

Best Practices for Push Notifications

An **Amazon Appstore** eBook

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What Are Push Notifications and Why Are They Important?

Push notifications are alert-style messages that appear on the home screen of a user's device (or in the case of TV, as a pop-up at the top or bottom of the screen). The notification will appear regardless of whether that user has the app open. They provide an opportunity to connect and re-engage users with your app.

Users are typically presented with the option to consent to receive push notifications during the app installation process. Be sure to provide a solid value proposition to convince your new users to opt-in.

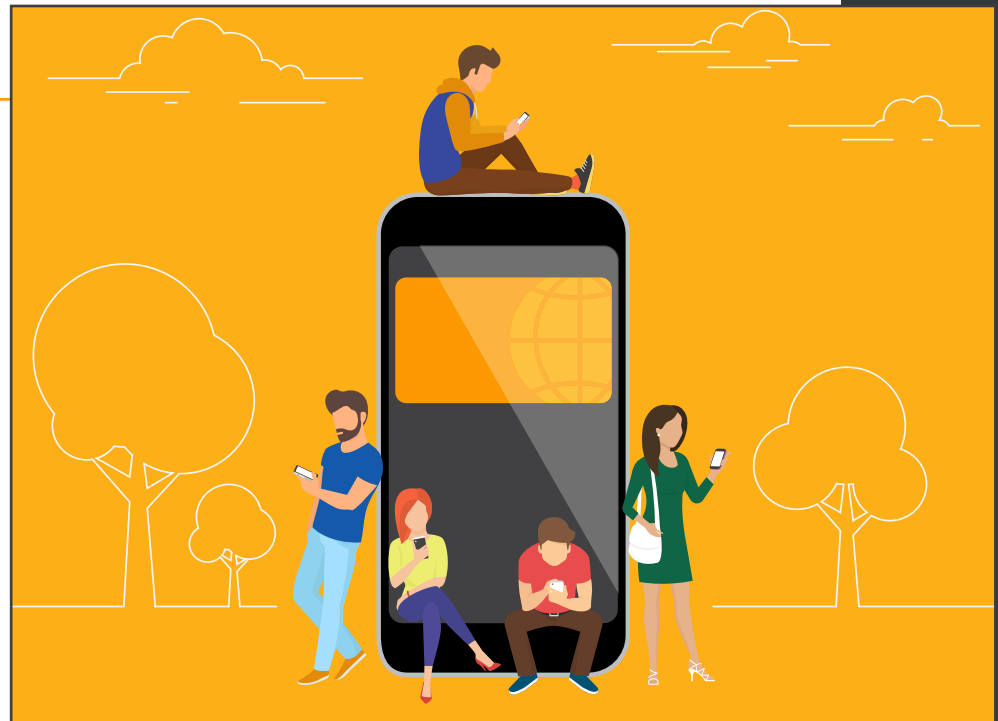
The power of push

According to Localytics,

push notifications

are said to boost
app engagement by

88%¹



Types of Push Notifications



Push notifications fall into several distinct types.

Here is a list of the most common types:

Informational

These messages can be thought of like status updates. The key is to deliver the critical information in the note so that the user doesn't have to open the app. For example, A travel app sends an update about the status of a flight's departure time or a fitness app might alert a user when a milestone has been achieved.

New features and content

These messages are used to alert users when there is something new in the app that they might enjoy. In the case of games, this could be a new level. For media apps, this could be a new episode of a show. Or perhaps the app has an awesome new feature that requires an update.

Social actions

These are alerts that a user's social network has performed an action, such as liking content, adding comments, etc. These messages are indented to bring the user back into the conversation with their social network.

Take action

Similar to social action notifications, take action notifications alert users to the need to take a specified action. In a game, this can be in the form of a reminder that it is the user's turn. A health app might remind users to open the app and log their water consumption for the day. Alternatively, a shopping app might alert users that a certain item is on sale for one day only.



When designing notifications for TV, consider whether the receiver can act on the message in the TV environment. Ensure that

all messages provide value to the user and are worth the momentary interruption. New features and content updates are probably best.



