



BOB'S GUIDE TO APP & GAME MARKETING

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INTRODUCTION

There are 3 million plus combined iOS and Android apps on the stores, and that number can feel like a Mount Everest that you, as a mobile app developer, have to climb to have success.

Inside this guide I have collected all the mobile app marketing recommendations. These great strategies will strengthen your connection with your customers and provide you with invaluable feedback.

Don't forget: a great marketing strategy may help a weak app have more success than a strong one.

PRE-LAUNCH CHECKLIST

This is a short list of essential practices when you are about to launch an app on the stores:

- Name

- Describe the app's function
- Pick a catchy name that is easy to remember
- Title should consist of a brand name with 1-3 major keywords describing it
- Use a native language name for each local store
- Work on your ASO strategy before choosing your App Name

- Keywords

- Apply logic and common sense to pick keywords to describe an app
- Apply third party tool (SensorTower, ASO Builder, etc.) to analyze keywords traffic generation potential
- Analyze the app's competitor reviews to discover new keywords
- Pick up as many keywords as necessary to fill up the 100-symbol limit

- Ratings

- 4 and 5 star ratings influence an app's rating on the charts
- It's crucial to have high ratings to compete with other apps on the charts
- Each app version has its own average rating figure - an update release helps to fix a low rating issue

- Screenshots

- Of 6 screenshots, the first 2 should give the best idea of the app's purpose
- Decide which format (horizontal or vertical) will tell the best visual story
- Consider a video demo stop frame for the first screenshot

- Reviews

- Positive reviews influence the user's decision to install
- Always go with genuine reviews, don't be fooled by fake ones
- Communicate with app users via social media to avoid negative App Store reviews

- Icon

- Use simple geometric forms
- Avoid using text
- Make it stand out in search results
- Icon should be scaleable to look good in various sizes

- Video Preview

- Write a script to shoot a video demo
- Highlight the best features in your app
- Use a call to action with an encouraging message to wrap up the video
- Shoot separate videos for iPad and iPhone for a universal app
- Length: 15-30 seconds
- Compression: H.264 MPEG codecs
- Rate 30 frames / sec
- Size: under 500 MB

- Updates

- Clearly identify what is new with each app update
- Keep it brief and to the point

- Pitch

Write short (2-3 paragraphs) text that highlights your app's best features. This will be a template that you can add details to about the specific blog you are pitching to, such as why your app review will benefit its audience. Including a link to short (up to 30 seconds) video demo will really help to show your app's best features to bloggers and journalists.

- Media List

You can use services like <http://mymediainfo.com> to get access to a large database of the contact information of bloggers and journalists. Make sure your list will consist of 15-25 media outlets, both high profile and less popular but still highly relevant to your app's theme.

- Schedule

Be aware that pitching an app is a long-term process. All bloggers and journalists you'll be approaching are overwhelmed with requests from other developers. It'll take time and 2 follow-ups to break through the clutter of other developer's requests. Be prepared that many bloggers or journalists won't answer your emails and follow-ups; that's OK. Move on to the next people on your list.

- Review Sites

The more points of reference you get published for your app, the more signals people get about your app pros, and they realize that your app is what they're looking for. There are lots of app review sites you can approach. We've covered this topic previously in our post [here](#).

- Social networks

Some of the best channels to reach out to your app's potential audience are social networks. Here is the approach I recommend. You'll need to decide how much time you can allocate on working with social media accounts you'll create. Be realistic and focus on as much as you will reasonably be able to support. Your list of social networks to choose from is Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn. All accounts or pages will require daily support: posting, feedback monitoring and tuning your posting activity based on what content triggers the best response. Your post's topics should cover the app updates, any media coverage it gets over time, and content related to your app, like articles/videos/photos/GIF/infographics. You will have to experiment with different type of content.

