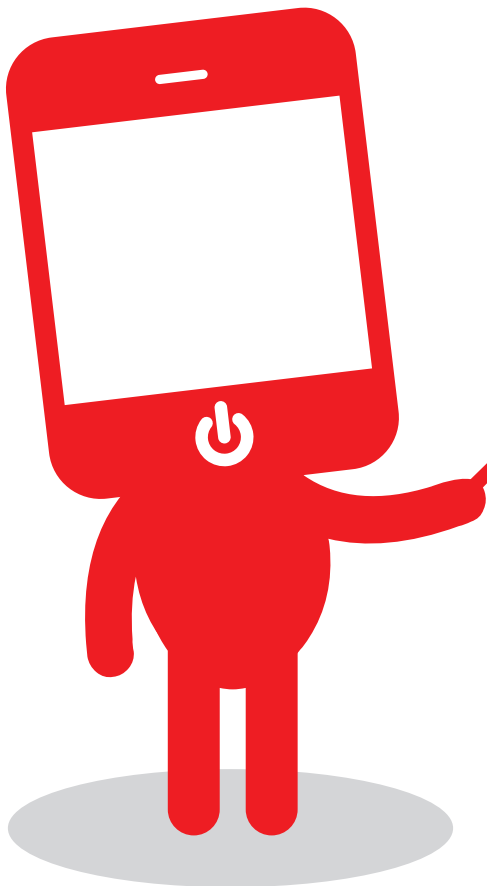




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going mobile

Second Edition

a how-to guide

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ABOUT US

ABOUT Red ANT

Established in 1999, Red Ant has one clear aim – to provide clients with all the expertise, talent and intelligence they need to engage effectively with their customers through digital channels.

With a focus on strategy and delivering measurable ROI, Red Ant's team of in-house experts has a reputation for excellence when it comes to planning, creating and delivering world-class digital campaigns.

To find out more, visit www.redant.com

Red ANT MOBILE

Red Ant Mobile enable businesses to take full advantage of the rapidly evolving mobile market. We provide a full range of services from expert advice on mobile strategy to the development and delivery of custom mobile applications.

Red Ant Mobile apps cover everything from small promotional tools to fully-fledged retail and social experiences. We also licence our own mobile commerce platform, specifically designed to allow existing retailers to offer a mobile storefront with minimal effort.

Key ANTs



Dan Hartveld – Director of Mobile

I'm a trusted expert on mobile strategy with a proven track record in real-world business and enterprise integration. I co-developed the UK's first grocery shopping application and I've worked with a number of top-tier retailers and FTSE 100 businesses, helping them take a share of this exciting new channel through innovative applications, mobile-specific online presence, and tightly executed mobile strategy.



Alex Sbardella – Mobile Products Manager

I'm an expert in mobile strategy, mobile interface and architecture design, and I've worked with clients across a broad range of industries, from retail to leisure and education. I specialise in creating concepts and user experiences tailored specifically for the mobile platform as well as day-to-day management and delivery of enterprise-level projects.



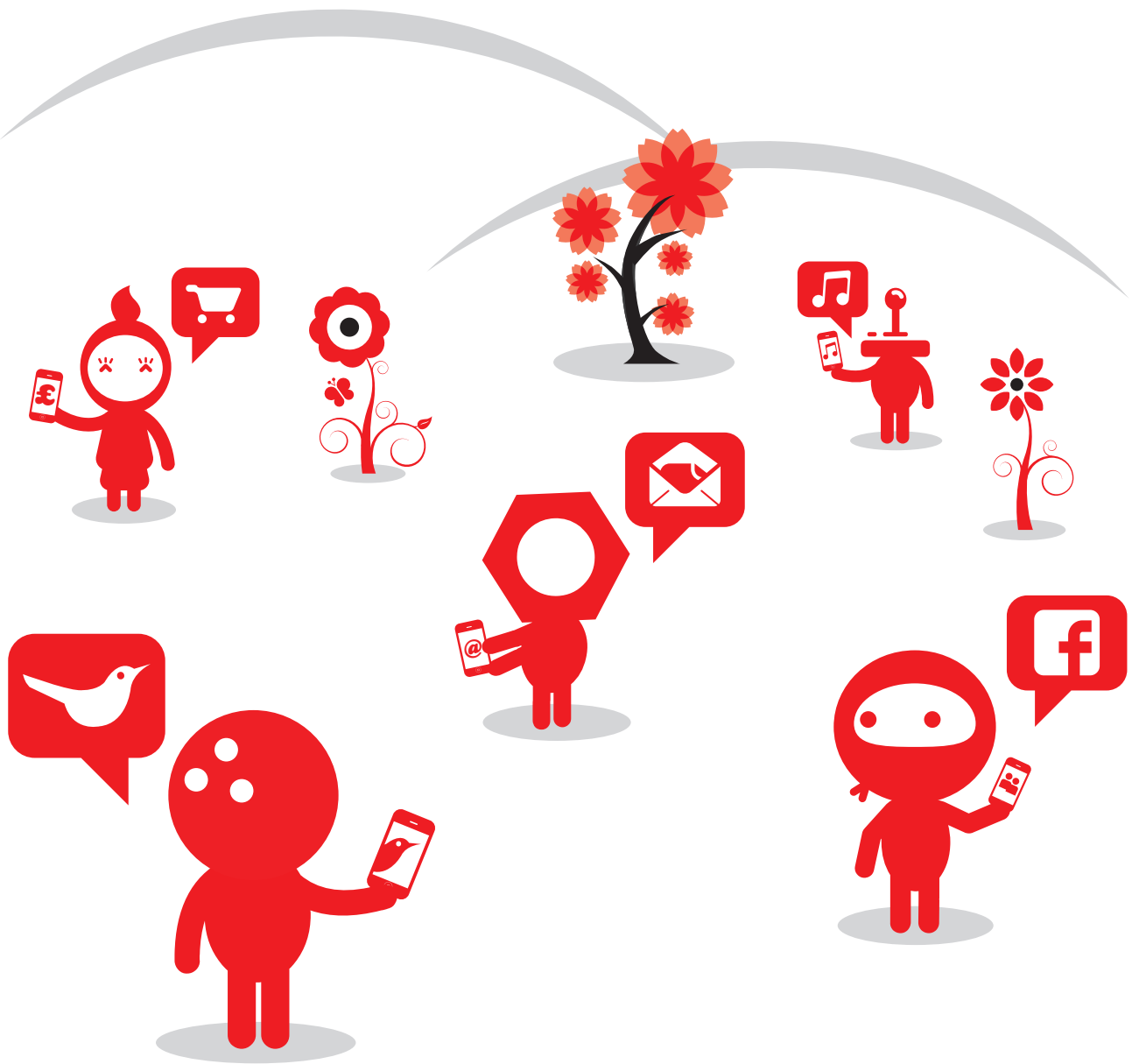
Dan Mortimer – CEO

With over 11 years' experience in the digital industry, my knowledge of the online space enables me to think creatively and challenge briefs. My passion is strategy and showing how digital can open new opportunities for clients. I love working with the team to come up with ideas to push brands for maximum exposure and return through digital communication and engagement, utilising the correct tools for the campaigns.



Elisa Harca – Client Services Director

I have spent the past ten years being excited by new ways for brands to engage with their audiences. Having worked on B2B and B2C clients (through-the-line), covering a broad range of verticals including fashion, beauty & wellbeing, financial services, travel & lifestyle, technology and automotive, I have come to understand that the key to offering added value to a client's business is not only through ideas and innovation, but also through a solid understanding of what matters to their brand and their customers. My team and I always immerse ourselves in our clients' business and work together to develop relevant marketing strategies that achieve the best results.



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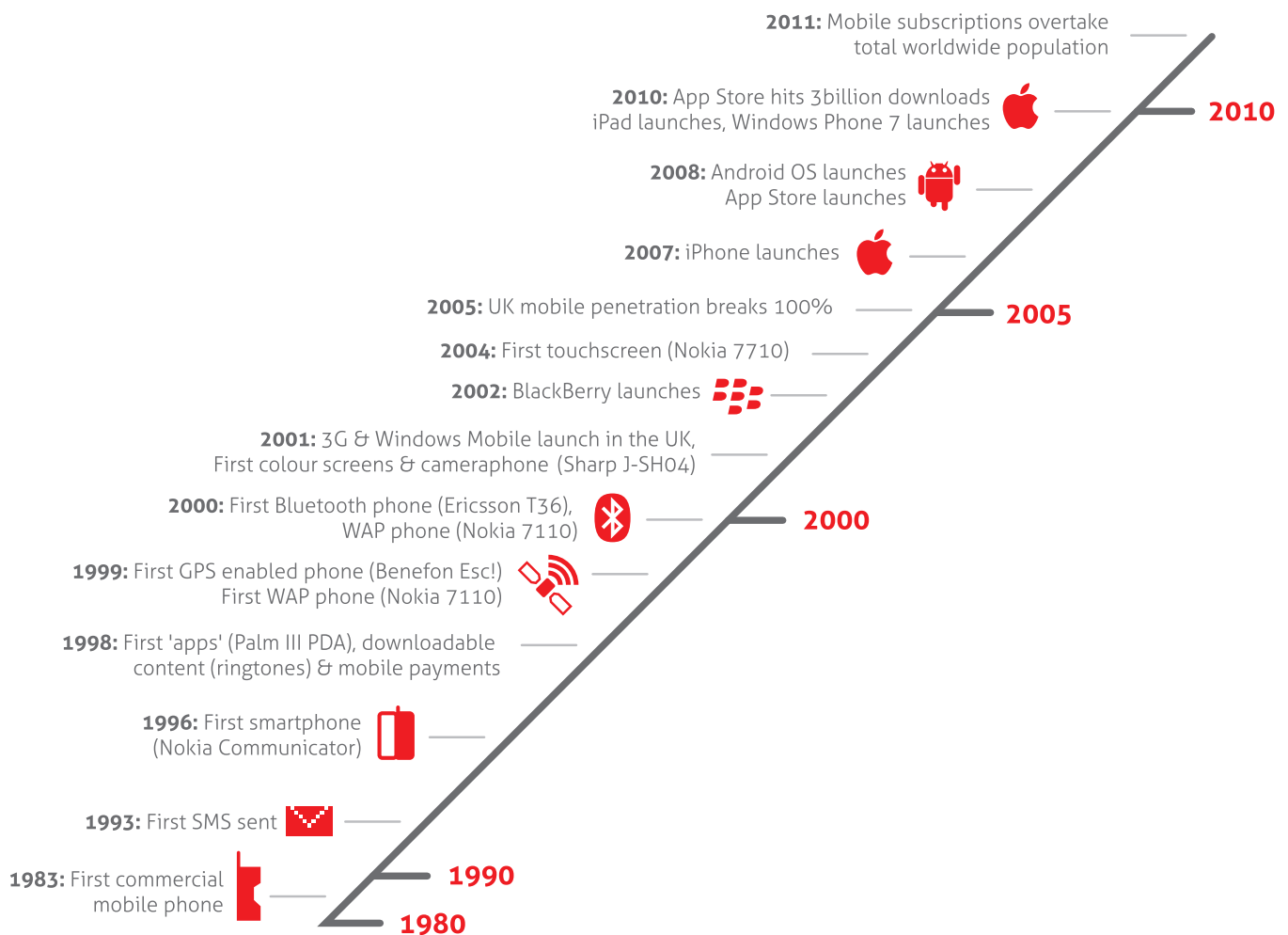
mobile landscape

MOBILE LANDSCAPE

WHY IS MOBILE BIG NEWS?

Since the emergence of the first WAP phone in 1999, pundits both inside and outside the industry have been predicting the advent of the 'year of the mobile'. While there have undoubtedly been market-changing advances in mobile technology over the intervening years which have caused a great deal of discussion in professional and specialist circles, it's only in the last two years or so that mobile developments have started to reach, inspire and change the behaviour of the public at large.

A number of factors have contributed to this shift in attitude. A fusion of design, functionality, accessibility and affordability has effectively brought about a 'tipping point', where mobile phones have not only become almost universally adopted as communication devices, they are also essential lifestyle accessories and a gateway to retail, leisure, business and educational activities.



Timeline – mobile phone milestones

HARDWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Advances in mobile technology have accelerated beyond the expectations of those involved in hardware development. Users now take for granted SMS, MMS and the ability to take photographs or listen to music with their phone. Emails, internet access and specifically-designed mobile applications are fast becoming standard, and user expectations are increasing with each new phone/operating system release.

Mobile hardware has reached the point where it can meet and exceed those user expectations – and this is largely down to the advent of the widely-adopted smartphone.

INTERFACE DESIGN

For the user, perhaps the most significant developments in mobile technology – because they are the most visible – are in the field of interface design.

User interface v user experience

Early mobile phones offered a user *interface* – access to the information needed to make a call or send a text and little else. Today, smartphones in particular aim to give a full *user experience* – web access, emailing, apps, photography and video. This is now such an integral part of mobile development that getting the right expertise in this area is essential for success.

And, of course, touchscreen technology has had a permanent impact on the way users interact with their phones. The resulting fluidity of use across all phone functions has fundamentally altered the expectations of users across the board, whatever mobile platform they prefer to use.

This has driven the development of mobile-specific web experiences and applications. Through early establishment of strict criteria for the development and implementation of iPhone apps, Apple has succeeded in ensuring that its clearly defined set of rules for UI have been accepted by users and the industry alike as something of a standard.

Of course, though the basic rules for mobile user experience are starting to crystallise – and we will explore exactly what these are later – there is still room for debate over the best approach for businesses. Mobile websites which have been optimised for viewing on smartphones can work very well if developed in the right way – for example, a number of national newspapers and retailers have chosen this route to get their product to customers. Equally, apps designed for specific mobile platforms, such as Ocado's shopping app on iPhone and Android, have been proven to engage existing customers and stimulate the interest of new ones.

PERCEPTION – HOW THE iPhone CHANGED EVERYTHING

When Apple introduced the first iPhone on 9th January 2007, it set the ball rolling for a number of changes within the industry:

- Media interest in mobile technology exploded
- Mobile users were presented with a product which rapidly became an object of desire for which they were prepared to queue overnight. Though mobile phones had been seen as status symbols in the past, the level of interest in this particular model was unprecedented.
- Apple's competitors faced a game-changing industry development which caused them to think differently about their own development paths
- The App Store offered users the first fluid, secure marketplace for discovery and delivery of enhanced mobile experiences, fully integrated with the phone itself

Until that point, the initial excitement about mobile communication had reduced to background noise – in technological terms it was yesterday's news. Users had settled into a routine of upgrading their phone every 18 months with no landmark changes in either service or the phones themselves. Just ten years after the first mobile handset boom the market was in danger of becoming stagnant.

