INFO GROVE

GUIDE TO MARKETING YOUR MOBILE APP

- FOR MUNICIPALITIES -

1. Who This Guide Is For?

This guide is meant for marketing specialists, communication managers, or anyone in charge of promoting your organization , its products and services. By using this guide, we hope to provide you with a comprehensive approach to marketing your mobile app based on our observations over the years. The guide provides concrete examples of what to do, what not to do, the channels to use (most are free), as well as a checklist you can use to prepare your marketing plan.

2. Introduction

We have been developing mobile apps since 2009, which is before most people got their first iPhone! Over this time, we've learned a few best practices for maximizing app downloads and increasing engagement. The following document will cover best practices for marketing your mobile app and prepare you for mobile success.

3. Marketing Your App 101

If you expect your new app to be in everyone's pocket within a few weeks by simply publishing it to the store, you're in for a sad awakening. Gaining mobile app downloads requires more than making one or two social media posts, it requires a good marketing campaign, a little bit of elbow grease, and all departments working together.

3.1 Understanding Your Audience

For any good marketing campaign to be effective, one must understand the target audience for it. You must understand their demographics such as age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, family situation, occupation, education level, and income. The better you can identify those traits, the better position you will be in to create an effective campaign. Work with your company's key stakeholders to understand that audience. It can be very useful to create a few personas (3 or 4) that can represent your key audience candidates so that at any time during the creation of your plan, you can review your plan with that persona in mind.

3.2 What marketing your mobile app is not...

We see many customers launch an app and post to their social media pages once and then hope for the best. Those days are over. There are millions of apps on the stores and your app will unfortunately NOT stand out. Sorry. Put plainly, if you think your target audience will find your mobile app with no prompting on your part, you will be disappointed with the download results. Our experience has shown that not marketing your app will create a very low, straight line download rate. Basically, you are relying on your audience to discover the app on their own. While both Apple and Google are good at presenting your app for download, unless you have some timely, culturally significant content you will not get their attention to feature your mobile app in their app stores. However, there are a number of both free and paid ways to effectively market your mobile app to your target audience, and better yet, measure the success of your campaign.

Here are other marketing faux pas when it comes to apps:

- Tweeting once about your app and never again.

- Making one Facebook post about your app and never again.

- Not integrating your app into all your other marketing strategies.

- Not continuing to follow up with your target audience on the existence of your app

3.3 Channels to use

Nowadays there are many channels that can be used to market your app and many of them are available for free. Below are some of the many avenues you should be leveraging to market your mobile app. Don't just do one of them, use as many as you can. If you add all sections together you can create a well-rounded marketing campaign. Use Appendix A as a checklist for your campaigns.

3.3.1 Website

● Home Page Banner or Icons

The simplest and cheapest place to start is on your website. Letting users know that you have an app should be on the home page of your website. Likely in the header or the footer. We recommend using the standard Apple and Google download badges; however, other options can work such as a little mobile phone icon. We recommend placing them near your social media icons if you have any. Obviously, the badges and icons should link to the proper download URLs for each store.

Home Page Popup or Banner

Another approach that works really well but does require a bit more effort is to have a popup/banner appear on your website when visiting from your mobile. You might have seen those when visiting some popular websites.

Here is an example from Domino's Pizza

That approach works really well to remind users that you have an app. You can also setup a cookie so if users decide not to download your app and close the popup, they are not reminded again until they clear their cookies.

News or Blog Post

Obviously, if you have a News or Blog page on your website, you should have a post about the launch of your app. Make sure that the title of the post is clear, something like "The YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME Mobile App is here" and that includes the download links in your post. Now we recommend putting the name of your organization and the term "Mobile App" after. If your organization is not well known, then perhaps something like "APP NAME - YOUR KEYWORDS" would work.
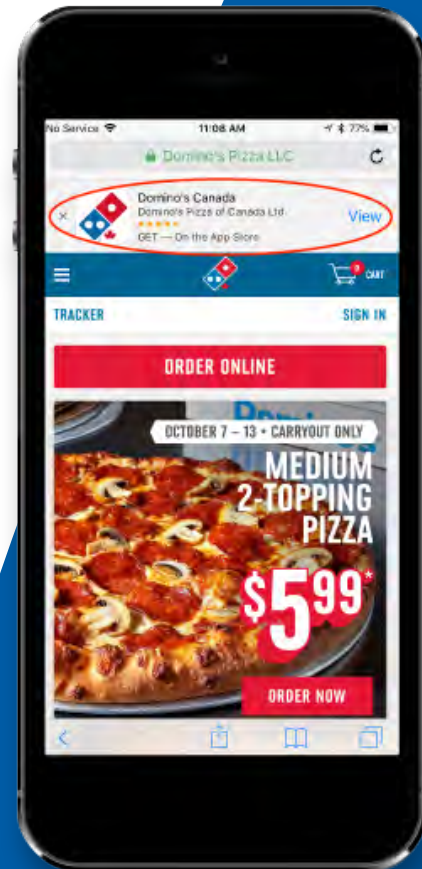
Example: *"Appyblog - The App To Help With Writing Blog Posts"*. It should be whatever you feel is the number one way users will search for your app (outside of the app stores). Now we all think a bit differently so best to talk to your colleagues or friends and ask them what words they would use to find your app. Try not to lead them too much to match the words you think will be used as that will defeat the purpose. After about 10 people, you should be able to see a pattern develop.