POST-LAUNCH TACTICS

1. ORGANIC

- App Previews

Apple introduced App Previews in September, 2014, and it's become the best way to let people try your app before downloading it. You do want people to install your app, not just check it out on the App Store and move on, right? With a 30 second video demo, you can tell a story about your app in a really efficient way. It's the next best thing to just giving your app to people to play with for free so they can decide if they need your app or not. Check out some of the best practices for [shooting a good app preview](#).

- App Reviews & Ratings

When people think about app reviews on the App Store, two notions usually come to mind: (1) people don't leave reviews and ratings when they are happy about an app and (2) all those reviews are fake, most likely purchased in bulk. Well, both statements are only partly true. For the most part, the reason why app users don't leave comments and ratings is psychological; people complain out loud and are happy quietly. Yes, if you Google buy iTunes app reviews, you'll find companies that practice such dubious business practices. But ask yourself, when you see bad quality chocolate brands in a market, do you stop eating chocolate? No; you simply stick to high-quality brands. Similarly, please don't reject app reviews as a valuable app marketing asset. There are a few reasons why we need app reviews and ratings at all. Reviews are part of the App Store algorithm used to calculate an app's position in Top Charts and search results. Apps with four and five stars are po-

sitioned higher than competing apps using the same targeted keywords. In addition, would you install an app with less than 3 or 3.5 stars? I wouldn't. Here is how you can gain more reviews or more than zero, if you don't have any at the moment:

- Add a "Rate our app" plugin. This is a great way to make it simple for people to leave a comment about your app; it's just a click away. They don't need to find your app on the App Store, go to the list of apps they've download, or find the Leave Review button—none of that. [Here is how](#) you can do that. Obviously, you can't force anybody to rate your app or leave a comment, but this makes it simple.
- Incentivise users to review your app. I won't reinvent the wheel by telling you that in this day and age, people value their time. They need a good reason to spend 2-3 minutes of their life to write a comment for your app, set a rating, or both. So give it to them! If your app is a game you can offer your users some internal currency points or another reward; if your app is not a game, think about something valuable you can offer in return for their time.

- Personal Onboarding

One of the ways people discover and download apps is through recommendations from friends. I know, it seems like we're talking about social media on social media 24/7, but it simply reflects the reality: it's about who you trust and listen to. People naturally suggest apps to their friends if they have an excellent experience using those apps. There is a well known [DICEE principle](#), coined by Guy Kawasaki, and I stands for Indulgent, meaning it makes you feel special when you're using a product. One of the ways to do this is to welcome them into your app correctly. You can find inspiration [here](#). I think the best analogy for good onboarding would be checking into a friendly hotel that feels like home; think of ways to mimic this experience in your app.

- In-app Behavioral Analytics Tool

What is the first question that pops up in your mind when you're sitting at your

desk or opening up your laptop to work? Is it, “Are my users are happy with my app?” or “What do my customers do inside the app?” Perhaps you wonder where you can get more installs to keep my app business afloat. All of these questions are valid, but I strongly suggest you focus on your existing customers’ experience. The numbers for app user retention are pretty sobering: on average, most apps [retain only 20% of their users](#). Your user experience is crucial; you need to know how customers use your app. One of the best ways to do this is through in-app behaviour analytics like [Localytics](#) or [Mixpanel](#).

- App Website & Smart Banner

When you read so much about mobile, you may get the impression that you should decrease your web presence in favor of your app. You shouldn’t! Here is what [recent Opera Mediaworks data demonstrates](#). People do continue to visit mobile websites, especially since Google has begun to [rank mobile friendly websites higher](#). Your app website serves as an online hub of information about your app, including: a description, screenshots, a video demo, a contact form for feedback, and links to all your social media channels. By doing [SEO](#) for your app’s website, you’re increasing traffic to it and therefore increasing traffic to your app on the App Store. With iOS 6, Apple introduced a Smart App Banner technology that allows you to build a short bridge between your app website and the app itself on the App Store. Here is how you [can set up a Smart App Banner](#).

