

COLUMNS

How Everything-as-a-Service will help brands on mobile

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By [Steve Chung](#)

Increasingly, brands that previously relied on non-interactive advertising to reach their customers are leveling up their engagement strategies by building branded mobile and Web applications.

Apps should be viewed as a crucial marketing tool. Not only does the app occupy real estate on a consumer's mobile device, it also serves as a direct communication channel between the marketer and the end user.

Having prime real estate on a consumer's phone is what we call "pocketshare." Apps provide customers with value, build communities of power users, give companies highly controlled opportunities for branding with copy and design, and act as a magnifying glass that reveals customer sentiments and behavior trends.

Financially, mobile apps are a way to bolster existing revenue streams. If monetized in the right way, they can even create a new source of revenue.

If you ask me, that kind of opportunity comes with a lot of pressure.

Cross that

How can a company get everything right so that its app is a smash hit, both for users and the business' bottom line?

There is so much to perfect: the user experience, the underlying technology, the design and the key features to include.

Since we are in the early era of apps, marketers and developers are still ironing out best practices. But luckily, we are also far enough along that wonderful third-party service providers are working hard to perfect specific areas of the mobile app experience and architecture.

We have NewRelic and Kissmetrics for analytics, Stripe for payment processing, Kinvey for the mobile backend, and Zendesk for customer service, to name a few.

The term XaaS, or "Everything as a Service," points to the proliferation of on-demand cloud services.

My advice to brand marketers: if you want to develop an app but are afraid of losing sleep over it, consider relying on XaaS.

We have entered an exciting age where you can now shop the shelf for important app features.

Chances are, third-party service providers have crafted the best user experience out there and are actively improving it. They also have the resources to invent and rigorously test new in-app marketing tools to help you drive revenue.

In fact, many companies exist for the sole purpose of perfecting these features so that you do not have to.

Inside the box

High-quality, off-the-shelf and white-labeled services save you tons of time, money and even mistakes, so that you are free to focus on other business objectives.

Before mobile and Web apps, there was hardware, and we still see the same model of leveraging off-the-shelf services at play.

For example, computer manufacturers rarely build their own microprocessors and microprocessors are the heart and brains of every modern computer.

Instead, computer brands buy them from a microprocessor manufacturer that specializes in that space.

Intel, a prime example of a microprocessor leader, makes these chips more efficient and cutting edge with each new release.

Intel chips currently power many different computer brands. Put an Apple, Dell and HP laptop side-by-side and the average end consumer would never know that they are all using a microprocessor made by Intel.

By using third-party microprocessors, these brands not only saved themselves from reinventing the wheel many times over, but they also saved themselves time and money.

What is really interesting is that each of these three companies sit on the same foundation of Intel chips, yet they each had the creative freedom to build incredibly distinct brands and business models.

AT THE END of the day, if you are a brand that does not have an app yet, you could be left behind.

The good news is that there are so many specialized services for brands who want to build their own native apps, with many more to come in the next few years.

If you pick the right ones, your development experience will be smoother and you will end up with a richer final product.

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