Don't forget to post again when you have updates or new releases. You can also do another post when you receive a very good review on the store. Leverage it to create a case study post. Another thing you can do is to find a friendly user and interview them and see why they use the app, their favourite feature, what they would like to see next and create a post about that.

● Dedicated App Page

Finally, you can create a page to let users know about the benefits of your app, including screenshots, YouTube video(s), doodle(s) and so on. Again the title of the page should be similar to what we suggested for the post. If you have done a post, then make sure the post points to the page too.
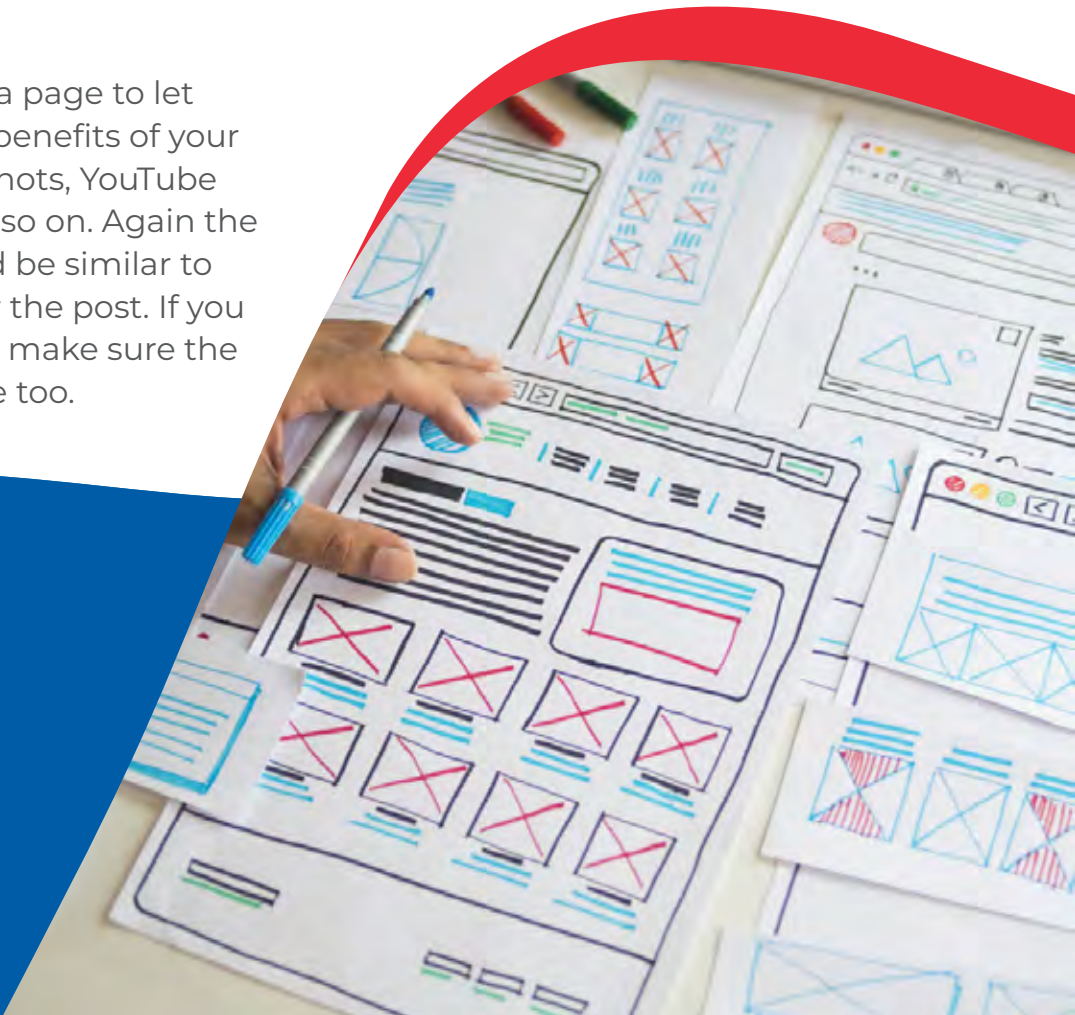
3.3.2 App Store