- Apple Watch Support

Whether Apple Watch has found its place in people’s lives is an open to debate; however, [millions of units have been sold](#). The device has momentum. If you open the App Store, you will see that apps that feature Apple Watch support have an advantage in terms of visibility. Take advantage of that. Add support to your app as well, especially now when there aren’t nearly as many apps that support it compared to the overall number of apps. And speaking of Apple Watch, since the recent Apple Watch OS 2 introduction, it’s time to think about

creating a standalone app for the Apple Watch. Because now it's possible to develop apps for Apple Watch that operate independently from an iPhone.

- Create a Viral Loop

Do you know what a viral loop is? Basically, it's a marketing technique to invite your app users to become its marketers. I bet you've heard about viral videos on the web, meaning everybody was talking about them. But a viral loop is a bit more complicated; let me explain. When you market your app, your marketing materials use phrases like "Please download the app here," "Look no further, download your app name here," and so on. This is not viral marketing. If your app is triggering a reaction from users like, "This is really cool app, so I better suggest it to my friends!," this would be viral but not a viral loop. However, if your app users know that by sharing your app they improve their own experience, this is a viral loop! As the matter of fact, there is a formula that describes the Viral Coefficient. It looks like this: $VC = N \times P1 \times P2$, where:

- VC stands for a viral coefficient
- N – the average number of your app users who are invited by each active user of your app
- P1 – the proportion of invited users who sign up and become active customers (meaning they actually do what you want them to: make an in-app purchase or subscribe to your service, for example)

• P2 – the proportion of active users who invite other people. Based on the values for N, P1, and P2, VC can be either more than 1, equal to 0, or less than 1. If your app's Viral Coefficient is more than 1, throw a party—your app is actually going viral! If it's equal to zero, you're in trouble, there is no viral loop taking place. Get back to the drawing board and see what you should change in your viral strategy. Now, if it's less than one, remarket your content, and monitor the situation closely. Here is how you can implement a viral loop. You should plan in your

app development stage. Basically, you can choose one of the three major ways to create a viral loop without risking a rejection by Apple.

a. Beat My Scores

This is the way that works the best for games, and it has quite simple structure. After users install your game, they achieve some level in the game and get certain score. Then they send their personal records to their friends and challenge them to beat it. Their friends get a push notification on their smartphones or tables and try to meet the challenge. As you might guess, these friends will follow the same path and challenge other friends and so on.

b. Help from Friends

Once again, this strategy works really well for games. This time instead of challenging others, you create a roadblock in your game or a difficult level. Then you give players the option to ask for help from friends.

c. Jump the Queue:

This method works for any kind of app. You set up a queue for people to get your app in advance of your app release. Then you give them an option to jump up in the queue if they share their queue number and a message about the app on their social media channels. This is a simple and elegant way to spread the word about your app before its release and acquire organic downloads. Granted this method will work only for high quality apps. Check out to see how this technique worked out for famous [Mailbox app](#). Creating a viral loop allows you to grow your user base in a short period of time and saves money on expensive CPI campaigns by getting downloads for free. Make sure you track KPIs inside the app and every social media channel you'll be using to see what specific message or image drives the most engagement

- Localize Your App for non-US App Stores

As you probably know, the iTunes App Store has [44 local versions](#). If you ignore 43 of them and focus your app marketing efforts exclusively on US, you are missing a big chunk of the market! Granted, the US App Store is

the biggest, but it is also the most crowded. To take advantage of all these markets, you need to act smart. Here is what your strategy should be. First, you'll need to use the [App Annie App Store Charts tool](#) that covers iOS, Android, Amazon, Windows Phone, Mac OS, and Windows platforms to get a clear picture of your app competition in local markets.

Once you know what apps you'll be competing with, you need to investigate these apps thoroughly. Here is what information you'll need to know about each app to compete with it effectively:

- What keywords it's optimized for. To find this information, you'll need [SensorTower ASO tool](#).
- What local media it was covered on. Then build a list of bloggers, forums, and catalogs to approach.
- What kinds of reviews people leave for these apps, just like with the US App Store. To be able to understand comments written in foreign languages, you'll need a translator.