Apple used its status as an innovator and, to a certain degree, rule-breaker to shake up the world of mobile development, leveraging its interface expertise to revolutionise and simplify human-computer interaction in the mobile space. Apps allowed third parties, both professional and amateur, to make software for phones easily. This existed pre-iPhone with Java apps – but the introduction of an advanced user interface framework allowed for the creation of user-friendly software at relatively low cost. This rapidly increased the scope of tasks that could be achieved on any single phone and opened it up to global level innovation.

It used to be that users purchased a phone with a certain list of features, and that was all you got; now there were devices which not only came out-of-the-box with most of the functions expected of a top-of-the-range mobile, but also offered bespoke applications to bolt on almost any functionality you could think of. This caused users to wholeheartedly embrace the idea of actively purchasing additional functionality to enhance their mobile experience for business, home, shopping and leisure.

Naturally, the public's renewed interest in mobile phones in general, and the iPhone in particular, stimulated the press, and coverage of all things Apple took off in a significant way. It's now apparent in media circles that anything Apple does is likely to generate headlines – and the level of interest has yet to wane.

Significantly for the mobile market, competitors in the smartphone space were also propelled into action by the fact that Apple had stolen a march on mobile development. Recognising that iPhone users very quickly took to the complete user experience and ecosystem offered by their smartphone, developers involved in designing for Android and Windows mobile platforms focused their attention on replicating and, where possible, improving this experience.

The end result of this cumulative activity on the part of the mobile industry as a whole, mobile users and the media, is a keen ongoing interest in all aspects of mobile development. Mobile is a hot topic, and that's unlikely to change in the near future.

Cost – the democratisation of communication

Another defining factor in the proliferation of mobile devices is just how inexpensive they are. Advances in mobile technology have led to cheaper handsets and a broader range of networks, and the past few years have seen prices for both phones and contracts significantly reduce, as supermarkets, music outlets and other retailers have invaded the territory once occupied solely by specialist mobile phone shops.

The rich user experience referred to above can come free of charge if users are prepared to sign up for an appropriate contract. In the UK in particular, network providers are generous with their phone offers, call and data allowances. All the advantages offered by a smartphone are now, theoretically at least, in everyone's reach, and user expectations are unlikely to revert to less comprehensive services or more restrictive phone functionality. Smartphones have also absorbed the functions of many other portable devices, increasing their relative value to the user.

"Why join the navy if you can be a pirate?"

Steve Jobs - CEO, Apple



INFRASTRUCTURE

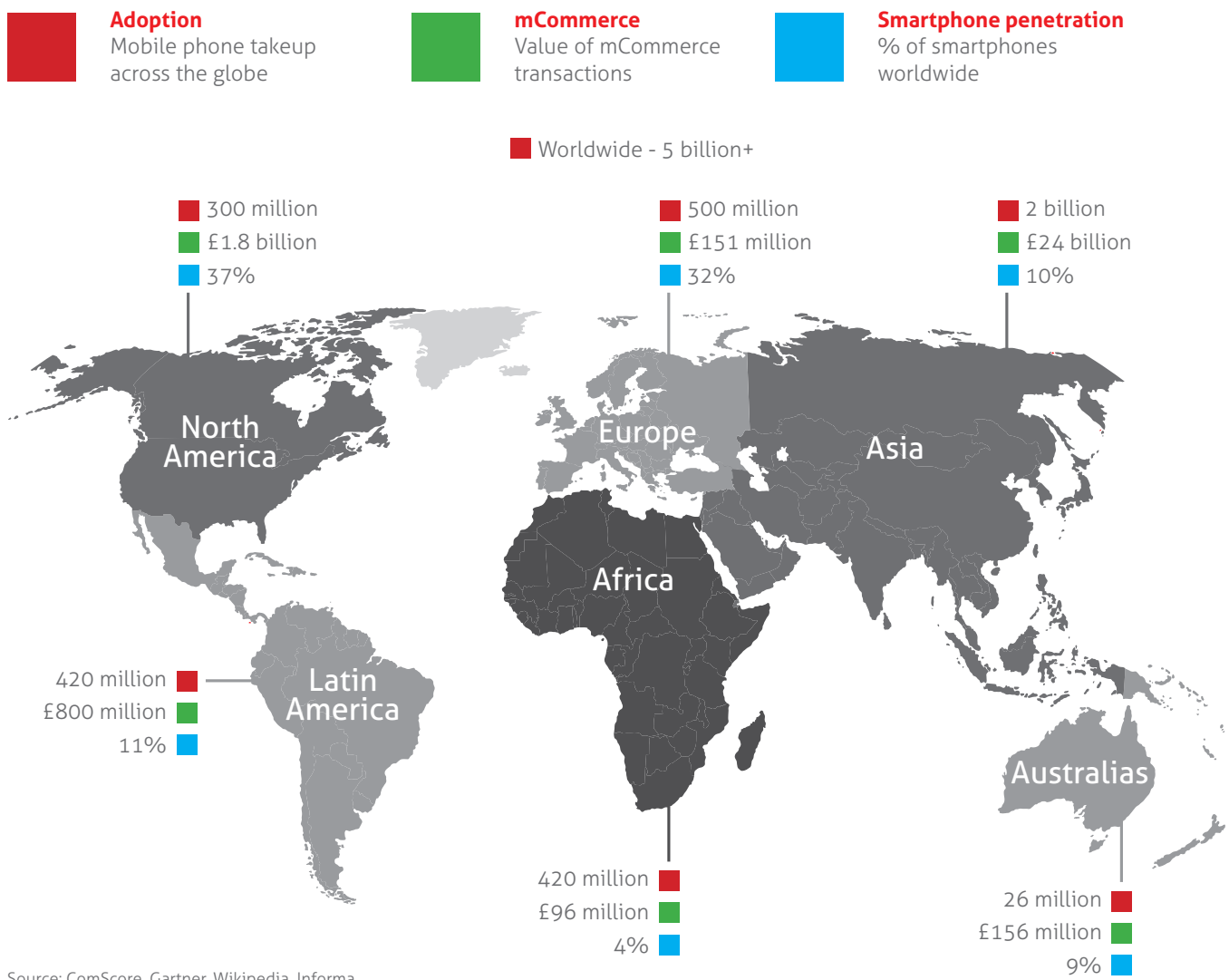
None of the advances in mobile technology would have been possible without major changes in infrastructure. The introduction of 3G networks specified that 3G systems must allow the simultaneous use of speech and data services, and provide consistent peak data rates. All networks now have significant 3G coverage, and this has paved the way for smartphone development and the level of service and functionality expected by users today.

The widespread availability of Wi-Fi has also shaped mobile development and use. Users are able to take advantage of this at home and on the move – a growing number of hotels, pubs and fast food outlets are offering free Wi-Fi as they know it attracts customers who have an increasing desire to stay connected, whether for personal or business purposes.

This widespread, easy access to data means that there are thousands of potential customers willing and able to make purchases at any time and in any location – they expect to be able to get what they need via their mobiles, and businesses with well thought out mobile strategies are in an ideal position to exploit this.

THE FIGURES BEHIND THE FACTS

To illustrate the significance of mobile and its growth over the last few years, it's worth looking at some of the figures which inform the market as of 2010.



Source: ComScore, Gartner, Wikipedia, Informa

What does THIS all mean?

It's clear that businesses with serious plans for the future cannot afford to ignore mobile, or become complacent about it and take short cuts to mobile engagement. However, as with all emerging channels to market, the field is currently wide open. While this offers a degree of freedom and room for innovation, it's not always easy to identify where to start, or who to trust when it comes to developing mobile for your business. In a new and relatively unproven industry, there are many self-styled 'experts' who are very willing to offer 'hit and run' solutions which could prove to be costly both financially and from a brand perspective.

Who should have a mobile strategy?

The straightforward answer is: all businesses with a desire to attract and keep customers, and increase revenue in the future. However, there are four key points to consider before deciding if the time is right for your company, and committing to a mobile strategy:

- Do you have a robust web presence? Mobile strategies rarely work in isolation, unless they are specific to the channel – for example, FourSquare and its use of geolocation. If you have a mature website which is proven to work efficiently, it's a good measure of overall data health. As there is likely to be a degree of crossover between mobile and your website, it also gives a reliable indication of what you're likely to be able to achieve from mobile.
- Are your business model and processes suited to mobile? For example, would you be in a practical position to fulfil orders arriving from a mobile site, based on experience from your website? Even if an app is standalone – a game, for example – it may need access to your data for an effective call to action.
- Is your target audience comfortable with mobile? The statistics show that most of those who engage with a brand online are very likely to move naturally to mobile, but this may not always be the case. Saga, for example, has a website and has set up its own social networking area for people aged 50+, but it does not use Twitter, Facebook or mobile to connect with its audience, as this is not how they prefer to interact with the brand and each other.
- Where is your competition? Will you be leading the pack, or playing catch-up? And if you're not the first to market: how will you differentiate your mobile offering, what can you learn from their experiences (both good and bad) and how can you improve what has gone before?

At its core, mobile is simply another channel for business (albeit one which currently offers unique opportunities), and it should be treated as such. Provided businesses have a clear idea of their brand, what they want to achieve and how mobile will help them achieve it, most are likely to have space for mobile in their overall digital strategy, whether it's full mCommerce, a standalone app or a simple game or viral designed to support a marketing campaign.

Why do you need a mobile strategy?

The demise of the dotcoms demonstrates only too clearly the pitfalls of getting caught up in the hype surrounding new technologies. It's very tempting to circumvent business processes in order to make an early impact, but this will at best lead to limited, short-term gains with no lasting benefits, and at worst damage the brand due to fundamental errors in judgement.

As with all business activities, taking the time to develop a solid strategy for mobile will pay dividends in the long term. The mobile landscape is constantly evolving – building a firm foundation based on brand aims and target audiences will allow businesses to keep pace with the changes and ultimately take advantage of them. It will also provide a valuable sense-check when dealing with agencies offering expertise in mobile – if you have a sound strategy and they are unable to work within it, then they are unlikely to be able to help the business meet its aims.

The following chapters provide a comprehensive, practical toolkit for developing and maintaining a unified mobile strategy – one which will deliver measurable results.

"It's clear that businesses with serious plans for the future cannot afford to ignore mobile, or become complacent about it and take short cuts to mobile engagement."

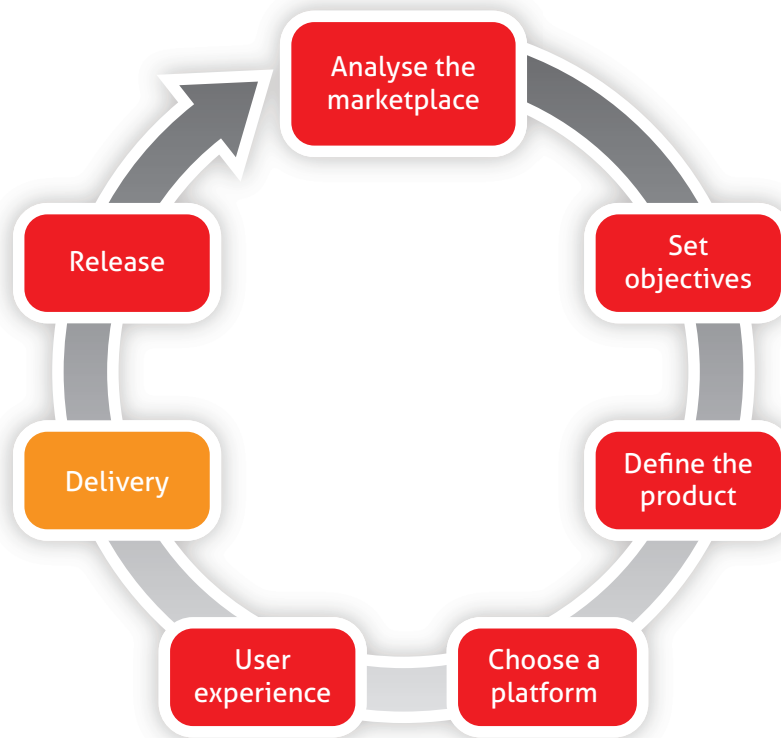


the unified

mobile strategy

The UNIFIED MOBILE STRATEGY

In essence, a mobile strategy should be a fully-integrated, thoroughly thought-out map for mobile engagement, focused on achieving specific goals. Done properly, it will touch every aspect of a business, including existing channels.



The mobile strategy lifecycle

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Emerging technologies bring many things with them – excitement, a high degree of interest from the media, an opportunity to pioneer new ways to promote products and services. But they can also bring uncertainty, a lack of structure, limited or no measurable results and a desire to claim a piece of this new space at any cost. Taking the time to step back, gain some perspective and consider what the fundamental benefits are to your business can mean the difference between long-term success and short-term, short-lived space grabbing.

Applying the disciplines needed to develop a robust strategy for mobile pays off in a number of ways:

- The mobile landscape is constantly evolving. Your strategy will go a long way to ensuring that you are able to keep up with and exploit the developments as they happen
- Uncertainty and confusion surrounding mobile and how it can be applied in a business context will be mitigated as control and structure are imposed on the process of mobile engagement
- The fragmented nature of the mobile channel – multiple platforms, a variety of ways for delivering brand messages – means that strategy has a vital role to play in providing cohesion and a clear path to mobile engagement which truly achieves specified business aims
- Your strategy will provide a method for measurement, which should allow for reliable analysis of mobile's financial contribution to your bottom line
- Having a strategy will ensure that you can maintain brand integrity – properly-considered activities are far more likely to enhance brand perception than rushed decisions based on a desire to 'not miss the boat'.
- Not having a strategy or failing to give it proper time, resource and attention can lead to loss of user trust and engagement. Getting it wrong this early in the game may lead customers to believe that the brand doesn't really understand mobile or their lifestyle in general, and jump ship to a competitor who does.

As an illustration, a well-known chain of restaurants in the US developed an iPhone app without any kind of strategy for providing either the customer or the business with worthwhile results. The app simply allowed users to flame-grill a virtual steak – there was no restaurant locator, call to action or even a link back to the website. It did offer a '3D experience', provided the user had a pair of 3D glasses readily available. As a result, potential and existing customers had no way to turn their mobile experience into a dining experience, feedback was broadly negative and the app was rapidly withdrawn. The business itself suffered, not only because of the time and money invested in an app which was unable to drive footfall to its outlets, but also because it rapidly became an example of 'how not to do it', which damaged the brand.

WHAT A GOOD STRATEGY CONSIDERS

A unified mobile strategy will cover a number of areas, each of which we will cover in depth throughout the rest of the paper. They are:

Analysing the marketplace

One of the fundamental first steps to building a mobile strategy is to have a close look at the marketplace – what does a typical mobile user look like, what mobile platforms do they use, what is their current user experience and what do they expect from mobile services? And, vitally, what is your competition doing and can you identify ways to differentiate?