● Title, Description, & Keywords

It goes without saying that your app should have a good title. The title is the #1 factor for App Store SEO so choose a good name. Also, realize that your app store name doesn't have to necessarily match the actual name shown under the app icon on the phone. Apple allows 30 characters for the title while Google allows 50 characters. So again pick a name that will include the number one way users will search for your app (see above).

Next, provide a decent description for your app. It should be clear and to the point. Don't be too short but don't write a novel either. Try to highlight the benefits of your app in terms your users will understand. Apple also allows you to include keywords (up to 100 characters) that are hidden but can help in your search results. Try to think of the different ways people will look for your app (again see the exercise above) and put them there. No need to repeat the title. One trick is that since they are hidden, you can use your competitors' app name in there. Google Play doesn't offer such field but you can include the keywords at the bottom of your description (minus your competitors app name).

● Screenshots

The next important piece to increase the uptake of your app (which is also free) is to make sure to have good screenshots of your app. Yes, your description is also important and can help with App Store SEO; however, screenshots are vital once users have landed on your app listing page. People don't like reading and a picture is worth a thousand words. Make sure to include screenshots that clearly highlight your features and do more than 1 or 2. Apple allows 10 screenshots while Google allows 8 so don't be shy. One thing you can do as well is to edit the screenshots with an image editor to include a bit of text or arrows to augment your screenshots.

● Promotional Video

Furthermore, App stores allow uploading promotional videos of your app. Again that goes with the fact that users don't like to read. That can be important if the concept of your app is new and you need to educate your users as to why they need your app.

● Initial Downloads and Reviews

It is important for your app to have downloads and reviews as people like to know they are downloading something of value. Get your colleagues, friends, and network to download the app. Your employees should be a given. Now with reviews, it is a bit more tricky. Having your employees review your own app can be misleading and not recommended. People can tell when the reviews are too good to be true such as *"the most amazing app ever"*. People are also skeptical if they see a 5 out of 5 rating. Usually 4.x is the sign of an app that is very good and the rating is real. So, if you have beta users, get them to provide a review. Your app can also have a mechanism to request reviews from users from time to time but we find those generally ineffective.

3.3.3 Social Media

● Post, Post, Post

Another good approach (and again mostly free) to advertize your app is via social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. The key here is to have a consistent and constant feed about your app and its benefits. You can't just do it once. Here are some suggestions of when and what to post:

- When your app first goes live.

- At its first week, 1 month, 6 months, and 1 year anniversary and how well it is going and being accepted.

- When you do updates of the app and talk about the new features.

- When you reach download milestones. 1000, 10000, 100000 so on

- When you receive a very good review on the store. Leverage it to create a case study post. It can be the same as your website blog post (see above) or perhaps a smaller version of it.

- Find friendly user and interview them and see why they use the app, their favourite feature, what they would like to see next. Again it can be the same as your website blog post or perhaps a smaller version of it.

There are tools to help you automate this entire process such as Hootsuite and Buffer so that you can just sit down once and create an elaborate post schedule for the next month, year, so on.

● Promoted Posts

Now since the social media frameworks get paid on advertising, you can easily pay a little bit of money to promote some of these posts (the more important ones) and select the audience that will see your posts.

● Pure Ads

Those networks make a killing with ads for a reason, their ads work. You can start small, find a good target group and spend a bit of money and see the results. Make sure the value statement is clear. Review that with others (usually outside of your organization) to make sure it is. You may have to tweak it over time.

● Likes & Shares

We live in a "Likes" driven world. Get your colleagues, friends, and network to like your posts and share them. Every one of those add up. Again don't be shy. There is no reason for your employees not to. They all will benefit. Liking and sharing are not the same as a review, it is quite ok to like your own product or service.

● Influencers

Reach out to local influencers or to influencers in your domain to see if they would be willing to do a review. Some of them will want to be paid but for some of them, it is a way for them to push more content and they will be happy to do it for "free" or in exchange for something else.

If your app is fairly novel, you have the opportunity to appear in podcasts as again they are happy to have new content.

