



App Marketing and Strategy

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Measures of Marketing Success

- ▶ Downloads
- ▶ Ratings
- ▶ Reviews
- ▶ Purchases
- ▶ Life-cycle (how long before everyone that could potentially want your app has it)
 - ▶ Starts slow, peaks, then tapers off

Not just about money...

- ▶ Building a brand or gaining experience may be more important than a sale
 - ▶ Very, very few people in this life are successful with their first efforts
 - ▶ Your personal learning may be more important than a sale
 - ▶ For students, “success” may be landing an interview because of your app experience

App Quality

- ▶ In school, 90% quality is an “A”
- ▶ In the app world, 90% is an “F”
- ▶ Success is in the last ten percent of quality
 - ▶ Not necessarily at first launch, but before big success
 - ▶ Images, logos, icons, tiles and screen shots
 - ▶ Marketing prose
 - ▶ Content & game play
- ▶ Achieved through testing, iteration and regular updates
 - ▶ Your skills improve as you work on and improve your app
 - ▶ That is why you have to keep making apps

Top News & Content Apps

- ▶ Use the name of an existing “top app” in their title
 - ▶ Game demo's, walk-throughs & cheats
 - ▶ News about a top app ie: “GTA San Andreas News”, “Instagram How-To”
- ▶ Are about a popular subject
 - ▶ “My Little Pony on YouTube”
- ▶ Look and title is similar to a popular app

Downloads Revealed

- ▶ Best indicator of success
- ▶ No. of downloads often not apparent to users in the store/marketplace
- ▶ Number of ratings and reviews are secondary measures of downloads
 - ▶ Actual ratio is unknown, but probably 1:200 isn't unrealistic so...
 - ▶ 5 ratings sort of implies 1000 downloads plus or minus a couple thousand
- ▶ Free apps get more downloads than paid apps
 - ▶ No way to really tell how good or useful an app is (from the user's perspective) from the store marketing hype
 - ▶ Zero risk versus a lot of risk (that the app won't be worth what you pay)
 - ▶ Will the app turn out to be a waste of money?

Ratings and Reviews

- ▶ Users have little motivation to give good ratings and reviews
- ▶ Angry/ripped-off users ARE motivated to give bad reviews
 - ▶ Provide **complete contact info** on marketplace page so angry users have a personal way to contact rather than through bad ratings and reviews
- ▶ Sellers (you) can't get bad ratings and reviews removed; even flagrantly erroneous reviews
- ▶ Ratings: 1 to 5 “stars”
 - ▶ Quick and easy for the user
 - ▶ Most won't do it; nothing in it for the user
- ▶ Reviews: much harder to get; requires extraordinary motivation (usually negative) to give a rating or review without being prompted

Ratings and Reviews

- ▶ Strategy: prompt users to give you ratings and reviews
 - ▶ About 1 in 100 will respond
- ▶ You can get more ratings and reviews if you ask for them. How?
 - ▶ Requires a change in the code so when the app is started a message appears with a link
- ▶ Trick is to only get “good” reviews. How?
 - ▶ Fact; if people don't like your app they will uninstall it pretty quickly
 - ▶ **Secret:** wait until you have a large installed base of users and then prompt for ratings and reviews
 - ▶ Only those people who like your app will still have it installed; so you are more likely to get good reviews
 - ▶ Don't ask too often; once or twice in the life-cycle is probably enough so that you don't alienate your loyal users who rated it already

App Store Optimization (ASO)

Users will find you in one of three ways:

- ▶ Keyword Search
- ▶ Rank
- ▶ Recommendation (by others)
- ▶ “**White Hat**” ASO: using approved and legal means of improving your ranking in an app store
- ▶ “**Black Hat**” ASO” using bots and other artificial means of improving your ranking. Some ASO firms offer artificial or fake ways of raising your ranking. Using these firms or their techniques can get your app removed from the store and your account banned.

App Store Optimization: Conversion

- ▶ The decision to download is based on:
 - ▶ Overall appearance and store description
 - ▶ Artwork quality
 - ▶ Screen shot quality and quantity
 - ▶ Effectiveness of marketplace prose
 - ▶ Number of ratings and rating quality
 - ▶ Its hard to “game” 100s or 1000s of ratings & reviews although not impossible
 - ▶ How you are differentiated from your competition
 - ▶ Higher quality
 - ▶ Better functionality
 - ▶ More/better ratings and reviews

App Store Optimization: Conversion

Overall Content

- ▶ More usually means you care and will make a better impression (to a certain point at least)

Icon & Tiles

- ▶ You have 1.5 seconds to make a good first impression
- ▶ Your app icon should be attractive, high quality, and clearly indicate what the app is about
- ▶ Compare to competition: How does theirs look?
- ▶ Include ALL promotional images in your submission; you won't get featured if you don't provide the image they use in that section, and often promotional images are not required.