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Best Practices

Push strategies that do well tend to follow the same basic rules of any other marketing tactic: they should offer an incentive to be opened, respect the user and arrive at the right time to kindly “interrupt.”

Here are our top tips on creating the perfect push:



TOP TIP

The Personalization Payoff

You can send a one-size-fits-all message to your users, but the best notifications are tailored to each end user, factoring in even the smallest details such as the receiver's first name. And personalization doesn't end there. As a developer, you have a wealth of data to help you personalize your messages.

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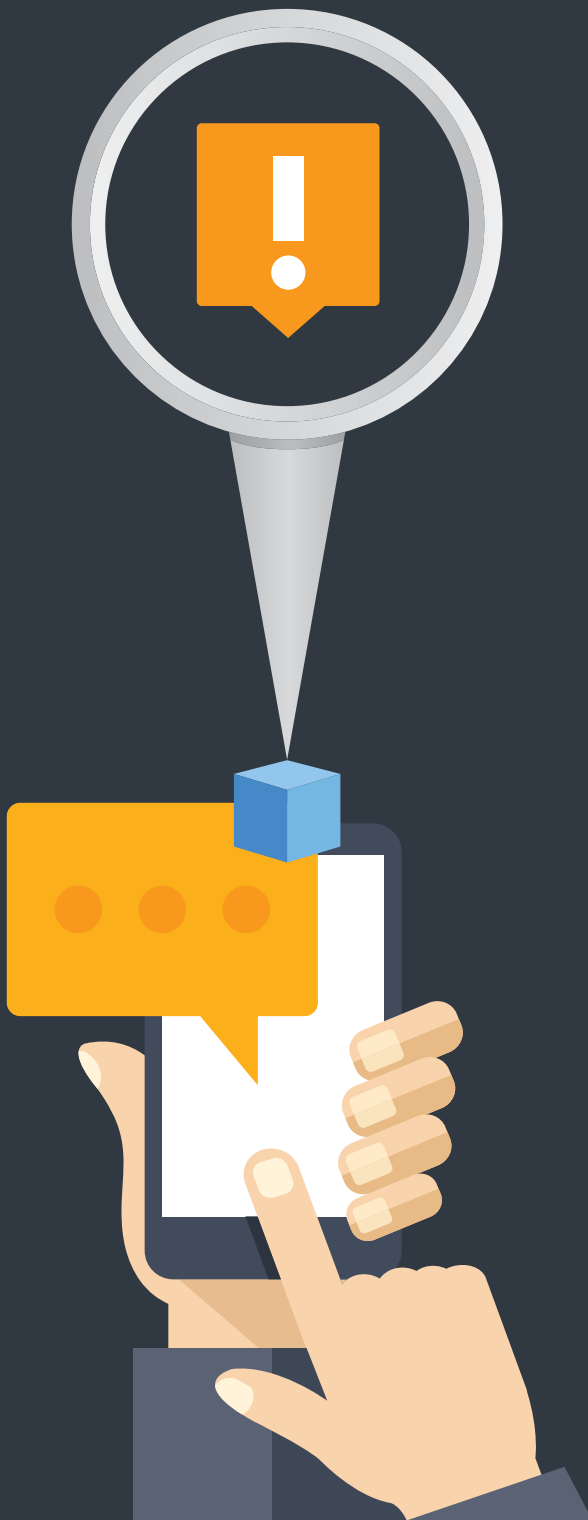
Consider some of these possible segments to help you get started:

New users who haven't:

- ◆ Opened your app since day one
- ◆ Purchased anything from your in-app purchase catalog
- ◆ Signed up for an account

Users who have:

- ◆ Reached a certain number of sessions with your app
- ◆ Engaged with your app for a certain length of time in the past
- ◆ Previously purchased from your catalog
- ◆ Engaged with certain assets in your app



Sign-Up Reminders Never Hurt

Does your app require new users to create an account? If so, reminding users who have not yet signed up is a great candidate for a personalized push. Don't be afraid to get right to the point. "Hi Peter! It looks like you forgot to create your account. There's no time like the present ;)"