Setting objectives

Your strategy will not work if you don't establish clear objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the start of the process. Deciding on your primary aim – awareness, sales, engagement, efficiency – will have a significant impact on the route you choose. Mobile can offer unique functionality and opportunities for securing and retaining customers – but it is not a marketing or distribution cure-all, and the strategy should fully take this into consideration.

Defining the product to meet your objectives

Once the objectives are clear, you can start to define what kind of tactic will meet them. Examining how customers are currently using your products or service, your business infrastructure and ways to adapt your product for mobile will provide the context for a product definition statement, which should also give room for breaking new ground using the qualities unique to mobile as a channel.

Creating a mobile brand

It's important for brands to adapt to the nature of mobile and the way users interact with services – screen size, time and frequency of engagement, and customer expectations all have an impact on the way branding works and how mobile integrates with your overall brand story.

Choosing a platform

There are a number of factors to consider when selecting a mobile platform – and the pros and cons have caused a great deal of debate. Is it best to focus on mobile web or applications? Will your product work on iPhone, Android, BlackBerry or all three (or none)? And how will your choice of content and customer base dictate your choice of platform?

User experience

Users have come to expect a specific type of user experience from mobile, and it's vital to consider how they will feel, how they will act and if they will be encouraged to make repeat visits/purchases when using your mobile product. Analysing user behaviour and applying basic rules for best practice will ensure that user experience is appropriate, consistent and, above all, delivers the required results.

Delivering the product

Given the growth of mobile and its increasing importance as a channel to market, there is an understandable desire to launch mobile products speedily, and while this is not necessarily a recipe for failure (there are advantages to beating the competition, as some businesses have discovered), the emphasis should always be on ensuring mobile can integrate easily and securely with your primary channels. The physical development of your mobile product will require specific skillsets, and part of your strategy should be where these will be sourced from – in-house or third party? And, as mobile is relatively new, how will you deal with any issues which may occur?

Releasing the product

A mobile product will have to meet a range of requirements before launch, including (for applications) marketplace provider approval, and integration with other marketing initiatives as part of an overall marketing strategy. The mobile strategy should also consider how to publicise the release as well as how to make best use of online rankings and reviews.

Monitoring and maintenance

Successful mobile strategies recognise that simply launching an app or mobile site isn't enough – the mobile product needs to be monitored, maintained, fixed if necessary and regularly updated if it is to continue to engage customers. Scheduled measurement against original objectives and KPIs will ensure that the mobile strategy stays on track and delivers the required results.

Who owns your mobile strategy?

Strategies that work long-term have one overriding distinction over those that don't – they have a specific owner in a specific area of the business with responsibility for ensuring that it is kept live. There are no hard and fast rules over where the strategy should sit and who the owner should be – business decision makers simply need to have a clear idea of which area is likely to gain most from mobile and, as a result, will be a driving force behind the strategy.

Should the owner be:

- Marketing? This would make sense if the overall objectives involve brand awareness and customer acquisition.
- Operations? This may work if the aim is efficiency or process development, perhaps in a B2B environment.
- Sales? This may be appropriate if the objective is solely to increase sales figures.
- eCommerce? If the objective is to increase eCommerce or complement online sales, this might be the right place for strategy ownership.
- A specific mobile team/task force? The growth and proliferation of mobile is unlikely to slow down, and in all probability most medium to large businesses will need a specific team within the next five years, so it may be right to start the ball rolling now.

Why not IT?

Businesses are often tempted to give ownership of all things technical to IT – whatever their aims or objectives might be. However, this may not be the best option from a mobile perspective. It is unlikely to bring material benefits to the IT team, and may well be considered just one more part of the infrastructure that needs supporting rather than driving forward. This is why it is important for the strategy to identify mobile as a channel to market rather than a piece of technology – it ensures that ownership reflects objectives.

Avoiding bad strategy

Knowing what a bad strategy looks like goes a long way towards helping businesses to avoid potential pitfalls. There are several key errors to watch for:

- **Starting with a tactic already in mind** – for example, building an entire strategy around an iPhone app for no other reason than they are what's hot and the CEO wants the business to have one – rather than analysing what will bring the best results.
- **Unrealistic timescales** – as mentioned above, at a time when there's little or no competition, it can be advantageous to deliver an innovative product quickly, even if it has rough edges. However, the general rules apply – before even considering what mobile product to develop, know your market, know your infrastructure and know the capabilities of your business and the people involved in design and build. You may only have one opportunity to deliver a successful mobile product, so it pays to take a little extra time to ensure it is built on solid business foundations. Businesses who fail to do this can permanently damage their brand.
- **Expecting too much of existing web agencies** – good agencies have recognised the importance of mobile and they are creating specific teams to build their portfolio of mobile channel experience. And, while your existing agency should always strive to provide you with the services you need, it would be wrong to simply assume that they would be able to deliver a mobile product. Mobile is an emerging channel – it makes sense to invite agencies to pitch for your business, and to buy in experience if necessary.
- **Working in isolation** – a successful mobile strategy should involve all areas of the business – marketing, infrastructure, operations. If it doesn't, it is unlikely to be able to stand on its own beyond any initial campaigns or activities, as these will not feed into or be supported by the business as a whole. It is important to include all affected parties in the planning process, so that the internal constraints and requirements are properly understood before the project begins. This need not mean involving everyone in every step of the process – in fact efforts should be made to prevent design by committee. Successful mobile strategies require strong vision, but understanding what is required from the business to deliver this vision is vital.

- **Leaving the customer out of the equation** – disregarding your customers' behaviour, needs and aspirations can lead to brand failure and, potentially, business failure. If 90% of your customers use a BlackBerry and you opt for an iPhone app, your uptake may not be what you expected. If you develop a strategy that does not take into account the opinions and sensibilities of a significant portion of your customer base, you could be faced with lasting brand damage. For example, a soft drinks giant made a very costly mistake when it launched an iPhone app to promote a new energy drink. Aimed at young men, the app divided women into categories and suggested lines of conversation which were at best inappropriate and at worst offensive. Millions of female customers were alienated, and some consumers led a campaign encouraging women to drink a rival brand instead.
- **Sacrificing ROI for gimmicks** – it is possible for businesses to make quick wins by releasing mobile products which are standalone and do little other than promote the brand name (for example, the Barclaycard Waterslide Extreme app). Generally, however, customers expect more than just impressive graphics, and it benefits both the business and the customer if a mobile product provides more than this – at the very least a call to action, or a store location service. Mobile as a channel is expected to allow the user to perform some kind of useful task, so businesses are taking a risk by developing purely promotional apps. Mobile is still at a stage where it has to prove itself, so applications which at least allow for measurement of response will enable you to demonstrate its worth in financial terms.
- **Becoming too dependent on one provider** – a mobile strategy needs to be solid enough to withstand change, and given the speed at which the market is evolving, relying on any one provider for all future mobile activity could prove to be unwise. For example, if the iPhone app store was suddenly unavailable to you, the work already carried out (design, development, infrastructure etc) should be flexible enough to be portable to other platforms such as Android and BlackBerry.

ANALYSING THE MARKETPLACE

According to ComScore*, there are currently around 70 million smartphone users across mainland Europe – a year-on-year increase of 41%. And the Internet Advertising Bureau's (IAB)+ research shows that 51% (around 23 million) of mobile users in the UK are actively researching products, looking for stores and making purchases.

So the raw data illustrates the immense size and potential of the market as a whole – and profiling these users, how they behave and how they are likely to engage with your brand will inform your strategy and give it a customer focus, which, as discussed above, is a major key to success.

Who uses mobile?

According to US market researchers The Nielsen Company**, smartphone users are:

- More likely to be male than female (54/46% split)
- Aged under 35
- Educated and more wealthy than average, with 34% of all smartphone users earning \$60,000+
- Loyal to their handset providers – 80% of iPhone users would choose another iPhone for their next mobile purchase, and the figure is 70% for Android

When it comes to spending patterns, the IAB's figures show just how comfortable users are with making purchases either through a mobile app or website:

- 40% of users reach for their mobiles when they see an ad they like on TV
- 27% say that mobile is their first choice of media when they want to access content
- 27% of those surveyed have used mobile to purchase via cards, bank details or PayPal
- £12.20 is spent on an average purchase via mobile
- 42% of users who made a purchase on mobile did so because they felt it was the easiest option
- 31% of those surveyed made purchases spontaneously
- 25% enjoyed the novelty and experimental aspects of purchasing via their mobile phone

*ComScore 2010 Europe Digital Year in Review (02/11)

+ IAB Consumer M-Commerce Study October 2010

**Nielsen Mobile Insight 2010

Given the evidence from research and a number of anecdotal factors which appear to back up the statistics, it's possible to paint a broad-brush picture of a commercially-active mobile user. They are:

Affluent and technically aware – they are willing to invest money in the latest phone technology, they trust mobile as a platform for product research and purchase, and can be equally as happy to buy via their mobile as they are online.

Inclined to see their mobile as a lifestyle facilitator – accustomed to being able to access the information they need whenever they need it, they use their mobiles to remove traditional barriers to service such as being on the move, having no access to a PC etc. And they are just as likely to use mobile services in their own homes as when they are commuting or out with friends – Tesco recently carried out research which highlighted the fact that 50% of the mobile shoppers surveyed made their purchases while sitting at home watching TV. Convenience (mobile phones are almost always carried with the user, and buying via mobile can be fitted in easily around other household activities) and functionality (mobile sites and apps that offer an experience as streamlined as their online equivalent) play a large part in the increase in this type of purchasing behaviour.

Sociable, with a tendency to express polarised opinions – mobile users will share what they think – good or bad – with other users via social networks, communities and reviews. This can lead to a small number of vocal customers having a disproportionate effect on market opinion.

Expecting apps and websites to deliver what they promise – as with all new technologies, early adopters tend to be relatively forgiving, provided their expectations have been managed effectively. The novelty of the platform is generally enough to make up for its restricted (but growing) ability. For example, Facebook users are content with the reduced functionality offered by its iPhone app, because it works well and provides them with the core features they need to access Facebook whenever they choose to. Apps and mobile websites which over-promise and fail to meet user expectations are likely to be on the receiving end of the wrath of the vocal minority mentioned above. The key message is: **Do a few things well, not many things poorly.**

Comparison shoppers – consumers as a whole have become accustomed to comparing prices, and a number of businesses have built this into their strategies. Supermarkets, for example, regularly advertise the fact that they charge less than their competitors. Having the ability to access this kind of information on a mobile device enables customers to not only carry out a live comparison at the point of purchase, but also locate a cheaper store on the web or using the built-in GPS facility – and this will undoubtedly have an effect on the way retailers set their prices in the future.

Heavily reliant on their mobile phones – the functions available on today's mobile phones have caused users to change their behaviour. For example, a significant number of people now depend entirely on their phone's GPS to tell them where they are or how to find a location – so much so that if their phone were to fail, they would be lost, quite literally.

A captive audience – users tend to be very loyal, and as a rule are open and accepting of any new product or service offered via their chosen mobile platform. They are also willing to pay – particularly iPhone users who are accustomed to buying apps – though they will demand value for money. After all, equivalent web content is often available free of charge.

Where are your customers?

While this general market information is useful in the initial stages of formulating your strategy, it is essential to research your existing customer base to find out how they use mobile.

Ask the basic questions:

- **Do they (or would they) use mobile to access information on a regular basis?** If the answer is 'no', it may be worth reconsidering your strategy and instead planning for a few years in the future, when mobile uptake will have increased.
- **What platform does the majority of your customers use?** Do they use iPhones? Android? BlackBerry? This will inform your development process and provide focus for your strategy.
- **How many of your customers make purchases via mobile, and has this figure grown over the last 12 months?** If the numbers are significant, the business case for mobile requires no further proof.

"The key message is: Do few things well, not many things poorly"

- **How do customers use your service?** Your approach to development will be affected by whether they are carrying out a number of small transactions on a regular basis (ordering groceries, for example), or making purchase over a longer length of time (booking an annual holiday or buying seasonal items such as Christmas decorations). Each will potentially have a mobile solution, but will require different tactics.
- **Is there a locational aspect to your business?** Mobile is ideally placed to fill the 'gap' between users leaving home and arriving at their destination, which is why store locators or travel services such as live departure boards have proved so popular.

The answers to these questions should enable you to develop a convincing customer usage case, tracking their potential use of your product or service from initial engagement through to purchase.

WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT FROM MOBILE?

Business strategies tend to fail if they focus on what the business thinks customers should have, rather than what those customers actually need or would find useful. Before considering how to deliver a mobile product to potential and existing customers, take the time to distil what you want to offer into two or three basic elements. For example, a pet food delivery store might want to:

- Enable customers to browse and compare products
- Allow them to place and pay for an order
- Offer delivery tracking and customer care

These fundamental services are clear, concise and will offer measurable benefits to customers. Avoiding the temptation to focus the experience on less vital features such as pet care tips, games and competitions (though these might well play their part in the campaign) will ensure that the mobile product will meet business objectives, because the strategy will have a practical focus on developing a small number of useful services well, which should work efficiently whenever customers want to use them.

However, *asking* customers what they want is not always advisable – they are likely to have an extensive 'shopping list' which may not be achievable in a single mobile product, or at the other end of the scale, may not realise what mobile is capable of doing for them. The best approach is to specify a product and outline its features, then ask for feedback. This benefits the business because customer needs will be met, and the customer, because they will have had input into the end product.

WHAT IS YOUR COMPETITION DOING?

As mobile is still a relatively new channel, businesses in some industries may be in the fortunate position where there is little or no competition. However, the figures show that mobile cannot be ignored, and most businesses with long-term goals will be, at the very least, considering how to move into the mobile space.

Part of your mobile strategy should be to analyse what your competitors offer and identify how you may be able to either differentiate or do it better. At Red Ant, we like to spend a half a day or so going over a client's competition with them and trying out some of the existing products available with similar functions.

PERFORMANCE IS EVERYTHING

It's vital to remember that, when it comes to mobile products, brand takes second place to service. Offering an efficient, straightforward mobile product which works every time will attract users away from their preferred brands, even if the name above the shop is unfamiliar.

Mobile users make their decisions based on what works best, whether it's a big brand or a relative unknown, so the opportunity exists to 'build a better mousetrap' – a mobile product which performs better than the competition and as a result encourages users to switch allegiance.

"The opportunity exists to 'build a better mousetrap' – a mobile product which performs better than the competition and as a result encourages users to switch allegiance."

SETTING OBJECTIVES

Any strategy succeeds or fails by the clarity and achievability of its objectives – and this is especially true of mobile. Because it is new, mobile has more to prove than more traditional channels, so a clear vision of what you want it to achieve and how these achievements will be measured is essential before considering any potential ideas for implementation.