For translation purposes, you can either hire a local blogger (preferably a native speaker) or open an account on a translation service online. If you decide to hire an online service, check out companies like [Tethras.com](#) or [OneSky.com](#). Next up is localization of your app. Check out this great tutorial from Babble-on about how to [localize your iOS app](#) properly. When you localize an app for a specific country think about local mentality and perception. One of the most vivid example I can think of to illustrate my point is a Japanese RPG that may be a hit in Japan might require a complete visual revamp to become a hit in US. People in different countries have different biases with their visual perception. ASO for a specific country will require a native speaker's help as well.

Please don't use Google Translate to get your keywords translated.

Every language has its unique peculiarities.

- Marketing Copy A/B Testing

Consider A/B testing to improve your app's marketing copy, specifically its icon, screenshots, description, and preview video. Even having a talented graphic designer and professional copywriter in your app development team doesn't automatically guarantee your app will have the best marketing copy

it could have. A/B testing your marketing copy, both graphical and text materials, will help you to find the look and feel that appeals to the most people but not necessarily what you and your app development team find appealing.

- ASO

Download here: [The Complete Guide to App Store Optimization](#)

2. USER ACQUISITION

An effective user acquisition strategy is the holy grail for many marketers, whether it be a mix of channels that generate a constant flow of new users at a sustainable cost or a clever tactic that gives a new product a boost in users in a short period of time.

- YouTube app review channels

Some video bloggers specialize in mobile app reviews. Over the years, they've built a loyal audience of viewers who are looking for new, interesting apps to try. You need to get in touch with these bloggers and negotiate your app review. Just like with regular bloggers, some of them charge for app reviews, some don't. Your decision on whether should you work with specific video bloggers or not should be guided by your analysis of their Youtube channels. You need to figure out how many subscribers a YouTube channel has and how many views app video reviews get on average. Find video reviews for apps that are similar to your app to estimate the potential response to your app review.

- Ads in podcasts

One of the most popular types of online content are podcasts. Tens of thousands of audio and video podcasts are available on iTunes. They cover a very broad spectrum of interests. You can approach podcasters that host a show that resonates with your app and discuss if they would air an ad for your app during one or more episodes of their show. There are also companies that offer an app ad placement in various podcasts, so they may handle the

whole process for you for a fee. The best company among these is [Midroll](#).

- Reviews on blogs

Do you read blogs? I bet you do, and even if you don't go to the blog's website specifically, you may read blogs via the FlipBoard mobile app, or on Medium, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Blogs are still one of the major sources of information for people. There are lots of blogs that cover apps or topics related to apps, and they have loyal readers. Build a list of blogs that have posts that cover apps related to your app. Get in touch with bloggers who maintain these blogs and make a case for why a post about your app will be interesting to their readers.

- Local offline ad campaigns

Despite the general trend for marketing to be mostly digital, offline marketing still exists and isn't going to fade away anytime soon. Think about what local business may benefit from displaying your app advertisement and where your app sticker or printed flyer might catch people's attention and lead them to an app store to download your app.

- Google search App indexing

Download here: [The First Guide to Optimizing Apps to Google and Apple Search](#)

3. UA PAID CAMPAIGN

There are several important KPIs (key performance indicators) that you should know for your app before launching a full-fledged traffic generation campaign after it's released on an app store. Such KPIs include:

- Retention rate - a coefficient that demonstrates how much app users continue to use your app one, three, or seven days after install
- DAU - the number of daily active users
- DARPU - the daily average revenue per user
- Session time - how much time users spend using the app on a single occasion

- Social shares - occasions when app users share an app via their social media accounts

To be able to measure these indicators, you need to run a month-long test ad campaign with a limited budget. The nature of such a campaign prohibits relying on native traffic generation means such as App Store Optimization or reviews in online media. If you plan to launch your app on the US market, we recommended doing a test release on the Australian App Store.