"Hi Peter! It looks like you forgot to create
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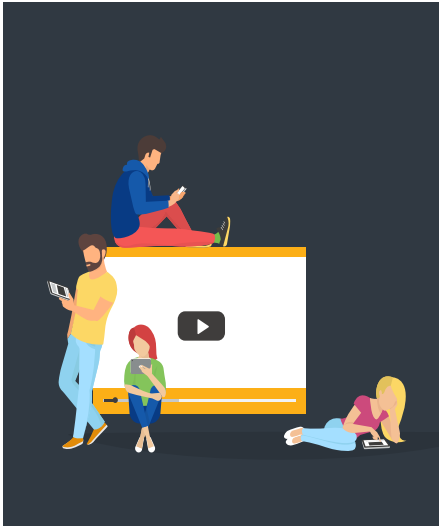
Personalization Drives Engagement

Mobile marketing platform Leanplum recently analyzed 1.5 billion push notifications. They found that these personalized, targeted messages had four times the open rate of generic blasts. ²





Fresh Content Now Available



Perhaps you have a media app with a regular cadence of new content. Instead of sending every single user a message every time a new episode is released, only send the notification to users who have watched previous episodes of the same show. You can take your personalization even further by segmenting your users into “people who have watched the latest episode” and “people who are behind by a few episodes.”



Predict the Future (Crystal Ball Not Required)

When it comes to personalization, you can also use aggregate data from your app to drive desired engagements. Suppose you see in your data that users who open your app daily on their first ten days tend to become long-time users. This might provide a great opportunity to engage these users at Day nine. The key is to be sure that the notification provides value to these users and gives them a good reason to come back to your app.



“Hey Peter!
Here’s an exclusive
sword just for
being you.”



TOP TIP

Choose Optimal Time and Frequency

3X engagement

According to Localytics, users who enabled push notifications launched an app nearly 15 times per month on average compared to a little over five times for those who did not. ³



Furthermore, a recent study by Tapjoy found that notifications sent early in the week had higher open rates, with Mondays seeing the highest open rates. And, like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” app users didn’t like “too much or too little” when it came to notifications, engaging most with messages that were sent weekly. They even found that there is a perfect hour for delivering a push notification: just after lunch. ⁴

When looking at your user data to decide on your personalization strategy, consider drawing on past behavior to decide the optimal times for your app. For instance, perhaps you have a segment of users who prefer to engage with your app in the morning hours. You will want to send these users a push notification in the morning when they are most likely to want to engage.

Unlike mobile phones and tablets that encourage multi-tasking, when users are engaged with a streaming media device, they are often immersed in one activity, such as watching their favorite show. Because these messages momentarily pull users out of their focus, messages can be seen as more disruptive and unwelcome. Steer clear of sending notifications too frequently.

TOP TIP

It Doesn't End at the Push

You have crafted the perfect, personalized message and sent it out at the best hour of the best day. Users are clicking through to re-engage with your app.

But is it clear how they can complete the task when they get there?

Let's return to the examples we shared earlier to help illustrate this point:



Sign up.

You have just reminded a new user to create an account, and they have happily obliged. When they click on your notification, they expect to see the account creation screen, or at the very least, an in-app pop up that brings them to this screen.



New content available.

Finally, the latest episode of the hottest show on your app is available and users have been waiting eagerly.

When they click on your notification, they expect the new episode to be the most prominent piece of content on them to this screen.



Predict the future.

So you were able to draw your Day nine user in for a tenth day. Remember that sword you promised them? Did you already put it in with the rest of their entitlements? Make sure it stands out from the rest of their entitlements as a reminder that you are a generous app developer. Do they need to perform an action to acquire the sword? Ensure the instructions for doing so are front and center the first time they open your app.



On Amazon Fire TVs, users can also see a collection of their notifications in the notification center, ensuring that if they can't act on the message in-the-moment, they have the opportunity at a later date.

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Measuring Success

Leanplum reported that personalized push notifications had an average nine percent click through rate (CTR). When deciding on success metrics for your push

notifications, work backward from the desired call to action.