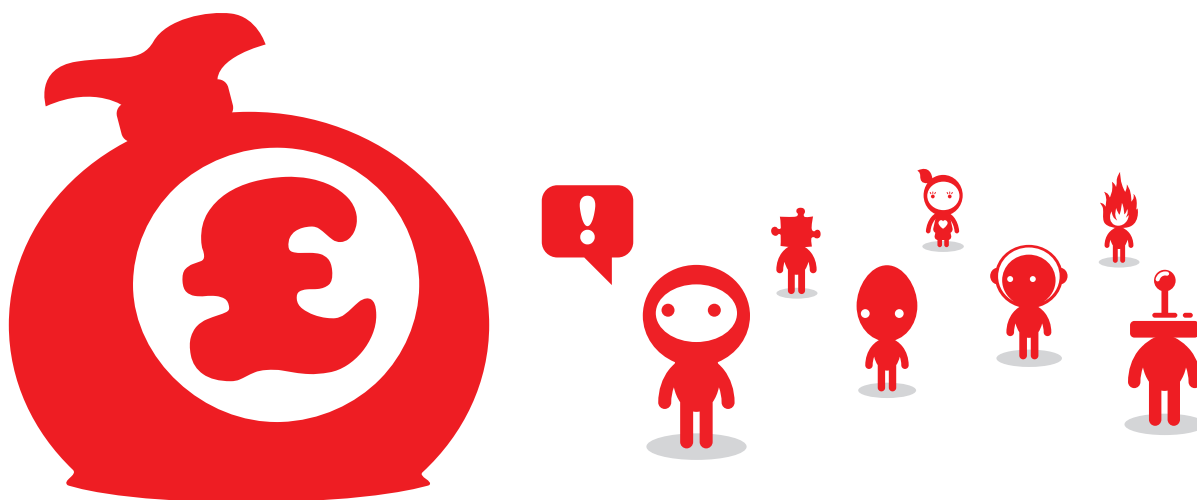
At this point, your aims and objectives should be generic rather than specific. The details behind your aims will be defined by the mobile strategy process. Generic goals normally include:

- Building awareness and creating demand
- Driving sales and increasing demand
- Process improvement through streamlined communications
- Increasing customer retention, satisfaction, or convenience

Each of these will have mirrored activities offline and any existing brand activities must be taken into account when planning your mobile strategy.

In an ideal world a mobile product would produce returns in all of the above areas, but it is important to select one or two primary objectives that can be used to focus your mobile channel and to measure the return. As your offering develops and you gain more awareness over how your customers interact with your brand through mobile, you will be able to adapt your strategy to achieve a wider range of objectives.

Though standard business disciplines apply for much of your overall strategy, when setting your initial objectives there are a number of things to consider which are mobile-specific. It's an evolving technology, and because of this you need to carefully consider the technical aspects of mobile and how it will work with your business infrastructure, now and in the future. Mobile will inevitably change over the next few years, possibly in unexpected ways, and your objectives must be focused enough to be able to withstand this.



WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM MOBILE?

The key to developing a successful mobile strategy is to have a specific goal in mind – store location, mobile grocery shopping, 'live' travel updates – these are all clear, achievable single ideas which play to the strengths of mobile as a channel. It's tempting to try to develop an app or mobile site which delivers all things to all people – full functionality, lots of graphics, advertising, eCommerce and games – but this almost inevitably results in a product which at best offers a poor or confusing overall experience and at worst does not work at all. Apps and sites which tend to meet business objectives and deliver ROI offer one to three straightforward, task-based services which meet a specific customer need.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE?

Your primary objective will, to a large extent, dictate your choice of mobile product. The approach you use to raise awareness and get publicity for your brand will be entirely different from what you would do to improve business efficiency, for example.



Mobile apps and their objectives

WHAT CAN MOBILE DELIVER THAT OTHER CHANNELS CAN'T?

Mobile's viability as a channel is based on the fact that it can deliver a number of benefits which simply do not apply to any other:

It is part of the user's everyday life – users tend to always have their mobile phones with them. This gives businesses the opportunity to bring their products or services direct to the user. Users will actively seek out mobile content from brands they like, and integrate it with their daily routine and social circle. Businesses are also able to prompt, remind and engage customers whenever they choose – provided, of course, they have carefully assessed the audience's tolerance for this kind of activity and don't overload them with messages.

Currently, it has novelty value – mobile apps and sites are presenting users with information, services and opportunities which are engaging and interesting simply because they are new. This allows businesses to develop innovative mobile products which, if done properly and with a firm focus on the overall strategy and its objectives, can add significant brand value.

It offers locational functionality – one of the advantages unique to mobile is that it successfully combines ever-present data services with very accurate information about the location of the user. For example, Transport For London's app is able to give the user travel information specifically tailored to where they are currently located, using the phone's GPS function. The TFL website is (currently) unable to do this, which means that users have an extra step to complete when accessing information on their PC. Plus, these services can be accessed quickly and conveniently while out and about. Imagine how difficult FourSquare (the location-based, experience-sharing mobile platform) would be to use if it required you to lug a laptop around, find some Wi-Fi access, and wait for it to boot up and sign in every time you checked in.

It is the only piece of technology which is present through all media – mobile users are accustomed to using their mobile in a fluid way across a variety of communication tools – uploading images from their phone's camera to Facebook, emailing their friends, browsing the internet, as well as making calls and sending text messages. What this means for businesses is that, if you get your mobile product right, users are far more likely to share it and spread the word to their friends than they are a web-based initiative. For example, in the early days of the iPhone App Store, Carling saw a lot of success with a popular app that allowed users to drink a virtual pint of beer, which although purely a gimmick exploited this in a number of ways. First, it offered an experience which was only possible on a smartphone, making the most of its form factor and motion-sensing functions. Second, it tapped into the fact that users can easily offer their phones to others so that they can take part in a positive experience – something which rarely happens on a PC or laptop – and that this often happens on social occasions (at the pub, for example). Finally, Carling ensured that its brand message was pushed forward via word of mouth – one of the most effective and sought-after methods of marketing.

It has unprecedented reach – more people see a mobile screen daily than any other, including TV and PCs/laptops. Almost 100% of adults in the UK with a mobile phone use SMS, there are currently around 5 billion mobiles in the world* (more than televisions and computers added together) and this number is only going to increase as the developing world becomes increasingly active in the mobile market.

Taking these points into consideration when setting your objectives for mobile will enable you to focus on what really matters both to the business and your customers. Your overall marketing strategy should provide an insight into what already works online – ask how this might translate to mobile, given all the unique benefits it has to offer.

WHAT MOBILE CAN'T DELIVER – EXPOSING THE MYTHS

While it's clear that mobile represents a significant opportunity for businesses to expand their channels to market and can deliver a number of specific advantages, it is not a 'magic bullet' which will solve all marketing issues and provide an instant solution to all business needs. Despite the press interest and a degree of hyperbole which tends to surround mobile technology, there are a number of myths about it which deserve close examination.

Myth – mobile hardware can do anything you want it to

Users and businesses alike have been led to believe, largely by an over-enthusiastic media, that mobile technology is at a stage where it can do almost anything: fully augmented reality is just around the corner, graphics are as good as those on games consoles, processing speeds are lightning-fast. In truth, augmented reality, though achievable in theory, is some way off being perfectly aligned with mobile functionality, the graphics are not of the standard you'd find on an xBox 360 and a mobile is not going to be as speedy as a laptop. There are limits on what mobile hardware can provide, and so there are limits on mobile product design.

Myth – because mobile phones are small and task-focused, mobile projects will be small and low-cost

People unfamiliar with software development may believe that a mobile device's limited size and the apparently straightforward nature of many of the apps and sites on offer directly relate to the time and cost involved in developing them. In reality, even the simplest apps can involve considerable investment of both time and money. While mobile web can offer some cheap wins, the software for mobile app development is still evolving itself, and is unlikely to reach the sophistication of web development tools for several years. This means that true off-the-shelf mobile environments don't yet exist, and many apps and functions have to be set up entirely from scratch. As with any early adoption, if your business wants to take advantage of new and innovative technology, it should be prepared to pay the price.

Myth – a mobile app can work as a standalone product

Mobile apps can give the impression that they work in isolation, independent of any business infrastructure or overall strategy. In fact, any good mobile app needs to get its focus and data from somewhere – and without a central data source (e.g. website or back office support) it is very difficult to ensure that all users have the most up to date information.

Myth – it's all about apps

Mobile apps get a lot of attention, and it's easy to see why. They're innovative, creative, engaging and, if developed properly, help users to perform tasks which entertain, educate or assist them with everyday activities. Inevitably, this focus on apps in general and the iPhone in particular can cause businesses to lose sight of their objectives in favour of what they believe will be bestowed on them simply by association with something perceived as 'cool':

- Having an iPhone app doesn't mean you're in the same league as Apple. Sheer weight of numbers means it's unlikely you'll receive any preferential treatment for choosing to distribute your product through the App store, and it's unlikely that your brand will appear on the Apple site or in any of their advertising. It's true that there is some degree of kudos associated with developing an app which meets Apple's rigorous standards, but the act of manufacturing an acceptable product will not render your brand instantly relevant to Apple's demographic.
- Your app may not necessarily be approved for distribution – Apple in particular has a strict set of standards for approval, and it pays to carry out a risk assessment before any development work has taken place or any funds have been committed. Review the standards – if any – applied by the platform(s) you want to use and measure your proposed mobile product against them. You don't want to invest time and money in the development cycle only to fall at the final hurdle. If you're concerned about approval, identify the key risk factors in your app and prepare contingencies.
- The app marketplace will not market your product for you. Unless you're exceptionally lucky, it's not enough to simply place your app in the store, then wait for users to buy it. As with all campaigns, a full promotional plan will ensure that potential and existing customers know what you're doing, why you're doing it and where they can find your product.
- Your app will not always receive five-star reviews – generally speaking, as with most products and services, users only feel moved to offer an opinion when they are dissatisfied. An app may well attract negative feedback if users encounter bugs or other issues. This is particularly true of paid-for apps – users expect them to work efficiently, even if they have only invested a few pence. Trialling paid-for apps as free, 'Lite' versions is a useful way to iron out any issues and introduce users to what you'll be asking them to pay for in the future – although a delicate strategy is needed here.
- While apps provide a number of benefits, they do not have the reach of the mobile web. If you focus on iPhone, for example, you may be neglecting potential customers who use Android, BlackBerry, or any other device. And when you have to update your app, you're relying on the user to actively choose to update, rather than implementing any changes centrally, as you would for mobile web.
- For most businesses, it shouldn't be an 'either/or' choice. Many successful brands (the AA, the BBC, Tesco, for example) have both mobile sites and apps, to give their customers the broadest range of options for engagement. The only significant choice for businesses should be which one they want to develop first.

Myth – everyone will be using a smartphone in the near future

There's no doubt that the smartphone market has grown considerably over the last 18 months or so, but, compared to the size of the overall market, it is still in its infancy. According to Gartner*, currently one in five mobile phones sold is a smartphone – which leaves 80% of buyers opting for a less capable phone. There will always be some proportion of mobile users who just want to make calls and send texts, without having the additional burden of paying for data. Some of these users will inevitably be important to your business – your strategy should consider how to engage them through more tried and tested means, such as SMS. O2, for example, despite being the first UK network provider for the iPhone, regularly runs text-based campaigns which link to offers on its website.

Myth – advertising within apps will make money for the business

A number of businesses have given in to the temptation to carry advertising in their apps. Early statistics on revenues from mobile advertising, and the poor performance of Apple's iAd, have shown this may be a misunderstanding of the mobile user. As discussed earlier, they are likely to be focused on using mobile to achieve specific tasks and won't be 'open' to this kind of advertising – especially on a screen just 4 inches across. On the whole, advertisements tend not to be monetizing tools – it makes better commercial sense to focus on promoting the app itself. Ad rings, on the other hand, where businesses offering similar or complementary services promote their products on each other's apps, can prove to be beneficial (for example, an app for sourcing handbags may make reference to an app for finding shoes, and vice versa). It's worth researching your existing customer base to find out whether they would accept or tolerate this kind of promotion before proceeding. Mobile advertising will be an area of huge growth over the next few years, and it is an interesting and open question as to how this area will develop.

*Gartner-Worldwide mobile device sales to end users in 2010 (February 2011)

Myth – if you're a big brand, users will be happy to pay for your app

Businesses mistakenly believe that if they have a recognised name, they will be able to charge for their app. In reality, the reverse is true – users expect big brands to have the financial clout to be able to offer their mobile products for free. For example, some national newspapers have discovered that readers are unwilling to pay for their content simply because they have made it available on mobile – they need to add value by offering unique and exclusive features.

ESTABLISHING AND MONITORING KPIs

Your mobile strategy should include specific, concrete ways for the business to assess its performance as a channel – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are the metrics by which ROI and performance of your mobile strategy can be estimated and eventually measured.

Tangible measures

The easiest returns to measure are tangible – for example:

- Sales through a mobile site or app
- Number of app downloads
- Number of Tweets, 'Likes', blog posts etc

Provided they are focused (for example, for a grocery app, 'average user completes shop within two minutes'), these KPIs can be given an estimated value which will relate directly to your overall objectives.

Non-tangible measures

Non-tangible returns are more difficult to assess, as they have a layer of analysis over and above direct measurement – for example:

- Brand awareness
- Market presence
- Reputation / impression
- Education

Each of these may relate to an objective, but they tend not to be directly measurable. To assess the return on these, simple metrics (users, repeat users, people returning to certain sections of the mobile site or carrying out specific actions in apps) combined with a degree of qualitative analysis can help to calculate the benefits and what they are worth.

The KPIs for your mobile strategy should be closely aligned with your overall marketing strategy. Specific budgets will be allocated for sales acquisition, publicity, efficiency etc, and the KPIs for each of these should cross-reference mobile-specific ones.

For example, you have a sales-related KPI for customer acquisition set at £40 per customer via traditional channels. You develop a mobile application at a cost of £50,000 that acquires 10,000 new customers (meaning a mobile customer acquisition of just £5/customer) – a very quick demonstration of the tangible ROI from the strategy.

And when it comes to measurement, mobile has a distinct advantage over more traditional marketing strategies in that it offers a number of very efficient tools for assessment – metrics on user behaviour, customer activity v customer value, app purchases and how they translate to sales – these are all available to provide a sense check as well as valuable management information.

It is important to establish a set of KPIs before development of any product begins as these will form objective measuring sticks to apply throughout the process. They should not be set in stone, however – if an app is failing your original set of KPIs it is generally a good indicator of how well it is meeting your objectives and will often help steer further improvement. It is always worth re-examining your KPIs (and their methodology) from time to time, to ensure they are still relevant and give an accurate assessment of your objectives.

DEFINING THE PRODUCT

Once you have a workable set of objectives and a clear idea of what mobile can and can't do for your business as a channel, the next step in your strategy is to define precisely what your product will be. Apple provides app developers with a process for creating what they term an "application definition statement", which gives a useful framework for ensuring they meet their objectives and are ultimately achieving success on the App Store. This is a useful tool for focusing your mobile strategy in general and your own product definition statement should cover similar ground, though it shouldn't be limited to any one platform and can encompass mobile web as well as apps.

