

# An App Buyer's Guide

David Peterson is a consultant for AppTree, an IT company specialising in Marketing and Communication Apps. In this paper David lays out some considerations when buying an App for your organisation.



**Why Mobile?** Mobile is quietly revolutionising the way we work, the way we communicate with each other and how we access information and services. Mobile is more than just a smaller computer that we can carry around, it has evolved to become an extension of our very selves. That may sound overly philosophical but if we take a look around we see people attached to their phones night and day, using them while walking, talking to others or watching TV. The phone is no longer a device I go to, its something with me and part of me. Over 40% of users even admit to looking at their phones before they get out of bed in the morning!

As I write, mobile access to the internet is overtaking PC access to the internet. This creates a marvellous opportunity to engage on a more personal and intimate level with our customers. Mobile will become essential to retaining them in the future. Mobile is not something any organisation can afford to ignore.

**What can an App do for you?** You may be reading this article because the idea of an App has been introduced to you. However, it may not be clear what an App can do for you that is not already being done via the internet, email and other marketing methods. It pays to be sceptical here, if you are going to make an investment it has to be more than a short term gimmick.

## The Mobile Revolution

### Mobile is growing

- 4 Billion phones in use, 1 Billion smartphones
- Access to the internet via mobile will eclipse desktop by 2015

### Mobile is everywhere

- 91% of Mobile users are within arm's reach of their phone day and night
- 40% of people use their mobile phone before they get of bed in the morning
- The average smartphone user spends 2.7 hours on their phone each day
- 86% of mobile users are using their mobile while watching TV

### Mobile means Apps

- 80% of time spent on smart phones is spent on Apps, only 20% on web sites
- Users will keep high quality, engaging Apps and quickly discard low value gimmicks

Let's start with what an App will **not** do for you. An App will not **directly** bring you new customers, people don't tend to download and use Apps from brands which they are not already familiar with.

**An App can however help you support your community of existing customers;** helping retain them, making them more aligned to you, spending more with you and advocating your brand to other potential customers.



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As I work with different organisations a general theme appears:

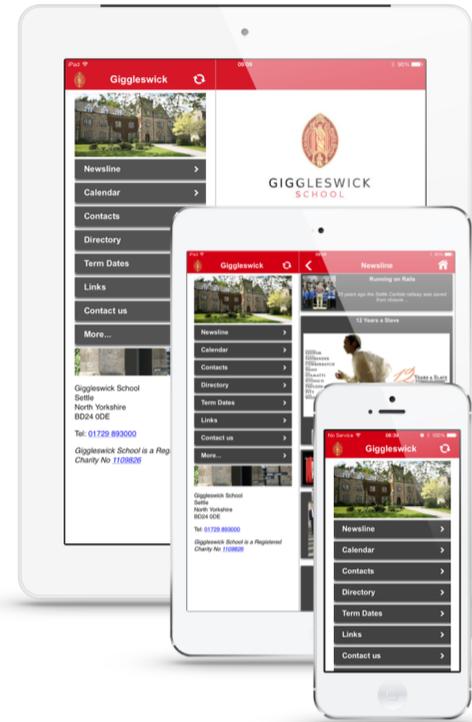
Organisations are typically well adapted to providing high value marketing materials such as brochures and websites which are aimed at **prospective customers**. These are produced to exacting quality and with perfect clarity.

However, in most cases there is very little focus on marketing to **existing customers**. That is not to say that organisations ignore or neglect their existing customers, but once a prospective becomes a customer the attention often shifts from marketing to operationally servicing that customer. Over time this leads to a dilution of how your customers view you and the unique value you offer. This in turn may lead your client to ask 'why are we buying from these guys?' Often these thoughts are triggered by marketing advances from your competitors or where customers are under severe cost pressure.

With costs of up to 10 times more to recruit a new customer than to retain an existing one, it pays to take care of the customers you have, studies show that happy customers who understand your values will spend more and also advocate your brand to their network.

## What's so Special about an App?

- Apps are instant, interactive and intimate
- Apps are with the user all the time, in their hand, pocket or purse
- Apps communicate directly with the user
- Apps deliver information in a natural manner, at a greater frequency and in a smaller, easier to digest format
- Apps foster a personal relationship with the user
- Apps are best used to reinforce a brand loyalty and community
- Apps complement other communication methods such as web and social media.



When my clients ask about the importance of continuing to market effectively to existing customers, the best analogy I have found to illustrate the importance is an example from our personal lives.

When two people first meet there is the romance of coupling and partnership. This must quickly develop into a deep appreciation of the couple's shared values to reconfirm the reasons for coupling in the first place.

Without a continual expression and confirmation of shared values the couple is only left with the operations of running a household, this creates the risk that one or the other will wake up one morning and ask why they are there at all!

We have many powerful examples how Apps have helped revitalise brands and their relationship with their customers, if you think an App could be right for your organisation the following pages offer some practical advice on the types of App available and how to select one.



