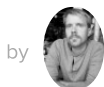# App User Engagement: Expert Advice (Part 1)

by   Matt Anderson

I've asked some of my favorite product management and UX colleagues about best practices for keeping mobile app user engagement successful and fresh past year 1. The basic questions were:

• What are the apps that you've had for a while doing to keep users engaged?

• In your experience, what are the best ways for an app to tell a user about a new feature?

• As time passes, how should an app handle a user who's forgotten a password, allowed a credit card to expire, or had an email address bounce the app's emails?

• Do you have other tips and tricks for keeping users engaged with an app after year 1?

If you want to learn from the experts, read on. You can see more in Part 2 and Part 3.

1. Ellen Chisa

VP Product, Lola Travel

www.ellenchisa.com | @ellenchisa

What do successful mobile apps do to keep you engaged?

Not nearly enough! Apps that keep me engaged create habit-forming behavior, or tie to a real world trigger.

A great example of habit-forming behavioral design is the Equinox app. You need to use it every time you go to the gym, which means I'm frequently opening it and thinking about it. MINDBODY creates a white label app that does something similar for smaller studios.
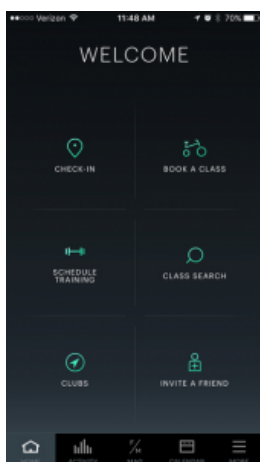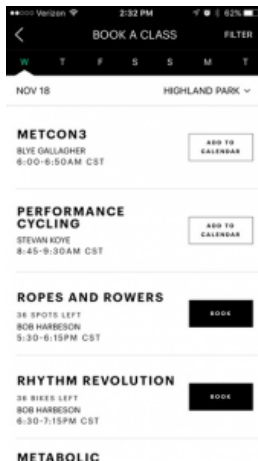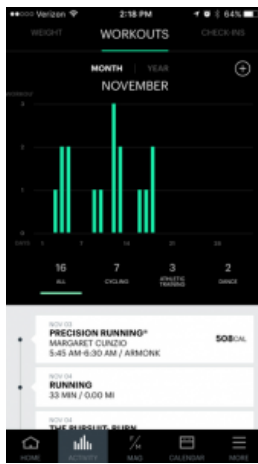
Photo credit: Equinox

Another interesting one is the Spire app, which has a hardware component. When you're in the backstack view, the app changes to say "Spire can't track your day if you close the app." The big text & the change always make me notice it when I'm looking at everything that's open, and keep me engaged.

Apps that don't have a trigger or habit component can be challenging. The one that's kept me engaged the longest is Threes. The puzzle keeps me interested because there's no end – I can always keep getting better. They don't even need to add new content. At some point, Two Dots lost me, even though it changes more often. I didn't like the new type of levels, and that caused me to fall off.
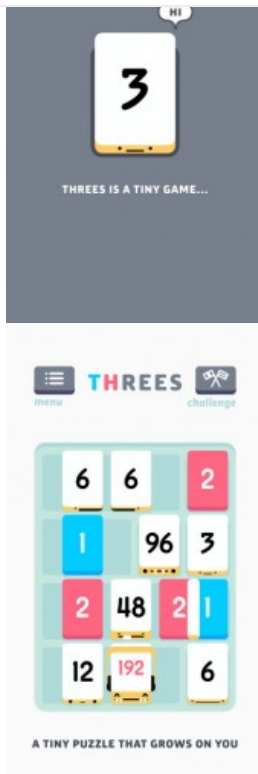
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Photo credit: Threes

How should mobile apps handle a user who's forgotten a password or allowed a credit card to expire?

On mobile, password recovery is much more seamless with a one-click login link from an authenticated email/phone number (like what Slack uses). I expect all apps to move in this direction and for it to be the new standard reset flow.

Similarly, apps that allow a photo of a credit card (using card.io, for instance) are more frictionless. Streamlining user behavior is even more important on mobile than it is on desktop.

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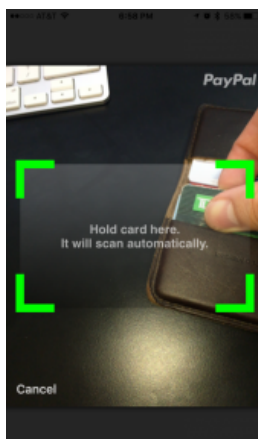
Senior Product Manager

LinkedIn | @Li_Li_D

What's been your success strategy for keeping your mobile app engaging to users?

We use continuous development to deploy app updates every 4-6 weeks to add new features and keep improving functionality.

At Hilton, our situation is unique because our app supports a physical business. So we have the benefit of having face-to-face, phone and email interactions with app users to highlight new features. We also have heavily integrated our mobile apps into our value proposition, so that it is mentioned in all of our marketing vehicles.

How should mobile apps handle forgotten passwords and other data that gets stale over time?

The ability to reset a password from a mobile device is table stakes in this day and age.

Every app should allow users to reset their authentication credentials within the app. As far as other account data, using push notifications and email as communication channels is helpful to let users know when data that needs to be refreshed.

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How do the mobile apps you use keep you engaged?

Push notifications to encourage ongoing usage/records, as well as a reminder when your favorite/previous purchase is on sale or available.

Specifically, I think of MyFitnessPal that reminds you to enter your food and exercise and not skip a day if you missed one, and then Munchery, which notifies you when a meal that you liked previously is available that day for delivery. Both of those are via push notifications.

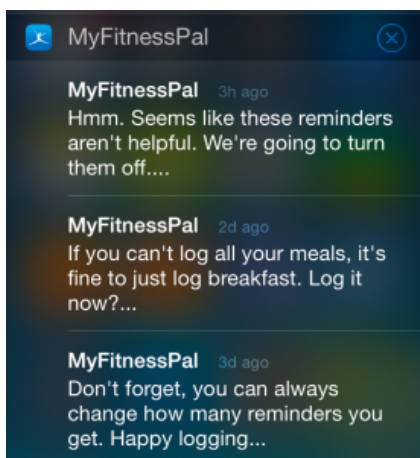Photo credit: MyFitnessPal via Andrew of LittleBigDetails,

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that is sent out to the users in the community.

How should an app handle an expiring account?

Contact the user in a friendly manner both via mobile and non-mobile channels such as via push notifications if they still have the app, and email if they shared that information for customer communication.

However, attention to the marketing rules such as SMS regulations which differ broadly by country and CAN-SPAM are important if you should use the channels outlined in the rules.

What are some tricks to help remind users of all their good times with a mobile app?

Recognition for how long they've been part of the community.

I think specifically of communities such as the Starbucks Gold Card that has "Member Since 2002 " under my name on the card, or Twitter where it mentions the date you joined (November 2008 under my @tektalk profile)

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🔗 about.me/tektalk
📅 Joined November 2008
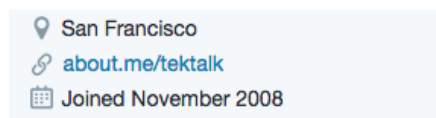
Photo credit: Twitter

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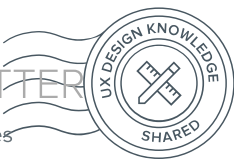
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