- Build upon current high KPIs

When your app performs on an app store within desirable KPI values, it's time to think about acquiring additional users. The term KPI was adapted by app developers to measure the effectiveness of their app marketing actions. The term originally referred to a measurable value that demonstrated how effectively a company was achieving key business objectives. Organizations use KPIs to evaluate their success at reaching targets. Just like a company owner decides to invest in a business expansion, you, as a mobile app owner, should consider investing in acquiring more users for your app based on its KPIs. Obviously, it's important to continue monitoring your app's KPIs throughout the whole paid user acquisition campaign to make sure they remain within desirable limits.

- Leverage high k-factor

K-factor is a marketing metric to describe the growth rate of apps. When your app has a high k-factor, an app user acquisition campaign has a high potential to bring many more users to your app than you would bring if your app had a low k-factor. It's important to understand that k-factor can't be kept high for a prolonged period of time; it fluctuates naturally due to people's unpredictable behavior. Because of this fact, it's crucial to measure your k-factor daily (or at least weekly) in order to spot the right moment to launch a paid acquisition campaign.

- Get an extra number of users in a specific period of time

Throughout the year, there are specific time periods you can take advantage

of to promote your app. You may launch a campaign during a holiday season, like Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving, or Valentine's Day; special occasions like Black Friday; or any of local events your app is relevant to. Because people have a short attention span during the holidays, using non-paid app marketing tools doesn't always allow you to achieve significant gains in new users. App Store Optimization, content marketing, and social media marketing aren't capable of bringing a significant number of new users to your app within a specific holiday time period. With paid user acquisition tools, you can get more users for your application from a specific geo location. With an app install driving campaign on Facebook, Twitter, or Google, the profiles of the app users you gain during your campaign might contain information such as as specific interests, gender, device OS and version, and more.

-Drive more installs for a niche app that doesn't generate sufficient number of installs via search on an app store

By conducting keywords research for your app via App Store Optimization tools, you can reveal keywords that are relevant to your app. If those keywords have low demand, it will result in a small number of installs that your app will be getting via an app store built-in search. It's not an issue with your app's marketing copy; it's because people don't search much for similar apps on the app stores. To reach more potential users, you need to consider user acquisition channels and mobile traffic social network services such as as Facebook Mobile App Install Ads, Twitter Ads, and Google's AdWords for mobile ads.

-Acquire an initial group of active users for a social networking or e-commerce app

Any social networking app suffers from a known catch-22: for a social networking app to become popular, it needs to have an engaged user base, but it can't have an engaged user base without attracting new users in the first place. A similar situation happens with an e-commerce app that provides a marketplace to trade any goods. It doesn't make any sense for peo-

ple to join an e-commerce app if it doesn't have a user base already and lots of goods to choose from. To solve this problem, app developers can invest into a paid user acquisition campaign and build a desirable initial user base.

- Test Different Paid Sources

There isn't such a thing as the best paid traffic source; it always depends on the app, specific location, OS, and time of the year. So you need test various paid sources you can use to advertise your application. These sources include Facebook Ads, Twitter Ads, AdWords Ads, Pinterest Ads, a direct deal with other app owners to run an ad campaign in their app, and ad and affiliate networks. Your ultimate goal will be to concentrate your ad budget on the best performing channel, and you'll need mobile traffic attribution and performance measuring tools to be able to judge what channel(s) performs the best.

CONCLUSION

- Marketing your app can't be an afterthought. It is not a one-time effort either.
- It's about:
 - Building the right app, building it right, and optimizing your app store page so as many people as possible can find you there,
 - Building an online presence, presenting your app in its best light, engaging people, and generating interest,
 - Listening to users' feedback, finding what makes users come back to your app and what makes them share it,
 - Doing cross promotion and choosing the right promo campaigns to give your apps a boost when it needs it,
 - Measuring continually to know what works and what doesn't to improve your app and its marketing.

BUILD THE APP OF YOUR DREAMS

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