

COLUMNS

How apps can drive business objectives

January 25, 2011



By **Adam Levene**

Remember the summer of 2008? Britain was in financial meltdown and the rain had yet again replaced the sun. For some, the new iPhone 3G provided that much needed ray of sunshine. iPhone users were drunk on Carling iPints, dizzy from Barclay's water slides and the Zippo lighter app gave guys an excuse to talk to girls in bars. The app frenzy was born. The iPhone finally gave marketers the opportunity to get their brands into the hands of customers, providing immersive, viral experiences.

Marketing can do one of three things: inform, add value or entertain, all with the objective to sell.

The pioneering brands that created apps for this unknown medium quickly earned the respect of the industry but set a dangerous trend. Their apps only entertained. Other brands followed.

Now in 2011, the industry has come a long way. Smartphones are mainstream, with all the manufacturers now harnessing the app eco-system.

Whilst there is still a major hype around mobile apps, brands have realized they need to justify ROI and drive that ultimate business objective to sell.

Our recent app development with Xbox for its Fable III release is a prime example of an app that is driving business objectives.

Xbox Kingmaker is a location-based game that allows gamers to plant flags and collect treasure.

Treasure is collected nearby the retailers that stock the full game, constantly driving in-store footfall.

Additionally, the treasure collected in the mobile game is ported immediately to the full game when the user inserts the disk into the Xbox. The head start achieved in the mobile game gives gamers further reason to buy the full release.

The app Grapple has developed for Premier Inn is another example.

Britain's largest hotel brand is going through a revival with comedian Lenny Henry fronting its advertising campaigns. It would have been very easy to create a Lenny Henry soundboard app but how would it drive sales?

Instead we have created an application that allows people to find their nearest Premier Inn, check availability and book a room from within the app.

This is far handier than a soundboard the next time you are stranded in a service station at 3am.

And here lies the shift.

Mobile has the power to fundamentally change a business. the same way the Internet did in the late 90's and early

00's.

Apps are at the forefront of this change and brands are waking up to their true potential.

Whilst the world needs laughter, entertainment apps will always maintain a role.

I took great joy from the Compare The Market soundboard, hearing Alexander the meerkat repeat his "simples" catchphrase, but the life of the app is limited.

What would have been really useful when recently hunting for a new car is a Compare the Market app that allows me to snap the registration plate, presenting me with a list of car insurance quotes.

We as marketers often lose sight of that ultimate business goal to sell. If we do not sell, we do not have jobs. You cannot eat yellow pencils.

When you are planning your next app build marketing campaign, keep these questions in mind:

1. Will this app reach my target audience?

At Grapple, we receive endless briefs for iPhone apps even though the brand's audience often does not own iPhones.

Know your target audience, understand smartphone user profiles and then build for multiple platforms to extend the reach.

2. Will this app help sell my product?

Find mechanics within your app that will provide value to customers; to increase loyalty and ultimately sell.

Add store-finders, give vouchers, make use of barcode scanners to link the app to the retail presence, and make your app transactional.

Adam Levene is chief strategy officer of Grapple Mobile, London. Reach him at adam.levene@grapplemobile.com.

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

American Marketer is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.