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Business at its best

5 trends in mobile business apps in 2015

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Mobile applications have shaken up day-to-day business practices for millions of sales teams as well as those in other fields, and it is easy to see why. Mobile devices put vital information at a user's fingertips, making an impact on efficiency and the bottom line.

But clients and application developers alike can run into trouble if there is no balance between the focus of the goals and the functionality of the technology.

In 2015, we expect renewed focus on combining engaging design elements with practical considerations, especially in the learning and process improvement environment.

These are the serious conversations we are having with clients as we enter 2015.

1. Design it once and expand
Clients are facing a challenge trying to keep up with the ever-multiplying stream of device sizes and platforms.

Although we still see the biggest demand for iOS applications, IDC recently projected that Windows tablets may prove to have grown by 67.3 percent year over year in 2014, and Android devices have remained popular with clients.

For creative directors and app developers, that means having a strategic plan for seamless integration across multiple platforms.

Ultimately, clients are looking toward an agnostic framework, allowing for apps to be created once while having the ability to be used across multiple devices.

2. Multiple choices, but selective executions
Despite the obvious challenges of multiple devices, clients who are investing in their first apps can become overly excited by the rich media options and 3D animations.

Feature-rich and engaging media create a better user experience. However, if the end user cannot efficiently and effectively run the app on the device, the objective is lost.

An important aspect of the digital process is to maintain the relevance of older devices. Animations can be built, but the media is taxing on older devices. It is our job to help clients stay on a "data diet."

3. Useful content management systems and in-app analytics
Clients are busy, and mobile properties and in-app analytics can fall to the bottom of the priority list.

However, content management systems can save time and increase efficiency by updating and distributing

information quickly and securely across multiple channels in real time.

Built-in tools from digital publishing platforms integrate analytics that allow small investments of time to see use patterns and imperative areas of your application. This data should constantly be monitored, allowing for continuous improvement and reimagined use cases.

4. Mind the geography
The geography of your users or client's users is imperative when designing mobile applications.

Smartphone apps are used effectively in many international countries. However, tablet penetration is on a steady incline, but nowhere near U.S. statistical use averages.

5. Give apps a clear purpose
The common temptation is to build an app that does as much as possible.

However, we predict the most successful business apps for the coming year will be directly usable on a regular basis, and concentrated on executing a few functions exceptionally well.

IN A CONSTANTLY shifting landscape, our jobs as digital designers and architects become multifaceted.

We all need to be advising our clients on aspects of business, marketing, device considerations as well as creativity.

This year will be a new benchmark for enterprise mobile apps. Those that plan strategically and use the tools available will be satisfied with their investments.

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