Once again, going back to the examples mentioned above:



Sign up.

CTR is a fine metric for these messages, but you will also want to measure the conversion percentage of users who completed the desired actions: creating an account.



New content available.

In addition to CTR, you want to measure whether alerting these users to watch the episode led to that action. Did they also go on to watch additional shows?



Predict the future.

Were you able to boost the percentage of users who open your app on Day 10? Did your previous insight that Day 10 users become long-term users hold true still?



What about those optimal posting times? Do Monday lunch-time push notifications work as well for you as they did for the apps in Tapjoy's study? If not, test different days and times based on past user behavior to find the time that works best for your brand.

Return on Effort

You will want to keep tabs on whether the incremental effort in designing and executing a push notification strategy is worth it. Be sure to compare your opt-out segment performance to those that have opted-in and are receiving messages.

Ask yourself questions like:

How often does each segment engage with your app?

For how long?

Do they have differences in spending patterns?

These are all metrics that should help you decide whether to invest in more push notifications or to scale back your efforts.





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Push Notification Services

Every platform offers their own version of push notifications.

Here are some of the most common services:

Apple Push Notification Service (APNS)

Google Cloud Messaging

Microsoft Push Notification Service (MPNS)

SMS gateways

Developing a push strategy for each of these individually can quickly become very time consuming. Luckily there are cross-platform tools that allow you to manage your push notifications across all devices from a central tool. Amazon Simple Notification Service (Amazon SNS) allows you to send notifications to Apple, Google, Fire OS, and Windows devices, as well as to Android devices in China with Baidu Cloud Push. You can also use SNS to send SMS messages to mobile device users worldwide.

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Notifications for Fire TV

Notifications for your Fire TV apps can provide the same kind of user engagement that people have come to expect from their mobile and tablet devices.

There several types of notifications you can create on Fire TV:

Heads-up
notifications:

On Fire TV, heads-up notifications appear at the bottom of the screen and fade away after a few seconds. Some interaction is allowed while the notification appears. For example, users can click a button or dismiss the notification with the Back button. All undismissed heads-up notifications will be displayed in the Notification Center, where users can review the notifications at their leisure.

Toasts:

Toasts are small pop-ups that appear within your app briefly and then disappear, with no ability for the user to interact with the message.

Standard
notifications:

Standard notifications are informational in nature and do not interrupt the current foreground activity (unlike heads-up notifications, which pop-up in the bottom-right corner of the screen).



Conclusion

A well-planned push notification strategy should be part of any marketing strategy. When done well, it can help boost engagement and revenue for your app. In this eBook, we covered some best practices for delivering personalized, timely, and actionable push messages. We also covered how to measure the success of your efforts and the tools you can use to get started.

We look forward to seeing your Monday lunchtime messages!

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Sources

1) According to Localytics, push notifications are said to boost app engagement by 88 percent.

<http://info.localytics.com/blog/push-messaging-drives-88-more-app-launches-for-users-who-opt-in>

(Localytics Data Team)

2) Mobile marketing platform Leanplum recently analyzed 1.5 billion push notifications. They found that when messages contained a personalized element, open rates increased by up to 800 percent. They also found that these personalized, targeted messages had four times the open rate of generic blasts.

<https://www.leanplum.com/blog/personalize-or-bust-press-release/>

(Leanplum)

3) According to Localytics, users who enabled push notifications launched an app nearly 15 times per month on average compared to a little over five times for those who did not.

<http://info.localytics.com/blog/2015-the-year-that-push-notifications-grew-up>

(Localytics Data Team)

4) a recent study by Tapjoy found that notifications sent early in the week had higher open rates, with Mondays seeing the highest open rates. And, like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” app users didn’t like “too much or too little” when it came to notifications, engaging most with messages that were sent weekly.

<https://home.tapjoy.com/>

(Tapjoy)

5) Leanplum reported that personalized push notifications had an average nine percent click through rate (CTR).

<https://www.leanplum.com/blog/personalize-or-bust/>

(Leanplum)