Creating a product definition statement

Your product definition statement should describe in a sentence precisely what your app or mobile site will do, its intended audience, and its USP or what differentiates it from the competition, if there is any. It can be thought of as the 'elevator pitch' for your mobile product:

Step 1 – Define what your audience might like or find useful

At this stage, you should list what your customers might require from your app or mobile site, bearing your original objectives in mind.

Look at what your customers are already doing and talk to them about it

Your customers should be at the heart of your product definition, and the more you know about how they currently interact with your business, the better your definition statement (and offering) will be.

Analyse how they visit your website – do they come direct or via another site such as Facebook? And if this is the case, check Facebook to see what it is that prompts them to visit – you may be able to use this to inform your mobile product development.

If a significant number of customers are already accessing your site via mobile, monitor how they behave – are they locating stores, finding prices, looking at service information? Your product should focus on what's important to them and how to make it easier to achieve.

Traditional market research can also help to identify customer needs which may not have been considered before. It's vital to manage expectations and avoid over-promising, but asking customers what brand-related tasks they would like to achieve on a daily basis could be revealing.

For example, to revisit the pet store example from earlier, your customers might want to:

- Compare prices
- Locate stores
- Browse products
- Get pet health tips
- Get and use coupons
- Receive exclusive offers
- Track deliveries
- Swap pet photos and information



Step 2 – Define your users

This is where, based on existing information about your customers and how they behave, you should establish who your users are and what they do. Pet store customers may:

- Prefer named brands and be willing to pay extra for them
- Look for bargains and special offers
- Be committed voucher users, or think that they aren't worth the effort
- Be concerned about the health and wellbeing of their pets
- Buy little and often, or buy in bulk infrequently
- Tend to buy similar items every time, or be on the lookout for new and novel products

Then select the three most relevant behaviours – in this instance, they might be: look for bargains and special offers; buy little and often; concerned about the health and wellbeing of their pets.

Step 3 – Match the list of what your customers might find useful with two or three identified behaviours

At this point you should have no more than two or three behaviours and two or three matching features – successful mobile sites and apps are focused on helping users accomplish simple tasks quickly and easily.

In the above example, the useful features in your initial list which might prove most appropriate to the identified audience behaviours are: receive exclusive offers; get pet health tips; locate stores. Though customers may welcome and sometimes use the other features, these are the key tasks they wish to accomplish and which may be served well by a mobile site or app. You should now be in a position to define in a sentence what your mobile product should be – in this case: 'Top tips and best deals for people who look after their pets and their budgets'.

Step 4 – Focus on delivering the right kind of app or site to your customer

Your product definition statement should form the basis for development. Any features or functions which do not fit with the statement should be set aside at this point in the process, though they may be useful in future campaigns with different objectives.

Consider how your audience will use the product and what they will expect from the user experience. Whether it should be simple and straightforward or use graphics and photos should be evident from the stated task the product is designed to accomplish. And the language you use should be similar in tone, terminology and assumed level of knowledge to the language used by your audience. For example, the pet store app is likely to be simple to use and focused on finding the right places to buy the right products at the right prices, but owners who care about their animals will undoubtedly appreciate a pet-based theme.

Taking the time to create a solid product definition statement at this point in your mobile strategy will provide you with a touchstone throughout the rest of the process and a practical way to assess whether your mobile product development is on track.

EXAMINE YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Before embarking on any kind of mobile product development, it is essential that you look closely at your existing business infrastructure. Carry out a review based on:

- Existing capacity and processes (eg is the business already successfully running a full eCommerce system; would the distribution system be able to cope with a potential influx of orders from mobile?)
- Planned future developments
- Budget (eg are there funds available to upgrade or expand business systems?)
- Support from other teams and broad company buy-in

This will give a realistic picture of what is and isn't possible when it comes to mobile products, and it will play a significant part in shaping your mobile strategy.

It is equally important at this stage to start involving key stakeholders from all other departments of the business – particularly those involved in technical areas. Decisions made at this point could have a far-reaching impact, and lack of consideration of the 'mechanical' implications may be costly to put right later. Establish what is feasible first, and hone your ideas to fit. Areas to assess include:

- Existing web services
- Legal and licencing requirements
- Content and availability
- Availability of internal resources and upcoming developments that may impact on them
- Cost of implementing change – what may appear to be a relatively minor technical adjustment might in reality cost thousands because it is fundamentally linked to a number of other business processes which would all need to be changed at the same time

Involve the experts – both internal and external – early and you are far more likely to develop a product which meets business objectives, engages your audience and delivers measurable ROI.

Don't do everything at once – if your infrastructure is too constrained, fix it first before starting to develop any dependent mobile functionality. If you develop in parallel there is an increased risk that any unexpected changes in the technical implementation will mean costly redesign and delays.

DISTILLING YOUR PRODUCT FOR MOBILE

While the product definition statement will give your strategy a base which can be referenced and returned to throughout the process, it's important to recognise that it is flexible and will inevitably be refined and improved over time, as activities are measured against KPIs. Focusing on your core business offering is a useful initial filter for the statement – one which will ensure that your mobile product focuses on achieving tasks which will meet both business and user objectives.

Assess what your key services or products are, and how customers currently access them. Feed this in to your product definition statement to distil your mobile offering and provide an even clearer remit for your product. This is how Facebook developed its iPhone app – it established that users accessing the site on their mobiles usually wanted to perform just one or two tasks – check their news feeds, update their statuses and share content with their friends. The app itself focused on making these tasks quick and easy to achieve, gained huge traction, and has gradually added peripheral functions in an unobtrusive way that does not infringe on the core user focus. Facebook's mobile user experience meets all the requirements of a good product – user-focused, task-based and, through native apps, mobile web, and SMS, available to all smartphone users.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

Though your product definition statement will have its foundations in practicality, it's important to take full advantage of the opportunities uniquely presented by mobile. Provided they meet business objectives and do not detract from users completing their core tasks, functions such as GPS and motion control can enhance user experience and provide a USP.

The latest version of the Facebook app, for example, has a 'Places' function which allows users to check-in wherever they are and to see where their friends are as well. This is unique to mobile – no other channel is able to offer this facility. And the best shopping apps give users the ability to shop offline when they need to (on the London Underground, for example), then place their order as soon as a connection becomes available. Again, this would not be possible via traditional eCommerce.



creating a

mobile brand

There are technological limitations – it would be reasonable to suggest that most brands, unless they had an exceptionally forward-thinking brand agency, did not consider when setting up their brand guidelines how their livery would translate to the very small amount of real estate available on a mobile screen. It may be necessary to revise your brand imagery to fit the space available:

- Check how your logo works when it is scaled down – if it is complex or involves intricate graphics or typography, you may need to consider developing a simplified version for your mobile product.
- Iconography and strong colours work well on mobile – does your brand lend itself to this? If so, think about setting up brand-specific icons with eye-catching colour schemes. B&Q's iPhone app is a good example of strong colour combined with clear iconography.
- Mobile apps and sites are not simply 'shrunk-down' versions of your website, which may have headers, footers and logos on each page. There just isn't enough room for this on a mobile screen – question whether it is really needed to convey your brand message. Mobile UX is generally more immersive than web, so less brand reinforcement is needed.

Consider the behaviour of mobile users and whether your brand may have to adapt to meet their needs. Users tend to engage with a mobile brand frequently, but for short lengths of time. Your execution needs to be strong enough to instantly convey its message – House of Fraser's gift finder app shows how well this can work.

While the strong focus on single tasks that mobile promotes brings a degree of free immersion, a smartphone that can do a hundred different things carries with it the ever-present spectre of an incoming call or notification, diverting the user from the task you want them to complete. And the low barriers to entry into the mobile channel means it is perfectly possible for a small upstart to 'upset the appcart' with new features or better customer understanding. Brand trust is therefore built through long-term ease of use, utility and efficiency, not pure exposure or slick graphics.

Be aware of the 'native' branding for your chosen platform. Where users are very familiar with its UI and are expecting a specific experience, platform branding should take precedence over business branding. This will enable you to provide a familiar, 'authentic' experience based on an established format. Many of the most successful iPhone apps, for example, closely resemble Apple's own UX – those which insist on imposing their own branding by developing custom buttons and functions stand to lose out first from a cost perspective (it's more expensive to build everything from scratch) and second from a user engagement point of view. However, it is possible to maintain brand integrity while making full use of the highly efficient branding intrinsic to the platform – Ocado's app, for example, will feel very familiar to iPhone and Android users, yet, thanks to mobile-focused use of logo and colour, is still very clearly from Ocado. Of course, this is not to say that custom UX has no place in the mobile world; it has value in industries where brand is central to purchasing decisions (such as fashion), in providing novelty in overcrowded areas, or on platforms with less established interaction principles and identities (eg mobile web or BlackBerry).

Remember there should be no user manuals for apps or mobile websites – however you choose to represent your brand through your mobile product, it must not prevent users from getting access or performing tasks intuitively and without assistance. You should not assume users have pre-existing knowledge about your brand; cryptic iconography will lead to a confusing user experience (and a frustrated user).

If you are considering a mobile app, bear in mind that each app marketplace has a distinct 'shop window'. Establish how your mobile product will be displayed, how users will recognise your brand instantly and what aspects of your app you will showcase.

At this stage, it pays to have an open mind about branding your mobile product. There are more business positives than negatives in making small sacrifices and being willing to relinquish a certain amount of control to brand giants such as Apple. The message to your customers will be loud and clear, and all other brand touchpoints, including print and TV, should use it to enhance the overall brand story: you've proved your commitment to customer service by using mobile to make their lives easier.

"Brand trust is built through long term ease-of-use, utility and efficiency, not pure exposure or slick graphics"

CHOOSING A PLATFORM

Now that you have a robust set of objectives and a solid product definition statement, you need to choose which platform to work with. Any decision you make at this point will inevitably have an impact on product development, but it's worth bearing in mind that it is by no means a point of no return – provided you have a comprehensive strategy behind it, it should be relatively easy to either change platforms or expand into others.

There are many platform options, largely independent from each other, and how to decide which one to use demands a white paper of its own. This section will scratch the surface of a much bigger topic – and provide you with the right questions to ask when conducting your own research.

Your strategy so far will inform your decision – not least because you should have a good idea of which platform your customers already favour. As mentioned earlier, it will probably be unwise to focus on an iPhone app if the majority of your customers use BlackBerry handsets.

MOBILE WEB OR MOBILE APPS?

When it comes to choosing a single platform, this will be a fundamental question – do you develop a website optimised for mobile, or an app specific to the user's preferred operating system? Though there are any number of advocates on both sides of the fence who are very vocal in their opinions, there is no 'one size fits all' answer at the moment. Your choice will depend on factors highlighted throughout your strategy – your goals, your customer base, and many more.

APPS – THE BENEFITS

User experience – generally, an app UI is smoother and fully integrated with the fabric of the phone, so they can be much more fulfilling to use than a mobile site. While it is possible to come close to the app interface experience with a mobile site (the M&S mobile site, for example, though they have still chosen to mimic the iPhone's app UI elements), the fact is that it takes a very talented team and considerable investment to even roughly approximate what can be achieved cheaply and easily using native UI on iPhone and Android.

Apps work offline – as discussed earlier, shopping apps in particular have taken advantage of this. Where customers using a mobile site are potentially moving in and out of areas where they can get internet access on their phone, attempting to compose a comprehensive grocery list can prove frustrating to the point of abandonment. With an app, however, the entire catalogue can be downloaded to the phone, allowing the user to browse wherever they are and only needing the internet for the final confirmation and purchase. The same applies to activities which are time critical – for example, mobile ticketing or mobile vouchering simply would not work if the user happened to be offline during the critical window of redemption.

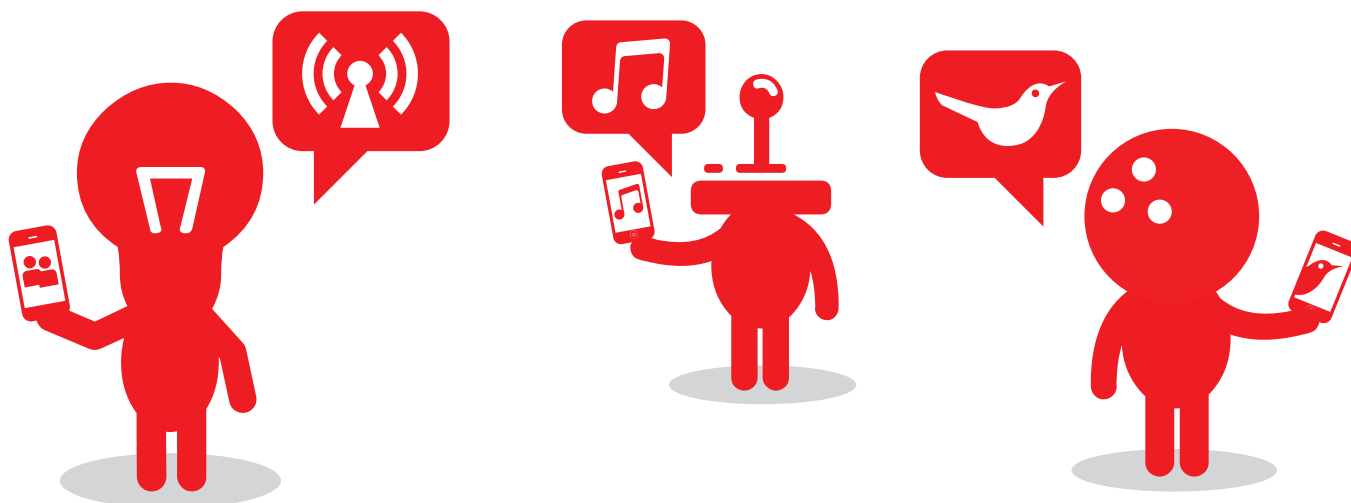
Apps are better if your goal is to monetise – Apple has used its App Store to create a customer base of affluent, knowledgeable people used to carrying out transactions on their phone, and Android, Nokia, RIM and Microsoft are following suit. And early evidence suggests that users who regularly pay for and download apps are more likely to go on to make purchases. If your strategy has identified paying for mobile access itself as a goal, this is easier to achieve via in-app payments due to increased consumer conversion and reduced payment barrier. Mobile sites requiring account creation, log-ins and so on tend to make transactions more complex for mobile users and may discourage them from using your service or products. Despite the wider reach of the mobile web, you may find better results from a smaller group of easier-to-monetise app users.

App marketplaces offer users a discovery mechanism capable of generating thousands of downloads a day with minimal ongoing effort, which is performance akin to high-level SEO.