App Store Optimization: Conversion

Screenshots

- ▶ Have to be honest; more is better if more views will show off more capabilities and features
- ▶ Show gameplay
- ▶ Use the screen-shot description to teach the user how to use your app ie: "swipe to the right to see ..."

Description

- ▶ Hook and convince: grab attention with first few words, then describe all the goodness in your app and why the user will like it
- ▶ Call to action ie:
 - ▶ *"don't miss another exciting story - download now!"*
 - ▶ *"Do you have what it takes to save the universe? Download now and find out!"*
- ▶ Don't make your description an afterthought; **this really, really matters**
 - ▶ How do the leaders & your competition do it? Can you do better? (usually, yes)

App Store Optimization: Search

- ▶ Most apps get discovered through keyword and key phrase search
 - ▶ Optimize for people (visual/text) and robots (key term fields, ranking engines)
- ▶ Potential users may be searching for your competitor or a different app entirely; this isn't necessarily bad
- ▶ Strategy:
 - ▶ Be thoughtful and complete in filling out your keywords
 - ▶ See what keywords similar, competitor or complementary apps are using
 - ▶ Cite your successful competitors; when someone finds them, they find you too
 - ▶ Cite successful complementary apps; people who use this app will likely find your app useful or interesting
 - ▶ Use keywords in your app title, marketplace descriptions (including your competitors and complements), notes, and keyword fill-ins. Your app title should not be a keyword. Your competitor's title should be.

App Store Optimization: Ranking

- ▶ Order of appearance is called an app's "rank" or "ranking"
- ▶ Being ranked high means more people will find your app
- ▶ Rank determined by a number of factors including: relevance of keywords, popularity of your app (downloads & current installed users), velocity, your conversion/click-through ratio, usage, discard rate, and **update rate**
- ▶ Ranking also determines if and where you appear in a category ie:
 - ▶ "Picks for You"
 - ▶ "New and Rising"
 - ▶ "Trending"
 - ▶ "Top Apps" or "Top Free Apps"

App Store Optimization: Release Timing

- ▶ Most apps get downloaded on weekends
 - ▶ People have free-time
- ▶ Downloads tend to peak on Sundays and Holidays
- ▶ You want to be “new” just as a weekend or holiday is starting
 - ▶ Release your app (or updates) on Friday
 - ▶ Release you app on December 23rd or 24th
- ▶ Target your marketing push for just before weekends as well
 - ▶ Twitter, Facebook, your blog, etc.

Getting “Recommended”

- ▶ App recommendation by people with a large audience can drive downloads and velocity
- ▶ If you make a “fan app”, email the band, celebrity, etc. , send them the link to your app and ask them to tweet or comment the link on their Facebook.
- ▶ Post the link yourself on the celebrity Facebook
- ▶ Put the link in the comments of the celebrity blog post

Self-Promotion

- ▶ Always download, rate and review your own app
- ▶ Get friends, classmates, family, other people that you know to give you your first ratings and reviews
- ▶ Post a link to your app on your Facebook
- ▶ Make a webpage for your “app business” with lots of keywords and links to your app
- ▶ Cross-promote: advertise your other apps within your app

User Loyalty

- ▶ Apps are services more than they are products (this is a new way of thinking about the software business)
 - ▶ Good: expectation of “perfection” in a newly-released app isn’t there
 - ▶ Bad: Expectation of regular updates over life-cycle is there
 - ▶ If you don’t care enough to work on it regularly your users won’t care enough to keep using it and to keep it installed
 - ▶ Users expect to be able to provide feedback and that you’ll respond to them
 - ▶ If you manage user relationships well, people that at first hated your app may become vocal fans and defenders
 - ▶ Invite your fans and anti-fans to be testers for you next app or your next release

User Loyalty

- ▶ Qty of “Installed Users” is much more influential in rankings than total downloads
- ▶ Loyal user: one who downloads, uses, and **doesn't uninstall** your app
- ▶ How to create and maintain loyalty
 - ▶ Your app should do what you say it does
 - ▶ Keep improving your app
 - ▶ Users are okay with an imperfect app as long as it is regularly being improved
 - ▶ New apps updated every two weeks, then every 30 days, and then quarterly through the first half of its life-cycle
 - ▶ Provide contact e-mail and solicit suggestions in your marketplace description; **better to get complaints/suggestions via e-mail than in a review**
 - ▶ Be respectful of your total installed size; be efficient with code and art assets
 - ▶ When a user is running low on device storage, they delete the biggest apps first
 - ▶ Test your app thoroughly and regularly and fix errors and broken links immediately
 - ▶ **Secret:** when you send out an update people will be reminded to use your app and will use it to see what the improvements are, thereby increasing your usage (and ranking)

