

Building an app requires a good development platform

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In response to a business pain, you've dreamed up a great new app idea and have embarked on a litany of Google searches that probably involved the words 'how to build my awesome new app'.



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You are thinking: I have the app that business needs. Well, you've come to the right place. App development is only treacherous without a sound strategy backed by technology such as a best-of-breed development platform. Some brilliant developers or business owners, with amazing app ideas have tanked because they didn't consider their strategy well enough beforehand.

So in an effort to help you build a great app, let's do a little homework.

Start lean!

Taking a lean start-up approach to the development of the app is ideal. Before trying to take an app to market, first identify key market segment/s and then make some assumptions about the problem being solved for each of them.

Assume that the target market is spending time or money trying to solve a problem - but are they really? Those assumptions should be validated through testing. The best strategy to adopt is a minimal viable product (MVP) approach.

Critical feedback

An MVP is a trimmed down version of an app (a prototype) - containing only those features that will make it deployable. Then the prototype can be deployed to a subset of the target market - the ones that will grasp the product vision and provide critical feedback, enabling you to test whether the product is worth the effort. An MVP further allows you to test one feature at a time with each target market, truly validating the app concept before it's launched.

An app developed for a specific device to take advantage of its unique features is a native application. A quick-and-dirty native app might seem like a hot ticket, but remember that as the app rolls out your code won't play with the operating system of other devices.

When developing an app for business, remember that there is a bring your own device (BYOD) culture out there, and developing native apps slices the target market into bite-size sections and appeals to the biggest slice to try it despite its one-dimensional functionality. It also limits your ability to integrate seamlessly to back-end or public services.

The opposite of native is to develop the app on a web-based platform such as HTML, CSS3 and JavaScript. Web-based gives you the edge, in that it's faster and cheaper and enables scripting once across multiple devices. The only dark cloud is that web-based apps don't take advantage of specific features. However, eliminating the need to develop the same app across various devices is a compelling silver lining.

And then, there was hybrid - which splices the best native app capacities with the best web-based capacities. Unfortunately, no mobile browser comprehensively supports HTML5.

Skilled developers

If you are a business owner and you aren't coding it yourself, you'll need developers. If an IT team is on hand, make sure they have the skills required to realise your dream app. If they don't, they'll have to either acquire the skills or outsourcing may be required.

Keep in mind that during development, screaming technicalities could pop up that haven't even been considered and that might slow down the process. The alternative is to choose an app development platform, like OutSystems Platform, that allows for the development of multi-channel apps quickly by eliminating the need for time-consuming hand-coding and utilising the resources on hand - crushing the cost of outsourced expertise and reducing the dependency on scarce skills.

By utilising an MVP model you have already received user feedback, and know what to tweak or add to the app that will ultimately make it better and more competitive. However, successful apps have to keep up with ever-changing operating system updates and you'll need to be able to roll with these punches.

Apps have to be flexible, constantly changing and evolving at a moment's notice. This is why app development platforms need to make rapid iteration as simple and seamless as possible.

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