user - how old are they, what do they do, what's their family situation, when will they use the app, where will they use the app, what are their favourite apps, what triggers will make them act, where do they hang out (online and IRL), are they early adopters or laggards, Apple or Android lovers, do they already engage with your brand or are they new prospects?

The more you can imagine your target using the app, the better you will plan the design, navigation, on-boarding, features and marketing.

3

What are their user habits?

Consider when your users are online. Early in the morning? At night watching TV? At work in their lunch hour or on their commute? Thinking about the environment in which your customer will use your app influences **EVERYTHING**.

Do you need to make some features available offline? Do you need to compete with kids-dinner-TV-phone calls for busy mums?

Are your users rampant social media scrollers? You'll need high impact, instant gratification design for these goldfish (BTW, did you know humans now have a SHORTER attention span than a goldfish? The **average attention span is 8 seconds** - can your users connect with your brand, absorb your message and do whatever your app needs them to do in 8 seconds? This is your holy grail.)

Nail down these user habits and you'll seamlessly integrate your app and usage requirements into your customers' lives. And that's waaaay easier than trying to create new behavioural patterns.

So what does that look like?

If you're targeting mums who are online in bed at 6am, you'll want an app that works just as well with volume off as with sound on. If you're targeting builders on a job site, your design will need to be simple to use, with straight-forward menus and large button displays so they can use it in just a few seconds and get straight back to work. If you're targeting existing users, let them save account details to prevent logging in each time. Or offer coupons / codes to incentivise additional purchases.

4

Decide the critical features for your MVP

Do NOT, we repeat do NOT wait until you have a fully fledged, perfect, expansive app to launch.

Think of your app as a phased project - you want to scope the entirety at the start, but focus first on delivering an MVP (minimum viable product). You need enough juice to let the user get a feel for what you're producing and how the app will benefit their experience, without overcapitalising on an app you've not yet market tested.

So get hypercritical. List all the features you want your app to include. Then prioritise them according to importance, impact and innovation. Then review again. You want to hone this list to maximise your budget efficiency - this is where consulting a specialist app developer can pay huge dividends. You want to spend smart money up front to attract users and get you on the path to monetising your app, without spending so much that you never break even. And you want to know which features need to be built earlier than others, so you're not trying to retro-fit tech into an existing platform later on #expensive.

Check out our [MVP planner here](#) to get clear on critical features for launch

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Native or hybrid?

Now you need to decide which platform to build your app on: native, hybrid (or web?). Does it really make a difference? And how do you know which platform is best for your business?

First you need to understand the difference between native and hybrid. Native apps are built natively in Android or iOS, which can improve reliability (fewer crashes), speed and access to better technology (newer releases). However this comes at a cost - native apps can be more expensive, as you need to develop a code base for each platform.

Hybrid apps can be more cost effective - built for both Android and iOS on a single codebase so you save time and money. Facebook and Google have developed their own [open-source](#) frameworks for this that any business can adopt while [React Native](#) is an extremely popular solution built and maintained by Facebook. Many start-ups build their initial apps on a hybrid framework to get to market more cost effectively and establish proof of concept, migrating to a native solution later.

And then there's web apps - a whole different ball game. Web apps are accessible through a URL, such as the web versions of Facebook or Twitter. Often users will prefer to use a mobile app over a web app, but in some instances (such as business management tools, financial calculators or document portals), a web app is a better solution.

The choice of platform will depend on the intended use, user behaviour and preference, and budget for your app development. Talk to a specialist app developer who builds in all three environments to establish the best solution for your needs.

For more on choosing the best platform for your app, check out our [blog post](#) on Native vs Hybrid Apps.

6

Appoint an expert team

Specialist apps require specialist devs. You need a team who can translate your idea to a killer app, so they need the technical nous to deliver, the commercial experience to deliver ROI and the consumer focus to build an app that doesn't just work, but which users want to use.

How to sort the 'good' from the 'meh' in the app development space? Check out our [5 Questions to Ask Your App Developer](#) before you spend a cent to avoid costly - and time-consuming - mistakes.

7

Testing, testing

Testing is almost more important than building when it comes to apps.

It's obvious that you need to bug test for flaws in APIs or functionality, but don't skimp on the user testing. It's not enough to just build an app, you need to build an app that works seamlessly for your user. Watch their navigation pathways. See where they get stuck. Beta test extensively, ask for feedback, and watch for trends in the responses to highlight vulnerabilities in your app or identify new features that could transform the usability of your project.

Apptivate! Launch your app

You did it. You completed your app, submitted it to the App Store and then . . . nothing. Now what? Don't deceive yourself - the hard work is only just starting. Bringing an app to market, attracting users and retaining those users is hard graft. There are over 5 million apps available for download, and the average user has 80 apps on their phone. How will you get cut-through? With a killer launch strategy.

You need to create demand before the app is live. Build a wait list for the beta version to amp up the urgency and exclusivity (it's called scarcity of supply - not everyone can get it, so everyone wants it). Create an explainer video to sell your story on social media in 30 seconds. Integrate a targeted PR strategy. Advertise. Blog. Get industry stakeholders and influencers on board. Your app deserves a whole marketing strategy of its own - after all, you've invested serious dough in creating a high-value asset for your brand. Don't be shy in pushing it as far and wide as you can.

Tip: If you need support, [talk to the team at Apptivate](#). We specialise in go-to-market strategies to fast-track user adoption for your app.

Additional Resources:

Get our [App Planning Worksheet](#) to start building a rock-solid app development plan.

Already got it? Don't miss our free [MVP Planner](#) to work out your critical features for launch.

Check out our [5 Questions to Ask Your App Developer](#).

Just want to get started? [Talk to us](#) about your idea and we'll turn it into a killer app.