

COLUMNS

## Five questions to ask before starting a mobile development project

July 19, 2011



By [Paulo Camara](#)

With the launch of the Apple iPad 2 in March and the growing number of competitive offerings from Samsung, Toshiba, Sony and others, it is clear that tablets are here to stay.

This increasingly crowded market represents another evolution in mobile devices and allows us to have the world at our fingertips like never before.

Because it promotes this ability to connect users no matter where they are, mobile has solidified its position as one of today's most vital marketing channels.

Not surprisingly, one of the biggest trends we have been seeing lately is that more companies are developing mobile applications aimed at marketing new products and services.

But developing apps for mobile is different than developing apps for the Web.

While the reason for creating them may be similar, before you engage in a mobile development project, you need to ask yourself some key questions.

What business need will the mobile application serve?

Seemingly obvious, this question is often skipped over by too many companies, both large and small.

Instead, they become enamored with just having a mobile app in the marketplace leading to plenty of sleek, shiny apps that ultimately enjoy a very short shelf life.

Before beginning a mobile development project, it is critical to consider how the app will be used to both engage the target customer and contribute to the company's overarching marketing strategy.

Also critical is establishing a customer development process, working with the customer to determine the need that will be fulfilled and developing the app with that need and the business goals in mind.

What methods will the development team use?

The methodology used to develop a mobile application can be almost as important as the concept behind the app itself.

Indeed, it can contribute significantly to determining what features will be included in the launch version of the app, and delivering it to market so it starts generating value for your business right out of the gate.

Some of the most successful mobile projects are those that employ a combination of agile methodologies and lean principles in the development process.

Agile, which most are familiar with, is an iterative process that enables companies to build and deliver apps quickly.

Lean, on the other hand, focuses on streamlining and delivering value to the project by eliminating waste in the value chain, helping the development team to determine which features are essential and which can be saved for future versions.

The principles of lean can be used to complement agile, ensuring a smooth development process and fast delivery of the app to market.

Can your infrastructure handle success?

Too often a company develops a mobile app and has high expectations for user engagement, only to have performance and bandwidth issues that bring their servers crashing down.

This makes usage difficult and, as a result, users quickly lose interest. Does not make it much of a marketing vehicle, does it?

The cloud has emerged as a real and viable solution to the question of infrastructure.

Recent hiccups with certain cloud providers notwithstanding, developing mobile apps in the cloud effectively takes infrastructure out of the equation, giving companies a cheap and scalable way to support rapid growth.

This allows the company and development team to focus on more important things, such as adding new features to the app that will really bring value to the user and, as a result, the business. It is one less thing to be concerned about, and a major thing at that.

When planning a mobile app development project, be sure to consider working in the cloud, to ensure that the app produced is ready for the success it can achieve.

Does your team understand more than just development?

Companies may have the technical proficiency within IT to get an app developed, but it is critical that the app developers align with the company's marketing strategy to ensure the end user actually downloads it.

Most mobile projects demand creativity, digital marketing expertise and a thorough understanding of the user experience on top of development skills.

When beginning a project, it is important to question whether your company possesses the capabilities demanded in both the development and discovery processes to address the customer's needs, and to align the different perspectives to ensure a smooth delivery of the product to market.

What does the user really want?

This one actually has two parts the before and the after. The "before" refers to creative design and development, and questioning which features will engage users and inspire them to make the oh-so-important recommendation to their friends.

The "after" refers to the customer feedback loop, and how it impacts the delivery of future iterations.

Both parts involve customer engagement throughout the development and design process of both the initial app and future versions. It is also critical to deliver these versions to the customer quickly.

Smartphones have already become an integral part of our daily lives, and the launch of the iPad 2 made it clear that tablets have taken hold as the next evolution in mobile.

The opportunities for marketing on this channel are there for the taking you just have to find them. And while engaging in a mobile project can have many benefits, these benefits can be accompanied by potential pitfalls.

When developing an app, it is critical to combine digital marketing expertise and development skills, while also understanding the business need and how this need relates to the user.

When developing a mobile app for marketing purposes, be sure to ask the right questions, so the mobile projects will end up yielding real business results not just a shiny new app.

*Paulo Camara is mobile services manager at [Ci&T](#), Campinas, SP, Brazil. Reach him at [proberto@ciandt.com](mailto:proberto@ciandt.com).*

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

American Marketer is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.