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## There are three variables in choosing an App:

- The Quality of the technology
- The amount of customisation, branding and unique functions required
- The level of the Support, Project Management and Coaching provided

The mix of these items in your package determines the cost.

**Technology:** the quality and technical complexity of Apps vary considerably, from what is merely a website made to work on a smaller screen; ranging to very high end, fully native corporate Apps which are fully resident on the device and interact directly with it, allowing lightning fast speeds, background updating and offline use.

The higher the quality of the App, the greater the cost to build, so how do you choose between the different models?

Your first consideration should be your target audience; if you are marketing a premium brand to a professional audience, who are likely to have high end devices and be familiar with high corporate standards, it may be desirable to fulfil their expectations with a high end 'native' App.

If your goal is to deliver real-time information to your customers, you will want an attractive, appealing, easy to use App that reflects your own standards and identity. Selecting the best technology that your budget can support is generally advisable.

### Typical buying options and price points offered by various suppliers

Buying table	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Best Described as	DIY Option [Discount Retail]	Serviced and Coached Option [Personal Shopper]	Bespoke [Saville Row Suit]
Technology	Basic Web Apps to Acceptable hybrid Apps	Corporate standard Native Apps	Individually built corporate standard native Apps
Customisation	Basic	Medium to High	Totally unique
Management	Initial set up only	Full project management and ongoing coaching and marketing support	Full project management and ongoing coaching and marketing support
Support	Helpdesk for you only	Helpdesk for you and your users	24/7 Helpdesk for you and your users
Price points	£100 - £300 per month	£300 - £500 per month	£10,000 - £1,000,000 One off payment
Advantages	Low cost start Suitable for budget brands or very small businesses	High quality, full support and coaching, for monthly fee (no set up costs) More likely to realise long term business goals than be a gimmick	100% your way fully supported
Disadvantages	Poor quality, lack of individuality, low levels of support make this likely to be a short term gimmick rather than add real sustainable value	Higher monthly cost	Very high up front cost



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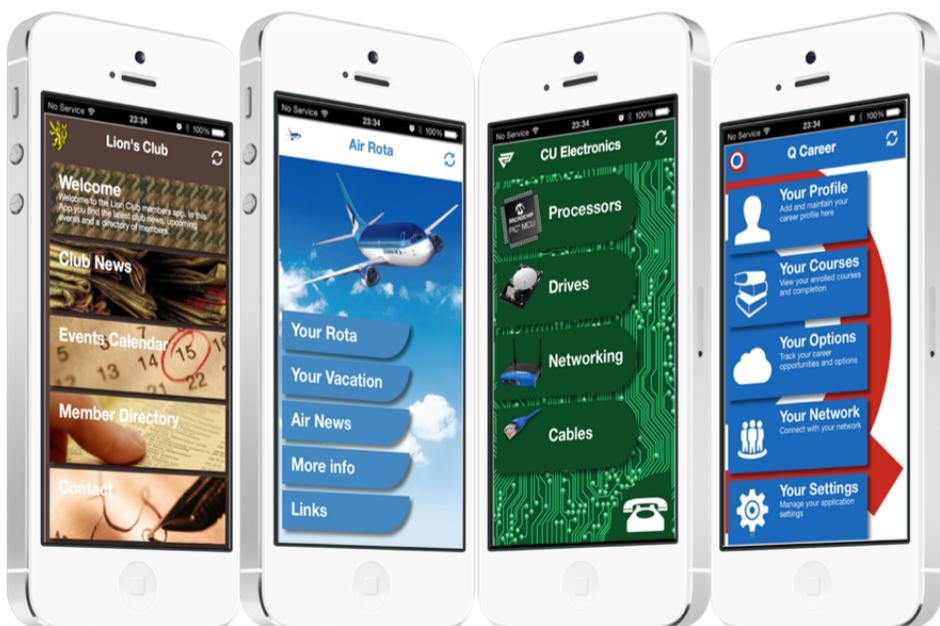
**Customisation:** The level of customisation you require will also determine the options available to you.

All suppliers offer some level of customisation such as the ability for you to name and brand your App. This varies from just having your name at the top of the App to having your colours, logo and corporate identity throughout the App so it looks completely individual to you.

Generally speaking the more customisation you require the higher the cost; it will pay to consider your audience here. Whilst it may be fine to buy a simple template driven App for a local restaurant which shares a template and looks a lot like Apps from other restaurants, it's probably not fine for a Rolls Royce dealership to share a design template with the local late night kebab house.

The higher end suppliers offer a wide range of customisations to make your App look unique and perfectly matched to your identity.

It's rare for all but the very largest organisations to have truly unique functional requirements. In these case a bespoke App is the only option available.