Apps allow you to take advantage of the mobile 'halo effect' in the press. Successful apps are more likely to generate media interest, thanks to current interest in Apple who, of course, push apps instead of web. If one of your objectives is to gain publicity in mainstream press, apps will undoubtedly outperform mobile sites (interestingly, the trade press can tend to go the other way – perhaps due to the relative dearth of true innovation in mobile web).

Apps generally take better advantage of the hardware specific features of mobile – GPS, the camera, storage and so on. While mobile web is beginning to catch up (Mobile Safari for the iPhone is capable of detecting a GPS position, for example) the experience is not yet as fluid or as satisfying. If your strategy is to develop a promotional offering with novelty value, this will be an important consideration. Similarly, if your aim is lifestyle integration, apps effectively using the phone's unique properties are more likely to appear permanently on a user's phone screen, and tend to promote quick bursts of daily brand interaction for short periods of time.

If your strategy is solid, you can develop different versions of your app for each platform - there will be a development cost, but as most mobile platforms are broadly similar in terms of UX, once you have done the bulk of the work in creating your mobile idea, brand, UI and back-end integration, you should be able to make the platform specific modifications with relative ease. Essentially, your strategy should ensure that your apps are future-proof and that, whatever direction mobile takes, you're positioned to rapidly react to the next mobile OS development. There are also several solutions emerging that allow you to code your app only once but convert it to a number of different platforms automatically, although these can sometimes lack the polish of bespoke development.



MOBILE WEB – THE BENEFITS

It's generally cheaper – HTML designers are readily available and cost less to employ than app developers. You're also more likely to have the resources in-house to do simple coding – though you will most likely need the services of a mobile expert to enable you to deliver all other aspects successfully.

Your site does not have to go through an external approval process – mobile web puts your business in control, and you will have the ability to develop your site entirely to meet business needs rather than adjusting to meet the criteria set down by an app marketplace. This is particularly important if, for example, you want to set up a mobile gambling site – Apple currently does not accept any apps of this nature.

Mobile sites have greater reach - you can deploy your site once, users will have a broadly similar UX across every smartphone and you don't have to build potential shifts in the handset marketplace into your strategy. And as the site information is stored on your own servers, any updates or changes can be made quickly and universally.

There will be less impact on your business as a whole – the development of a mobile site may involve adjustments to existing infrastructure and processes rather than wholesale additions, and, while it's still important to get advice from mobile experts, should be able to use existing resources for management and measurement.

As mobile evolves, the lines between apps and mobile web will become less distinct. Over time it will become the norm for mobile sites to make use of phone functions in the same way as apps – and the word 'app' itself is gradually becoming synonymous with 'anything used on a phone'. Ultimately, it doesn't have to be an 'either/or' choice – your strategy may suggest that you should develop a mobile site first, monitor how it works and then use this intelligence to develop your app(s). This approach will guarantee that all users will have the potential to engage with your brand through your mobile product in the best way.

PLATFORM ANALYSIS

The level of interest in mobile and its rapid development means that there is any number of statistics available on each platform, its market share and rate of growth. However, when considering platforms as part of your strategy, it's important to be aware that these figures are not always reliable, the sources don't always agree with each other, and they need to be viewed in an overall market context. For example, just because a platform is growing rapidly or has a large installed base, this doesn't necessarily mean that the base is particularly involved in app culture or is suitable for successfully achieving your strategy. An example of this is Android – while it is growing at a tremendous rate, it is being used by so many different manufacturers that it is rapidly fragmenting as a market, which makes delivering the product more difficult. Similarly, smartphones overall are taking over the majority share of the phone market (predicted to be 70% by the end of 2011 in the US) and Android or BlackBerry are likely to be the biggest providers, but there is no guarantee that users will want or use the functions offered by their chosen platform. To further reinforce this, while BlackBerry may have a large share of the smartphone market, when it comes to apps it falls far behind with around 16,000 available to its users, compared with 300,000 for the iPhone.

As with all technologies, there will be cohorts of devotees making the case for their platform, with firmly expressed opinions on why it is best. At this stage, your strategy should be agnostic, as should the mobile experts you engage, until you have examined all the facts and figures and put them in context with your objectives and customer profiles.

For more detailed information and up-to-date analysis of the current mobile platform market, please see our companion document, 'Choosing a mobile platform'.

Your content will affect your platform choice

The final point to consider when you are choosing a platform is that your content will, to a large degree, dictate which direction you go in. For example, if your strategy and product definition statement suggest that you should develop a game, an app may be your only option, unless the game is heavily text-based. And if you want to inform a wide variety of potential customers about your services or capture the in-store market, mobile web may be your best choice. Interrogate your strategy – will your mobile product rely on web connectivity? Does it need to deliver timely updates? Will there be frequent interactions between the user and the mobile product?

No one element of your strategy should be the sole influencer, however – consider your goals, user demographics, infrastructure and brand together to ensure that you have all the information you need to make an intelligent platform choice.

The Rise of the Tablet

Tablet computing is by no means a recent invention. Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) have been around since the 1980s – Apple itself launched the Newton in 1987, a PDA which came complete with stylus, portable keyboard and handwriting recognition software. And in 2002, the first tablet computers running an optimised version of Windows XP entered the market, again requiring a stylus and various other peripherals for effective use.

But tablets didn't really gain traction with the mass-market until the introduction of the iPad in 2010. Apple was taking a risk – the market was virtually non-existent, and as a result so was demand. But the iPad's design and interface had a number of advantages over previous incarnations of the tablet. First, its OS was almost identical to the one used for the iPhone, so all complex functionality was stripped away – making the device ideal for a wider group of less technical users who might not previously have been interested. Second, the touchscreen vastly improved accessibility and user experience – the stylus and plug-in keyboard were things of the past. Finally, the design of the tablet itself made it portable, adaptable and desirable. From a standing start, Apple created a market and customer demand, and sold more than three million devices in the first year.

With a number of competing tablets set to invade the market (for example, the Samsung Galaxy on the Android platform, or the BlackBerry PlayBook) it's important that you make the decision where they fit in your overall strategy.

Do TABLETS FIT IN WITH YOUR VISION FOR MOBILE?

There are evidently solid cases to be made both for and against tablets as mobile devices. The one clear message is that they are viable channels to market and are likely to be around for the long term. So, as a business, you need to make a decision about whether tablets are a specific part of either your mobile strategy or your overall online strategy.

If you decide that tablets are part of your mobile strategy, this will affect your choice of platform. For example, if you're considering developing an iPad app, your mobile product should focus on the iPhone, because they share the same OS etc.

Your product definition statement should give you an idea of the best way to engage tablet users. Would they prefer an app which is broadly the same as what they can download for the iPhone, or is it best to develop an entirely separate app for the iPad? It's important to remember that it's not just a matter of offering an iPhone app which has been increased in size to fit the iPad screen – this usually results in bad graphics and an unsatisfactory UX. Developing an app specific to the iPad (or whichever tablet suits the audience you identified in your product definition statement) will allow you to take advantage of its unique features, and give users a reason to engage with you through this channel. In fact, according to global eCommerce platform Shopatron, the average conversion rate for iPad users is around 80% higher than mobile users across all platforms. So if your objective is to increase online sales, an iPad app may be your primary focus, despite a lower install base.

If you decide that tablets are part of your overall web strategy, your first consideration should be whether your existing website will work on a tablet. For example, if your site relies heavily on Flash, it will not work on the iPad. The use of touch to access information (rather than a mouse) means that features such as rollover menus will also need to be adapted, and you may wish to tweak your overall UI so that it more closely resembles the 'standard' iPad UI. Other tablets, however, such as the Samsung Galaxy, are Flash-enabled and users have less prescribed expectations when it comes to UX.

Ultimately, though the tablet market has grown considerably since the launch of the iPad and is likely to become more dominant as other devices become more readily available, mobile and web will always be bigger. It may be that tablets come to occupy their own space between the two – according to research company HUGE, the iPad is mobile, but only in the home. Users regularly carry it with them to the kitchen (for looking at recipes), to the bedroom (to catch up on TV programmes and videos) and to the living room (to browse websites and make purchases), and they consider their laptop or PC to be for 'work only'. If it continues, this usage pattern may have an impact on how tablets are treated in the future.

User experience

UX is what separates successful apps from unsuccessful ones – and it's the key area where you will need expert input. Underdeveloped feature sets can be 'rescued' by a good user experience – conversely, no matter how advanced your feature set, a poor UX will put off users and potentially damage your brand.

In this section we will offer some guiding principles of best practice for approaching UX to ensure a mobile product engages and retains users. It's not a UI guide – there are plenty available, and the experts you hire to help you develop your mobile product should have the necessary skills and experience to make sure you follow the right path. But it will inform your mobile strategy and give you an idea of the questions you should ask and the decisions you will have to make.

HUNTERS V GATHERERS

Broadly speaking, there are two types of mobile user – hunters and gatherers.

A hunter will be looking for specific information or help with performing a task, and they will require fast access and accurate answers. They may be trying to find a particular store or looking up train times, for example.

A gatherer, on the other hand, is more interested in occupying themselves, and will be taking time to browse news headlines, play games, look at catalogues and so on, often returning to engaging or dynamic content.

DATA SNACKING ISN'T EVERYTHING

Traditionally, mobile has catered for the hunters, allowing for simple 'data snacking' – dipping quickly in and out of websites and mobile apps, to check Facebook, for example, or find out the latest football scores. But as mobiles become more capable, they are becoming increasingly able to meet the needs of gatherers, as well – watching TV, reading eBooks, and leisurely catching up with the news are all possible on today's smartphones.

So, while the concept of 'data snacking' is still important – allowing users to find what they want when they want it – it's now important to consider providing the gatherers with what they need – a longer term, potentially more immersive experience. However, while gatherers tend to take more time looking for information, they still want access to it to be speedy and simple – for example, those looking for news items to read at their leisure want the headlines to be immediately available. This is typified by the success of InstaPaper, a service that allows mobile users to quickly assign news and blog content to a central list, to digest slowly later.

The key to satisfying both hunters and gatherers is to bear in mind that, if they choose to spend time either on a site or an app, it's precisely that – their choice. Access should be quick and convenient, no matter what the user is looking for or how much time they have.

Your product definition statement will give you a good idea of what type of users your customers are. If they are hunters, focus on features which enable them to achieve tasks in the smallest number of steps and minimise any functionality which does not help them. If they are gatherers, look at ways to give them instant access to the information they want to browse through, then identify ways to keep them on your site or app. Of course, it's entirely possible to provide both, but be wary of trying to do too much and turning your mobile product into a 'Jack of all trades' – it will end up being master of none unless you maintain your focus on the customer.

80/20 RULE

Generally, 80% of those with access to a mobile product use just 20% of its functionality. To ensure that you provide a good UX, look at how your customers interact with your website (particularly your mobile customers – easily done by restricting your analytics to mobile browsers or holding mobile-specific focus groups) and identify what functionality is used most, then use the information to cut down your feature set and make sure this vital 20% is as easy and intuitive to use as possible. Of course, even with stripped down functionality, users will still only regularly use the one or two functions they need – regular reviews of usage and behaviour patterns will give a clear indication of those you should focus on and help you evolve them over time.

TASK-BASED DESIGN

As we've established throughout this paper, mobile users want to accomplish tasks, whether broad (eg browsing news items) or specific (eg checking flight times). Every function of your app or mobile site should be geared towards helping them to complete their task, and everything else should be discarded. For example, a heavily branded home page with no features may look nice, but it does nothing practical for the user and should be left out of your mobile product. Mobile users tend to be time-poor, and the real estate you have to work with is very small – your mobile product can't afford to waste time or space. Question each development at each stage – is it helping the user to accomplish their task, or is it getting in the way?

KEEP IT SIMPLE

By now, it should be clear that whatever approach you choose and whichever platform you select, you need to keep your mobile product as simple as possible. Mobile users expect to be able to use an app or get access to a mobile site without help and without an instruction manual. One-word prompts, giving instructions such as 'shake' or 'tilt' are acceptable; however, if at any point in your product development process you find that you need to add an app-specific help or FAQ section, your mobile UX could probably use some work and you need to reconsider the direction you're taking.

In the long run, the simpler your mobile product, the better it will be for your business. It will be easier and cheaper to support and update, and you're more likely to have satisfied customers – make your product too complex and customers just won't use it, which will add nothing to your bottom line.

DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

As we mentioned earlier, Apple, Google and other mobile platform providers have developed sophisticated user interfaces which have been proven to work and deliver satisfying, trusted user experiences. They have invested billions ensuring that users know exactly what to expect when they press a button, swipe the screen or touch an icon. Developing custom interfaces which do not work in this way will confuse them and potentially put them off using your mobile product permanently. Being prepared to make compromises in order to meet the requirements of your chosen platform will be better for your business:

- Customers will feel comfortable using your mobile product and will be able to interact with it intuitively, as an integral part of their phone
- If you're developing an iPhone app, it is far more likely to be accepted (and even promoted) by Apple if you follow its UX guidelines
- There will be no perceived obstacles between your brand and your customers, which will encourage them to engage with and continue using your app



delivering
the
product

DELIVERING THE PRODUCT

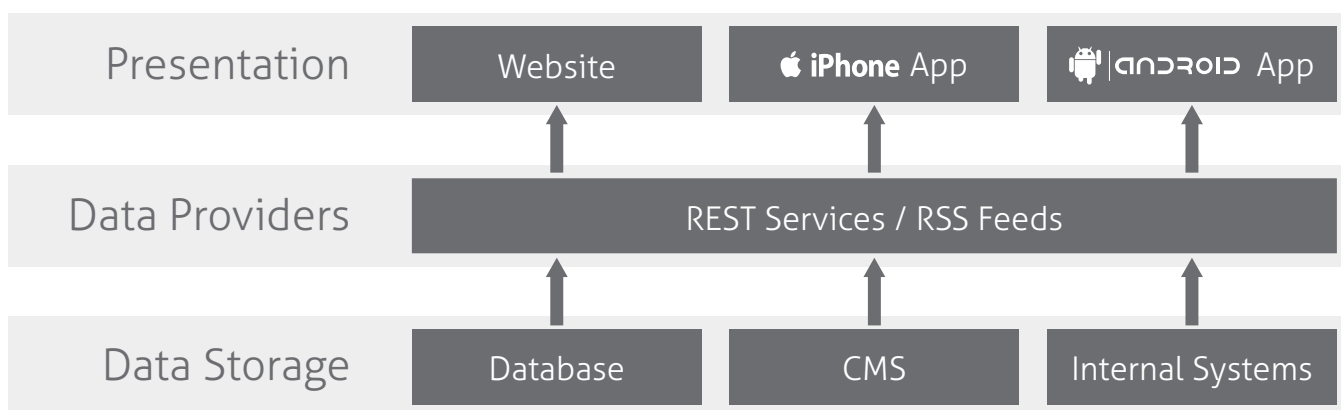
When it comes to delivering your mobile product, your key focus should be on your primary channels and ensuring mobile can integrate easily and securely with them. Physical development of your mobile product will require specific skillsets, and you need to consider where these will come from as part of your strategy. You should also have a plan for issue resolution – it pays to expect the unexpected.