● Banners

Much like on your website home page, you can include references to your app on the banners of your social media page. You may not be able to provide links but simply letting users know that your app is available on the app store will help. You can even start with a more elaborate banner when you first launch your app where the app is front and center and then later one, you replace the banner with something where the mention of the app is more subtle but still visible to users.

3.3.4 Traditional Ads

● Facebook Killed The Radio Star

Now obviously traditional ads are still a good approach to get downloads for your app. It is obviously not free but can be very effective. There are many mediums available such as TV, Radio, Bus Stops, and Billboards. The exact medium to choose will depend on your audience and how best to reach them. We have worked with a travel company that booked bus stop ads outside of the passport offices in town and got great traction from that. Most cities we have worked with get good traction from bus stops ads as well.

Radio stations are also trying to find ways to stay relevant and can offer pretty good return on investment, especially if your audience is a bit older. The one drawback of traditional media is that it is harder to measure their effectiveness or to guarantee that only your target audience will see your ad. That being said, by using a vanity URL or even a QR code, you can easily extract a further digital measurement on the success of the display ad campaign.

For some solutions like Uber, where you target two different user bases (suppliers and customers), you have what we call a chicken and the egg problem. You can't get suppliers on board because you have no customers and you can't get customers onboard because you have no suppliers.

● Conference / Trade Shows / AGM

One simple approach is to have banner made letting attendees know about your app. If you are the organizer of such an event and you have an app for it, make sure you have a banner at all the entrances to your event or at least one at the main entrance. Banners can be done for $100 to $300. You can also include links to the app in the signature of your event emails (registration confirmation emails, reminders, so on).

● App Marketing Tip: Exhaust digital first: It's Measured!

Machine Zone CEO Gabe Laydon explains why he maximizes his online digital spending over traditional media for his Game of War and Mobile Strike free casual games. You can watch his 39 minutes video here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXBqzpExvrk

3.3.5 Outbound Marketing

● Newsletter / Email

This approach should be tied to your social media campaign. Let users know in your daily/weekly/monthly newsletter that the app is available when it is first launched and then include it in the signature (similar to the home page). You don't need to wait for your newsletter either. Your app is important and a major milestone so don't be shy and let users know about it. Again it is free. That being said, you may want to restrain yourself from emailing about it as often as you would on social media.

Press Release

Write an SEO friendly press release. You can do press release for about $300 these days. Once the press release is done, share it on social media and also share it with local business associations, business newspaper or news agency. CNN will likely not cover you but a local news agency will likely be glad to and do it for free. That being said, if your app is groundbreaking, then do reach out to the major news agency to let them know. Make sure your app is fully working first!! No bugs. Either wait until your app is fully mature (been on the app store for a few months with some downloads and good reviews) or make sure you have tested it to no end. For a large audience like that, your testing effort should almost be close to double your development effort. So if you spent 400 hours developing the app, you need to spend 800 hours testing it. The last thing you want is to have CNN show you on their front page and then users reporting that it crashes or doesn't work.

Awards and Recognition

If your app is novel enough, you can look to obtain awards and recognition. Some of these are paid for but some are not. Again your local business association may be a place to start. One of our customers got an award from their parent business affiliation.

3.3.6 Encouraging Downloads

Another way to increase your downloads is to force users to download it if they need to perform tasks or make the app the exclusive place to obtain certain content. We have some of our customers who have created special launch programs with gifts for users that comment with the app or send a request, so on. Conferences, trade shows, and AGMs are a good place to encourage downloads. Only provide your schedule in the app or asks users to vote in the app.

3.3.7 The App Itself

● Frequent Updates

Now it may be strange to put the app as a channel as a way to market your app but it goes without saying that if your app doesn't provide value, it won't get downloaded or will get downloaded and get deleted shortly after. One of the biggest mistakes we have seen is not keeping your app's content up to date. By keeping your app's content up to date, it allows you to constantly follow up with your target audience to keep them engaged. But most important, app development is not a "set it and forget it" service, it requires constant value to keep people coming back for more. Ensuring people keep using your app will require you to leverage your app's capabilities to the best of your ability. Moreover, you need to refresh your app when Apple or Google launches new OS versions to make sure your app is still compatible with them. Nothing deters users more than seeing an app that hasn't been updated in years.

● Leverage Push Notifications

Using push notifications to provide valuable notices to your users is never a bad thing. Yes, some users turn them off but if your push notifications are timely and provide value, they will remind your existing users the value of your app and it can lead to word of mouth advertising. It can be as simple as your users knowing that there is a downtime maintenance window coming up (avoiding your users some grief) to more important notices such as road closures, last-minute venue or time change, or letting users know about new features or new updates.