User Loyalty

- ▶ Listen to feedback
- ▶ Talk to users directly ie: blog, tweet, Facebook and answer e-mails
- ▶ Don't spam, annoy or interrupt the user; too many or too frequent in-app messages cause people to delete your app
- ▶ Playtest with real people: friends are too nice; strangers are more honest
 - ▶ Go to events/shows to expose people to your apps

Monetization (\$\$\$)

- ▶ Ways to make money:
 - ▶ Sell the app
 - ▶ Free, but with ads embedded within the app ie: “ad supported”
 - ▶ In app purchasing:
 - ▶ User can purchase premium features or content within the app. Basic app may be free (“freemium”) or paid
 - ▶ Hybrids:
 - ▶ Free trials (app is free for a short period of time)
 - ▶ “Freemium” (basic app is free; better app or experience costs
 - ▶ May offer two versions of app
 - ▶ App is “upgradable”

Monetization: Paid apps

- ▶ Best way to earn money; especially with games
- ▶ Stores usually have set minimum and maximum prices
 - ▶ Minimum is usually 99 cents, but sometimes \$1.49
- ▶ Lower price will usually have more downloads, but there is a tradeoff
- ▶ You can launch your app for free and change to paid later if there is sufficient demand
 - ▶ Most stores are built so that if a user downloads for free, you can't charge them for updates; only new users
 - ▶ If you have a couple of hundred downloads of your free app and then start to charge \$.99 expect your velocity to drop to near zero. If you have 20K downloads in a month you might have a good enough app where changing to \$.99 might be justified
- ▶ You can change your price up or down; which direction you go depends on demand
 - ▶ You can have a "sale" for a limited time (or not a limited time) to drive renewed interest

Monetization: Ad Support

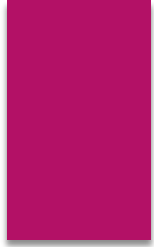
- ▶ App is free but an ad is displayed on screen
- ▶ Some (tiny) revenue is earned by having the ad displayed
- ▶ Most revenue is earned if the user “clicks” on the ad
 - ▶ Term: **eCPM** = “earnings per thousand clicks” (typically somewhere between \$.05 and \$.25)
- ▶ Requires LOTS of users and LOTS of usage time
 - ▶ Games generally are best at generating ad revenue
 - ▶ Top games generate thousands per month; good games can earn hundreds, most games earn very little
 - ▶ Limited life; you have to have your next game in market when prior game starts to taper off
- ▶ Ad content has to align with your users ie: game ads for games, etc.

Monetization: Free Trials

- ▶ Free trial is popular with large productivity software titles like Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, etc.
- ▶ **Current business models show that free trials for mobile apps don't work**
 - ▶ Less than .5 of one percent of people decide to pay after using the free trial
 - ▶ User intent is to use it for the time period only
- ▶ Free trials are implemented in the software code. When the time expires the game quits and prompts the user to pay in order to get it working again.

Monetization: In App Purchasing

- ▶ Basic app can be free or paid
- ▶ User can upgrade the app for a price
 - ▶ More content/functionality, removal of ad, better performance, game assets, etc.
- ▶ Player gets “hooked” on the app, and is willing to pay to enhance the experience
- ▶ “Pay to win” strategies ie: game is nearly impossible to finish without buying “upgrades” can cause negative publicity and backlash
 - ▶ My Little Pony game would have taken 10 years of daily play to earn enough in-game currency to finish without buying upgrades
- ▶ Implemented in app code



Don't expect
instant success!

Case study: Rovio

- ▶ Started by three students in 2003
- ▶ Created mobile games with low/moderate success
- ▶ Entered “full crisis” mode in 2007, laid off over 75% of workforce
- ▶ Switched to iPhone development
- ▶ Released new IP game in December 2009

Angry Birds was a flop!

- ▶ Rank 600th in US/UK App Stores
- ▶ Only 35,000 downloads after three months
- ▶ Did not stop developing game
 - ▶ Released 42 new levels
 - ▶ Created Free and Lite versions
- ▶ Started marketing in English speaking countries.



Case study: Blast Monkeys

Android Active Installs – Release to 6 Months