INTEGRATION

The question of integration is more likely to come up if you are developing an app rather than a mobile site, as the latter tends to be built using the same infrastructure as your regular website.

Fundamentally, you need to ensure that your business is able to handle multichannel activity. If it is set up to work efficiently through all channels, this will give your business a degree of future-proofing and ensure it is capable of dealing with sales whatever platform they may originate from.

Most companies will have 'layers' of data which feed into their top-level services – the ones which are visible to their customers.



The bottom layer represents where all the information about your business is stored – we've called it 'data storage', although it can also include other internal management systems, such as ordering, resource management or supply chain. As you can see from the diagram, this is where you would find your information such as customer databases, store location information, stock levels etc.

The middle layer represents ways of translating the data to make it universally available to all business systems and potentially to the wider internet – we've called this layer 'data providers'. These can be as simple as well structured data files or web services and news feeds.

The top or 'presentation' layer represents how the data will appear to your customers. This is where the UI on your website, mobile app or mobile site appears.

A number of businesses, particularly those set up more than a decade ago, tend to have only basic data providers, if any. Generally, their data stores are directly linked to their web presence or they use data providers that are not designed to be available via the internet. This is undoubtedly the 'easy' option, but it also means that the data stores and the website are entirely reliant on each other – ie if one falls over, the other will as well. More importantly, businesses set up this way aren't geared to adopting a multichannel approach, as they don't have the infrastructure to support it.

For channels that use 'distributed software', ie apps, these data providers must be made publically available, which brings with it security and management implications that should be fully investigated.

To effectively exploit the benefits of web, mobile apps, mobile sites and any other channel to market which may emerge over the coming years, your business needs to have a platform-agnostic way of providing data in a computer-friendly manner, and ensure that there is a clear separation between the user accessing the data and the data itself.

PREPARING FOR MOBILE

The thought of making fundamental changes to your business infrastructure in order to prepare it for the mobile channel can seem daunting and complex. But it is possible to make changes incrementally rather than wholesale, and there are also many frameworks available that will allow you to make these changes without impacting your current offering or business practices. In fact, it is common for companies to build this functionality for a new mobile channel, and only move their website over when appropriate.

Look at your proposed mobile product and assess what kind of data it will need to work effectively. Does the information change frequently, or is it relatively static? For example, your company address is unlikely to change often, so it is probably safe to put it straight into your app, if required. On the other hand, if you have a catalogue of products which is regularly updated, you will need to consider where your app will get this information from – internal data stores, or external feeds? In either case, you will have to ensure that your 'data providers' are robust and secure. If the information you need comes from internal sources (ie your database), how will you go about making it available, and if it comes from external sources, how will it fit into your overall business structure?

To fully integrate your mobile activities from a business point of view, you must ensure that your primary channels are solid. If they are built on anything other than firm foundations, adding a mobile channel could become an expensive and time consuming task. So, your first step, before even considering app or mobile site development, should be to assess whether your data providers are up to scratch. Make sure that they are agnostic – ie available to all platforms (mobile web, iPhone, Android, tablets etc). Even if this involves additional development, if you do this part properly, you will only have to go through the process and invest finances and resources once and it will inevitably reduce the costs and risks involved when developing your mobile offering. The outcome will be that all required data sources are gathered together and made accessible, all logistical and technical issues will be dealt with, and your business will be able to call itself truly multichannel – essential for commerce in the second decade of the 21st century.

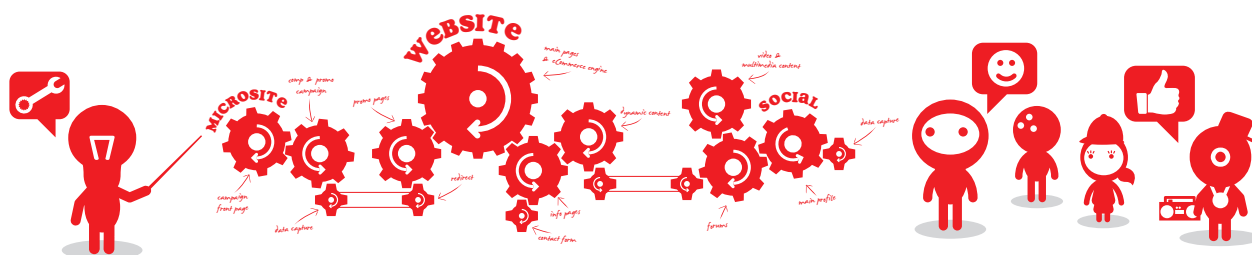
Once you have ensured that primary business functions such as placing an order, stock and payment validation, delivery processes etc are positioned firmly in your data providers rather than on your presentation level, you will have a clearer picture of what your mobile product should be, and have the data in place to back it up. Adapting your infrastructure in this way often has many other benefits beyond mobile, allowing third parties to provide additional services for your customers.

CONSIDER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MOBILE AND TRADITIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As we touched on earlier, there are a number of important differences between mobile and traditional product development. For example, mobile development requires a specific set of skills. It's not 'regular' web or software design – the UI has to conform to size, speed and storage restrictions, as well as the standards enforced by the various app marketplaces. And mobile developers are usually required to have experience in a different language to web developers – for example, iPhone apps are written in Objective C, which is effectively exclusive to the iPhone and Mac operating systems. These differences mean specialist knowledge and experience is vital for the delivery of a successful product.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, CAN YOU BRING IN-HOUSE?

If one of your overall business objectives is to develop in-house skills, you may be considering training your existing developers to deliver mobile products. However, this is likely to be a costly and time-consuming path to follow, particularly for apps – each platform has its own requirements, tools and standards, and any developer without experience of mobile will have a great deal to learn. You will have to build in extra time for the necessary trial and error involved in the learning process, and if this results in time becoming a premium towards the end of your project, you may have to resort to bringing in external resources anyway.



For large companies with technological ambitions, those focused on IT as their core business and those with mobile as a primary channel, establishing a fully-skilled internal team may be a viable long-term option – but most businesses won't have the luxury of time or the extensive budget necessary to see this through.

However, outside of designing the UI and other specialist elements, some of the basic work involved in developing your mobile product can be carried out by internal teams. For example, whoever looks after your IT will be instrumental in establishing your data providers. And a good mobile strategy should have identified key stakeholders throughout the business who will be in a position to take on a number of roles including branding, user experience and copywriting which can be adapted for mobile.

Identify where your areas of expertise lie internally, then seek out a collaborative mobile specialist who will work with you to provide you with the mobile-specific resource you need. Above all, whether they are internal or external, make sure your project manager has experience with the mobile development process, as they will be able to identify and resolve issues speedily, as well as allocate resource efficiently.

How to cope with unexpected issues

As with all new technologies (and most 'traditional' ones), the development process for your mobile product will undoubtedly encounter issues and holdups. The difference with mobile is that, as there are not many off-the-shelf software or ready-made solutions available yet, you need to develop more custom code, which brings with it an increased potential for errors. There are, however, ways to mitigate the outcomes of any problems which may occur:

- Make sure you have a strong strategy with built-in contingency plans. For example, if a function of your mobile product is proving to be too time-consuming or complex to implement, you should be able to turn to your strategy for a way of dealing with this – either planning in extra time or allowing for it to be left out of the process. Your strategy should also specify where your business is willing to make compromises, whether they are technical, financial or brand-based. Establishing levels of tolerance and areas of compromise in advance will save time and money should any issues occur, as you will have already mapped out a clear plan of action.
- Set out clear parameters for testing. The mobile landscape is fragmented – particularly on the Android platform, which operates across tens if not hundreds of different handsets. You need to decide whether you will run a comprehensive testing cycle for all devices, which will ensure in advance that your product works in all circumstances but will come at a price in terms of time, resources and finance. Alternatively, you can choose to test your product on your customers' top three or so preferred devices before launch, then deal with any bugs on other handsets as they occur, which is less thorough but quicker and cheaper to implement, and is generally acceptable to users as long as you react swiftly. Either way, you will have planned and allocated resources in advance.
- Keep your app or mobile site as simple as possible. Never lose sight of the fact that you are either helping users to accomplish a task or drawing attention to your brand in the most straightforward way possible. The simpler your mobile product, the less likely it is to fail. And, should the worst happen, the quicker and easier it will be to fix.
- Don't fixate on the edge cases. In developing mobile solutions, there are often a large number of edge cases – a combination of events or tasks the user may want or try to perform that result in unintended effects internally – and they need to be handled. These edge cases can often result in a chain of functional changes that cause large delays or big structural adjustments, and can double or even triple development costs but may only ever affect less than 1% of users. It's easy to lose sight of why changes to the original design have been made. Make sure you revisit your original specification regularly and can justify any changes you make commercially.
- The mobile market is not static – it is continually adapting and evolving. This means that there are no 'safe options' when it comes to development – what works in your testing environment today may not work in the real world tomorrow. New platforms, handsets and mobile devices will be launched in the time it takes you to prepare your mobile product, all with different specs and standards. And your chosen platform may well have issued a new version by the time you're ready to go public. All these factors are out of your control – part of your strategy should be to accept that some aspects of your mobile product development process will have to be revisited and amended retrospectively. You should also plan for regular reviews and updates of the market as a whole and your product in particular, to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

Releasing your mobile product

This chapter primarily focuses on apps, because the process for releasing them is more complex, and the Apple-specific marketplace, because they are the current market leader. However, there are a number of points to consider to ensure that your mobile product launch is successful and reaches your target audience regardless of platform.

Launching a mobile site

The key issue with launching your mobile site is ensuring it is discovered and used by new and existing customers. As there is no mechanism for 'showcasing' your site (no app stores or marketplaces), you have to build in a process for promoting it – via existing marketing, for example. When users visit your website via their phone, make sure they are directed to your new mobile version – use the research you carried out earlier to ascertain which platform they are most likely to use, and ensure your site is readily available to them. Also – and this is a consistent theme throughout this chapter – leverage the benefits offered by any press, TV, PR or other planned advertising to draw user attention to your new mobile presence.

Releasing your mobile app

If you have chosen to develop a mobile app, options for promotion will depend on your choice of platform. For example, Android has its own marketplace, but apps on this platform are also available through individual phone manufacturers (HTC, Samsung etc), networks (eg O2), independent sites such as getjar.com, and from the developers themselves. There is no strict approval process – once the app has been developed, it can effectively be launched through one or all of these marketplaces. Conversely, if you opt for an iPhone app, the Apple store will be your only marketplace, and you will have to abide by its rules for acceptance and promotion. The rest of this chapter looks at how to ensure your app has the best possible chance of clearing all the potential hurdles in its way, from registration to marketing and ranking.

Planning for app store launch

It's recommended to start planning for app store launch as soon as you decide to develop an app. Your mobile expert should be able to provide valuable insight into how the process works from their own experience, plus a steer on whether your concept as a whole is likely to be accepted. Considering all the possibilities – including app rejection and ways around it, as well as how you will market it and build awareness – before you even begin development will save time and money and mitigate any risk of failure.

Why it's worth the trouble

The App store offers a number of advantages over other app marketplaces. It's the most popular, the most polished, easiest to monetise, and the most embedded in users' consciousness. iPhone app users are entirely familiar and comfortable with discovering new apps – both free and paid for – and it is a key part of the overall iPhone experience. Though the approval process may appear daunting and potentially time consuming, if your app gets the Apple seal of approval, not only will some of its kudos 'rub off' on your brand, if you have a truly successful app (and if you have a robust strategy, there's no reason why it shouldn't be), you may well also benefit from some free promotion in association with one of the most desirable brands in the world.

A guide to the Apple process

Some parts of the Apple approval process are only available to developers and are confidential, so this guide will give an overview of how it works, issues to consider and questions to ask your mobile partner.

- Register for the Apple Developer programme. There's a small, one-off fee for this (currently \$99), and it takes about a week for the registration to become active. Your mobile partners will already have an account, but as the name you register will be the name under which the app will be released, it's important for brand recognition purposes to have an account of your own. It will also give you access to download stats, design guides, and developer materials, and importantly it links payments to your bank account. If you prefer, your mobile partners can register your name and manage the account for you. Ensure that you put this in place early, so that you are prepared for launch in advance.

- Establish whether you are going to submit your app to global locations on an individual basis or as one app which will adapt automatically to suit all territories, and the what the implications will be for localisation, translation, currencies, and differences in culture. You will also have to schedule in approval for each individual location.
- Plan the marketing package for your app. The marketing data which will surround your app in the store is effectively your 'shop front' – discuss with your mobile partners what the keywords should be, how the app will be described (especially if it is intended for an international audience) and what screenshots you are going to use.
- By far the most important issue to consider and plan for in advance is getting approval for your app. Currently, the process employed by Apple is unique – app marketplaces for handsets other than the iPhone have a much more lenient vetting process, though this may change:
 - Some types of app are forbidden and will be summarily rejected – those with offensive content, apps promoting gambling (depending on territory), certain types of coding or marketing practices and so on. An experienced mobile agency will have a clear idea of whether your app will be rejected due to any of these reasons.
 - Apple has complete control over what it will and won't approve – there are guidelines, but they are only available to developers. Again, an experienced mobile agency should be able to advise you on likely outcomes for your app. Early on in the process – ie before you embark on any time-consuming and expensive development – ask them to assess any risks and highlight ways to minimise them.
 - There is no fixed length of time for approval – some apps are approved within days, whereas others may take weeks. And while Apple always provides feedback on why the app was rejected, addressing any issues and then resubmitting does not guarantee that it will be approved the second, third or even fourth time round. Build in at least a month to your launch plan to take account of this, and be prepared to compromise on the launch date.
 - Apple tends to be egalitarian when it comes to app approval. Unless you are a major global brand or are able to provide a product which will enhance the functionality of the iPhone or Apple's own brand, you will not get any preferential treatment. The process for approval is closed, and developers are not able to enter into any kind of discussion with those involved in it.
 - It may be worth building rejection into your development strategy – employ an 'agile' process where you prepare your app and submit it ahead of time, well aware of the fact that it might be rejected. You can then use this as an iterative system to improve and enhance your mobile product until it is finally ready for launch.

How RANKINGS WORK AND WHY THEY'RE SO POWERFUL

Once your app is approved, you will be able to exploit the App Store and its powerful tools for discovery and exposure. App stores offer several methods for ranking apps – editorial (which is harder to influence) and analytical (which is easier). 'New and noteworthy', 'What's hot', 'Staff favourites', and 'Featured apps' are lists chosen by an editorial team at Apple, then publicised on iTunes and in the App Store on the iPhone itself. The paid and free top 10, 25 and 100 – rated overall and within specific categories (lifestyle, games, business etc) – are based purely on download figures per territory, and this is what you should focus on.