3.3.8 Other Channels

There are some channels that you can leverage to increase your downloads. Your email signature is a good place. Ask employees to include download links or make it easy for them by formatting their signature for them with the relevant links. Recall the "Sent from an iPhone" tactic used by Apple at the beginning.

Your business cards can also be a place. Use the back or mention it along with the list of your social media channels.

4. Key Takeaways

1) You are your best advocate: Use your website and your employees.

By now you have surely noticed that more and more of your target audience has been connecting with your website from their mobile devices. This may even have been your statistical justification for having a mobile app built. With the addition of a very simple, pop-up on your website you can redirect incoming visitors to download your newly minted mobile app. Links and advertisements on the front page of your website are also effective, but nothing grabs the attention of mobile users like an option to opt out of the mobile website and download an app.

Leverage your employees to market your app in their channels.

2) Social media marketing: The Freemium Approach

That intern in the corner churning out clickbait? Get them in the routine of posting that you have a mobile app to download! Your social media following, if it is engaged in what you are posting, will take to this message quickly. But remember, you can't get away with posting once in the social media world. Your posts are now getting buried in your target audience's social media feeds, so it's critical to re-post the app's availability on a routine basis, and even think about paying to boost your posts. Now, if you followed tip #1, all your social media posts that connect back to your website will also lead to the app being advertised immediately to your mobile users. Think of this as the tag team of free digital marketing app techniques.

3) Performance advertising: Targeted and measurable

Facebook and Google, as was pointed out by Gabe Laydon, the CEO of Machine Zone (Must watch interview) are performance marketing firms. They get paid to position ads to your target audience. Make use of these ads and position yourself against the right keywords and demographics. TV and radio have proven to be effective ways of marketing, but as Gabe shares, try exhausting digital advertising before spending on these traditional media. Even if the numbers seem low at first, digital at least gives you an accurate measure of what your audience is clicking on versus the Hail Mary marketing approach still embraced by traditional broadcast media.

4) Display advertising: Be seen where it counts

When your content is targeted to an audience sitting in a doctor's office or standingin a bus shelter, why not just use a poster to ask them download your app? While digital advertising is tightly targeted, it is constrained to the online world, and display advertising offers additional value based on the location context of the display which helps to trigger the desire to download an app.

In all the cases above, you will be able to benefit from a digital measure of your campaign's success to get your mobile app downloaded. Commit to putting the best mobile app download marketing practices into your release plan!

5. Conclusion

In 2022, mobile apps accounts for over 80% of all digital media time (emarketer). Your audience is already familiar with mobile apps, but it's your job to educate and remind them as to why they need YOUR app. Yes, these marketing tips may take time and sometimes money but they are a must. A carefully planned strategy can be done with very little effort in the long term.

Every mobile app serves a purpose, whether to communicate with a target audience, play a mobile game, or a tool for day-to-day activities. Use digital media and traditional ads (some) to create awareness and excitement about your big launch!

6. Appendix A - App Marketing Checklist

ACTIVITY	CHANNEL	FREE OR PAID	DONE
Include download badge/icon/links on home page	Website	Free	
Add popup on the home page to inform users about the app	Website	Free	
Publish news/blog post on launch and app updates	Website	Free	
Create a dedicated app page	Website	Free	
Come up with a good title, description, and keywords	App Stores	Free	
Include great screenshots	App Stores	Free	
Produce a promotional video. Re-use on a dedicated app page.	App Stores	Free	
Obtain initial downloads from employees	App Stores	Free	
Get reviews from beta users, early users	App Stores	Free	
Post when the app goes live	Social Media	Free	
Post on anniversaries	Social Media	Free	
Post on updates and new features	Social Media	Free	
Leverage good reviews to create a post	Social Media / Website	Free	
Create a case study from friendly users	Social Media / Website	Free	
Promote your social media posts	Social Media	Paid	
Create social media ads/campaigns	Social Media	Paid	
Likes & Shares by employees	Social Media	Free	
Reach out to influencers	Social Media	Free / Paid	

Include app on your social media banners	Social Media	Free	
Use traditional advertising media such as TV, Radio, Billboards	Traditional	Paid	
Create banners for a trade show, conference, AGM	Traditional	Paid	
Include mentions of in your newsletter on launch and app updates	Email	Free	
Publish press release on launch	Press Release	Paid	
Apply for awards	Traditional	Free / Paid	
Encourage downloads by providing some content only in the app	App	Free	
Include app in your email signature	Email	Free	
Include app in your business cards	Traditional	Free / Paid	