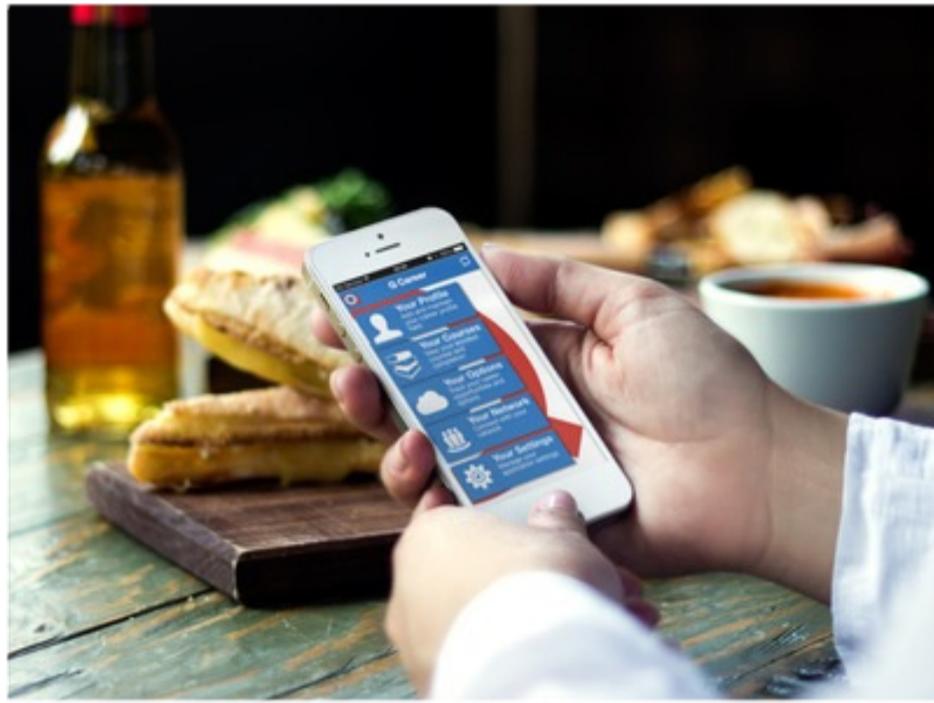


## Top 10 Tips for choosing a supplier

- 1) Talk to the potential supplier on the phone or face to face. Is the person you talk to just the sales person or the person who will support you long term? Are they UK based? Are they using their own technology for re-packaging someone else's?
- 2) Never pay a set up fee or upfront cost even on delivery of an App. Always pay monthly so you are assured the App will be maintained in the future and that the supplier has to work hard to keep you happy.
- 3) Be suspicious of contracts with long tie in periods, avoid them.
- 4) Don't take a supplier's word for it, ask for references and phone them up, the supplier's reputation is everything, look for long term happy customers.
- 5) Download the supplier's other Apps, play with them, test them for usability and quality, make sure you test on WIFI, mobile signal and no signal at all.
- 6) Contact the supplier's help desk for one of their existing Apps (if one exists), assess how helpful the help desk is and how this will represent your organisation to your customers.
- 7) Ensure the App supports Apple and Android phones and tablets which are the fastest growing segment. Ensure that there is at least a web app version available for other devices including desktop and laptop.
- 8) Don't scrimp, buy the technology to match your audience's needs: Premium audience needs premium technology or it is money wasted.
- 9) Select a supplier who offers more than one level of service so you can move between service levels if required. That is to say if you need more support you can upgrade or after a period of successful running perhaps downgrade support options to save cost.
- 10) Ask about value add services such as marketing, launch materials and measurements.



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**Support and Management :** The support offered by App suppliers can also vary widely. Some Apps are completely DIY where you will set up and configure the App and even deploy to the Apple and Google stores by yourself. These DIY options are only appropriate for those with an IT team which is experienced in mobile development and prepared to keep the App up to date as technology advances.

Thankfully most suppliers offer set up and deployment support as part of their packages, these range from just set up support to a complete ongoing managed service.

Apart from the initial set up, consider what other support you will need. Some suppliers offer a help desk to support you, some offer a help desk for you and your users. Think carefully about whether you can give technical support to your customers on the App yourself or not.

Some suppliers offer coaching and marketing support services, these options are designed to support you through the entire lifecycle of the App as a Marketing project. A specialist consultant will project manage the set up of your App, provide all your launch materials and coach you on a weekly basis on how to get the best of the App. Many believe they don't need this level of support but those who do tend to be far more successful, its worth considering even just for the first year.

**About us-** **apptree** is a marketing company that helps businesses leverage mobile technology to complement their marketing and communications efforts.

Our expert team consults with clients to understand their unique requirements and provides real business insight to formulate an integrated marketing strategy.

Using **apptree's** own mobile platform, our support team can create the highest specification, professional apps and offer unparalleled ongoing technical and business support.

If you would like to discuss mobilising your marketing and communications with an **apptree** app, please email us on [contact@apptree.co.uk](mailto:contact@apptree.co.uk)