Appearing in one or more of the editorial lists will certainly boost your download figures – but unfortunately you can't circumvent the system or 'buy' your way in. The quality and functionality of your app is key – if it's a well-crafted app which follows the platform brand and UI, works well as a lifestyle integration tool, enhances phone functionality or simply performs its task to perfection, it's more likely to get noticed.

A select number of apps are chosen by platform vendors to appear in their TV, press and online advertising – this is, of course, extremely valuable to the chosen few, which tend to be either the first of their kind, the product of large global brands, innovative games which display the full potential of the phone or complement the vendor's ethos. Ocado, for example, benefited from around £1million of free publicity from Apple because it was a recognised brand with a well-designed app which was the first of its kind.

There's no doubt that you should aim for your app to appear in the rankings as they are the most common conduits for discovery. Making it into the top ten is worth around 5,000 additional downloads a day (in the UK Apple App Store alone), and, once you're on the list, the process becomes self-sustaining – the more people see your app in the charts, the more they will download it and the more secure your position will become.

Apple will not issue any official criteria for how their ranking process works, but from experience it appears that the charts are based on a **five-day rolling average** of downloads. So, to maximise the chances of your app getting a good ranking, it's best to plan for short, intense bursts of marketing activity – across all disciplines, if possible – which will encourage a large number of downloads over a short space of time. There are many bloggers dedicated to watching and documenting the process as it changes over time, and we encourage you to read around the subject.

GENERATING PUBLICITY

As we discussed briefly earlier, your mobile product is unlikely to succeed if it is released as a stand-alone initiative. Occasionally, apps released without fanfare have captured users' imagination and become word-of-mouth successes, but it would be unwise to rely on this as your primary means of promotion. Your strategy should include an integrated marketing plan to ensure that your mobile product is not only promoted through mobile-specific channels but also as part of your overall marketing activity.

MOBILE-SPECIFIC PUBLICITY

Apart from the app store promotions mentioned above, there are other ways to publicise your app through mobile-specific channels.

iAd and AdMob are in-app advertising systems offered by Apple and Google respectively (there are others, but these are currently the largest), allowing developers to place sophisticated, interactive advertising within their apps. They can be used to generate interest and support free apps, and in Apple's case advertising revenue is split 60/40 in the developer's favour (although they have minimum spends that are out of reach of all but the largest brands, and demand editorial control over content).

Ad rings – as we mentioned earlier, ad rings allow for cross-selling within apps which complement each other. Brands with common objectives and services which advertise on each other's apps have the potential to add value to the user's experience.

Retail apps, for example, may drive footfall to each other's stores as part of an overall, mobile-enhanced, shopping experience. There are several ways to get involved in ad rings – first and foremost, use your own market intelligence to ascertain which businesses with apps might be willing to enter into an agreement with you.

Browser client detection is a simple, low-cost way to ensure that your mobile site or app reaches your users in their own space. If you have followed recommendations for developing your mobile strategy, you should already have a good idea of which mobile platform your users prefer – you will have needed this information to make an informed decision on which direction to take when developing your app. If, for example, you know from your research that most of your audience uses an iPhone to access your site, make sure that a pop-up appears each time which encourages them to download your app or, if your product is a mobile site, ensure that they are directed there automatically.

Mobile SEO is a rapidly growing field that is moving in parallel with a rise in mobile searches. It is prudent to expand your existing SEO strategy to encompass the new channel (either with your existing agency, or a dedicated mobile search expert) to make sure you are not missing out on significant custom; with mobile searches set to overtake desktop by 2015, you will certainly need to look at this at some point, so why not now? An interesting new trend is for consumers presented with a new product or service (through a TV ad, in a store, or on a billboard poster, for example) to Google it immediately with the mobile device they have to hand, rather than remembering to look it up next time they are at their desktop. Make sure you're meeting these customers' needs (or diverting them from your competition).

UNIFIED MARKETING ACTIVITY

By this stage in the process, your strategy should have ensured that you have the right people involved internally to fully support your mobile product and its promotion. A unified marketing plan, which encompasses all elements of business promotion from press advertising to online and TV, should provide mutual benefits. A mobile product will enhance your proposition in other areas of your business (for example, a mobile store locator will drive footfall to your stores) and vice versa (advertising a mobile app in-store will encourage customers to download and use it – and offers a great opportunity for a unique online/real-world crossover).

MONITORING AND MAINTAINING THE PRODUCT

Your mobile product has been released, promoted and your customers have started using it – but that's not the end of it. Now you need to follow a process for monitoring and maintaining it to ensure that it continues to meet the objectives you set out when you started putting your strategy together. From an overall business perspective, regularly measuring your product's performance against KPIs will give you a strong steer on how the product is working for you, as well as any areas for improvement or development. For a detailed description of how to evaluate performance and put a fiscal value on it, see 'Stage Four – Evaluation' of our white paper 'Planning and Managing a Digital Strategy'.

However, as with all aspects of mobile product development, there are a number of mobile-specific issues to consider.

The mobile maintenance process is unlike the web maintenance process you may be used to – usually, products are developed, tested, signed off by stakeholders, trialled if necessary, then released, and amended as needed based on user feedback. If you have a mobile site, this is the process you will follow – you will have one version to update, it is based on your own servers and you have control over what your users see.

With mobile apps, each user effectively has an individual version of your product on their phone, so maintaining and updating it becomes much more time-consuming and complex – particularly as users can be sluggish to keep up to date with individual app patches or even the entire underlying operating system. It's important not to underestimate how long it will take to maintain and update your app, and to build in some factors which will limit your exposure to any difficulties which may discourage users from downloading your app or using it once they have it.

Test your product as effectively as you can before release – as we mentioned earlier, how you approach this depends on the platform you choose. If you opt for an iPhone app, testing will be relatively straightforward, as it is only available on one small range of handsets and through one outlet – the App Store. However, Android and other platforms will involve a more selective approach to testing, given the increasing number of different handsets available, each with different specs, screen sizes etc. And be prepared to accept that, however robust and thorough your UAT may be, as with all new technologies there will undoubtedly be unforeseen bugs and issues which you will have to deal with post-release.

Manage user expectations – there is a degree of built-in tolerance when it comes to releasing apps and mobile sites. Experienced users are aware that there may be technical hitches and teething problems – as long as you acknowledge them, and respond to any user feedback swiftly and honestly, you should be able to keep users on-side.

Mobile sites are less likely to give you timely feedback, as there is no inherent 'review' mechanism, unless you build in a satisfaction survey. If your site crashes, there is no immediate way for users to raise a public outcry, which allows you breathing space to work behind the scenes and fix any bugs without the additional pressure of universal scrutiny. Apps, however, are actively reviewed by users in a very public way. As with most feedback, users are more likely to provide their views and opinions when they are dissatisfied – those that are happy with their download tend to review less often.

Unfortunately, negative app reviews can appear directly underneath your 'shop window' in the app store. This can have a significant effect on your download numbers, which in turn will affect your position in the rankings. While it's unlikely you'll avoid negative reviews altogether (no app is ever released entirely without problems – real or imagined), you can take steps to minimise their impact. Make sure your strategy has a built-in contingency plan – interrogate your product specification:

- What happens if the app doesn't work/the mobile site crashes?
- How will the business respond to negative comments/issues brought up by users?
- What is the overall approach to error handling and release maintenance?
- How does the business ensure that the same issues don't happen twice?

These questions don't need hard-and-fast answers – all that's required is a planned mechanism for dealing with them. Your mobile partner or agency should be prepared to consider the issues and, taking into account all the relevant stakeholders, establish a viable course of action for each.

However you choose to deal with issues, whether they become apparent internally or as a result of feedback, it's vital to acknowledge them and explain how you intend to deal with them. This is particularly important when it comes to reviews for your app – if you respond in a constructive manner and take steps to fix any bugs, it's possible to turn a negative opinion into an opportunity for positive PR. It's a way to prove that you are actively listening and responding to your customers.

Updates are a positive thing

It's important to view updates – whether scheduled or in response to feedback – as a way to re-energise your mobile product and reintroduce it to your audience. There are two types of updates:

Responsive updates

When releasing app updates resulting from user feedback, not only are you able to put your app back in the spotlight again, you can also demonstrate your commitment to customer service in a tangible way. Making reference to any bugs fixed in the text which appears next to the new release in the App store, or commenting on them on your revised mobile site proves to users that you have taken their requests on board, and creates a positive brand perception. Ensure that there is a mechanism for feedback within your site or app, to show that you take customer comments seriously, and respond as speedily as you can – even if it's only to say 'thanks for your input – we're looking into it'. Remember that in some instances, you will be unable to reproduce the exact problem the user has – so it's really helpful if you ensure they're on your side and available to assist you with information about their specific setup.

Scheduled updates

Plan for regular updates which will add value to your mobile product – if you have a number of features to offer customers, release the most important ones first, then introduce the others gradually via a series of updates. This will give your users reasons to revisit and rediscover your app, and it will give the impression that your mobile product is constantly evolving.

Can you deal with surges of interest?

Occasionally, apps and mobile sites capture the public's – and the media's – attention and attract hundreds of thousands of downloads. An appearance in the 'What's Hot' list in the iTunes store, for example, can stimulate significant interest which your systems will have to be ready to support. If an upsurge in visitors to your mobile site causes it to crash, you'll have a good indication of where any issues may lie – the core message is: be prepared for all eventualities – success, failure, apathy. Review your infrastructure and ensure that your primary channels are solid enough to handle a potential onslaught.

Users won't always behave as predicted, or as you want them to – they tend to focus on one or two functions of your app or site. Assess usage patterns and use them to streamline your mobile product and tailor it to what your users need, based on actual activity. Your strategy should have a continuous feedback loop which informs current and future decisions and consistently improves your mobile offering in response to changing technology, customer behaviour and user journey.

Use evidence to measure results – when it comes to measuring results against your KPIs, it's important to rely on what your users actually do, rather than what they say. For example, your customers may tell you that they want your app to offer a weather report as well as top travel deals – but their actual usage patterns may show that they rarely check the weather and almost exclusively focus on the cheap holidays.

Have the courage to ask what went wrong, as well as what went right – your strategy should be robust enough to handle successes and failures equally, and to withstand change – whether it's technological or consumer-based. And if you reach a point where it becomes clear that it will cost your business more to support a bad mobile product than to start again and produce something better, you should be in a position to take these hard decisions with confidence, because your strategy will support you.



The next generation

Now that you have a successful mobile product, you've measured its effectiveness and you've met the objectives you set out when developing your strategy, it's vital that you do not rest on your laurels. In a rapidly evolving market, it's never simply a matter of ticking mobile off your 'to do' list and moving on – if you want to take full advantage of the opportunity you've created, your mobile product will need constant attention to ensure it is keeping pace with both the industry and user expectations.

This may involve expanding your offering into other mobile areas or platforms. You may want to consider supplementing your app with a mobile site, or vice-versa, depending on how customer usage develops. Whichever path you choose, the message remains the same – keep it simple, make sure it helps the user perform a task, and always have your key objectives in mind. One thing is certain – if you stand still, you will fall behind.

What does the future hold? Our predictions for the next five years

The history of technology is littered with predictions about the future – most of them not entirely accurate. So any forecasts we make come with a caveat – they are based on calculated guesswork derived from our own opinions and experience. Having said that, we can confidently state that there are a number of likely directions for the future of mobile:

- The number of smartphone users will grow to become the majority. Thanks to market forces and the rapid development of platforms to rival the iPhone, the cost of smartphones is steadily decreasing, and the power and functionality they offer is theoretically within everyone's grasp. This is particularly important for emerging economies in places such as South America, India and the Far East.
- Territories like Africa which do not have a robust infrastructure to support the growing numbers of people who want to access the internet are seeing their populations turning to smartphones as viable alternatives.
- Mobile internet access is rapidly reaching the point where it will overtake desktop access, and in economies where individuals cannot afford both a computer and a mobile phone, the choice is clear – smartphones offer the most vital functionality of laptops plus all the advantages of mobile telephony.
- Your competitors are very likely to go mobile in the next five years. It has proved itself to be an effective, straightforward channel to market (if structured properly, and backed by a solid strategy), and businesses with plans for growth in the future will neglect it at their peril.
- Eventually, the distinctions between mobile apps, mobile web and internet transactions will blur, and all channels will merge. Ultimately, they will simply become ways to access the same content, dictated entirely by user choice.
- App stores will still exist, because users like to have content curated for them, with a central point of access rather than having to search the whole of the web for what they need. However, they are likely to become more generic and cross-platform – for example, Amazon has its own app store, offering downloads across most platforms, and GetJar runs independently, showcasing apps for Nokia, Android and BlackBerry. Apple may currently dominate with its App Store, but this will not always be the case – the walls between app store owners are gradually coming down, and Apple will have to accept that this level of proliferation will inevitably lead to it losing a degree of control.
- Apple will also lose some of its status as a dominant force in the mobile space. No longer the underdog, its grass-roots support from those who championed it for its creativity and renegade status will diminish. As other, potentially less creative but also less rigid, platforms grow in popularity and user uptake, Apple will have to decide whether to remain inflexible in the face of change, and as a result lose market share, or adapt to emerging trends. It will still be an important and desirable brand – but there will be others presenting strong competition and plenty of new, young companies prepared to take on the 'underdog' mantle.
- mCommerce will become a driving force in retail. Customers are becoming more and more comfortable with making purchases via their phone, and technological advances are making it increasingly easy for them to do this. The advent of the mobile e-wallet will allow people to use their phones to physically pay for goods, simply by 'swiping' them over a terminal at the checkout (Starbucks has already introduced this, and McDonald's is trialling it).
- Online transactions will become swifter and more efficient, as will store location, price comparison and real-time offers based on 'live' user activity. These advances will change the face of the high street – consumers will effectively have their favourite shops in their pockets, and as a result be more knowledgeable and price-conscious. This applies to merchants too – small retailers can already use a smartphone to accept credit card payments with minimal overhead. Almost any business involved in commerce of any kind will be affected by these developments, and they will have to embrace and adapt to them if they want to compete.

- Mobile infrastructure is the only area which will potentially hold back development. The recent introduction by a number of networks of a cap (albeit a generous one) on data allowances and the increasingly fragmented nature of the industry will undoubtedly have an effect on plans for more feature-rich and data-hungry mobile products. In future, there is likely to be a delicate balancing act between demand and infrastructure.

The mobile revolution has changed the way we work, rest and play, and these devices have become our window to the world. For businesses, they are the new shopfront, and will become a fundamental part of the future of commerce. Businesses that care about their customers need to act now and become a part of it.

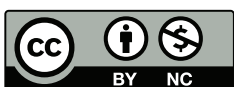


"The mobile revolution has changed the way we work, rest and play, and these devices have become our window to the world."

If you would like to talk further about any aspect of mobile, please give us a call on:

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