



Foreignerds

Mobile Application Development Process

Stage 1: Discovery

Gathering mobile app requirement and draw a rough feature list

This stage is the most crucial stage of the app that you are planning to change the world with. But before you move mountains you need to have a detailed plan and have answers to question like what? how? when? . So before you engage the developer have these things ready :-

- 1) A brief of what exactly app will do. Write objectives & goals.
- 2) Which platforms you would like app to be available on?
- 3) Do you have any other app in mind as references?
- 4) Who is the intended audience of your app?
- 5) Will your app be paid?
- 6) When would you like to tentatively launch the app?

Put the answers to above questions in a document neatly and go through it once more and see if you can refine it before blasting it to the prospective developers. So, these 6 points become your entry point and will provide enough information for a developer to understand the concept. But before you go to the developers we suggest you do following things:-

1) Build a small group of friends, colleagues or experts who understand the domain. See, this group as critiques or future users. This group will eventually help you test the app or give constructive ideas.

2) Do spend very good time on various mobile app stores to see if you can take inspiration from other apps. Build a list of the apps you like and build a brief writeup of why you like it. This will help your development team understand your vision clearly.

Do List

- + Develop a detailed document as per the 6 points mentioned.
- + Do spend good time on iStore or Google Play to see similar apps.
- + Try bouncing idea with a group of people as discussed.
- + Go back to your RFP and refine it based on new insights.

Don't List

- Don't go to the developers with incomplete information.
- Don't share the document without signing the NDA.
- Don't get bogged down by the documentation. It's the key. :)

Tip: If its possible try to break the idea into small stages and make the app in iterative model. This will help you go to the market faster. If all is well go for the subsequent stages and keep incorporating the feedback that you receive.

Stage 2: Estimation

Finding how much it will cost you to develop your app.

We assume that now you are ready with a neat document/RFP which you can broadcast to the developers that you have short-listed. When you are initiating a dialogue with the developers its important that you take care of the following things:-

- 1) Send a NDA and get it signed by them.
- 2) Mention the last date of submitting the proposal after they receive RFP.
- 3) Ask for some similar apps developed by them.
- 4) Ask them to list the complex features separately.
- 5) Ask them to propose some additional features.

Now, the final day comes and everybody has submitted the proposal. Its time to shortlist the right developer but how do you go about it? It becomes simple at this stage because based on the information you requested you will see the most suitable developers clearly. Still, here are some of the points you must consider before short-listing the developer :-

- 1) Was the proposal complete as per the afore mentioned 5 points.
- 2) Are you impressed with there reference app?
- 3) Is the cost around your budget?
- 4) Does the time line suits you?
- 5) Did they bring any new insights to the concept?
- 6) Do you approve of there communication skills?
- 7) Is the payment plan flexible?

Do List

- + Keep the developer list within 10.
- + Do follow the 7 point criteria for short-listing the developer.
- + Do inform the non-shortlisted developers immediately.
- + Do talk to the short-listed developer at least once before finalizing.

Don't List

- Don't accept incomplete proposals.
- Don't base your decision solely on price.

Tip: Communication is the key here. Even if you hire the best developer and he doesn't understand what you are saying then don't expect things to turn out the way you want them to be.

Stage 3: Scope of Work

Finalizing what needs to be developed and when.

We assume that you have already short-listed the developer and now you are ready to start the development. But before you do so you need to have a complete scope of work with a detailed development schedule. Here, is the list which will help you prepare for this stage:-

- 1) Ask for a detailed scope of work with a clear development schedule.
- 2) Request for important milestones and keep it to a minimum of four.
- 3) Ask for deliverables for each milestone & base your payment plan on that.
- 4) Ensure that there is a good scope of testing in the schedule.
- 5) Request for a single point of contact from the development team.

Now, you have a contract copy with all the above details. This is the stage which will take you on a long journey, so before signing on the dotted lines you should have checked following things because it will be hard for you to turn back and correct things :-

- 1) Is the contract complete as per the afore mentioned 5 points.
- 2) Is the mode of payment clear?
- 3) Is the defination of deliverable clear and acceptable?
- 4) Does the milestones fit in well according to the entire business plan?
- 5) Are the legal aspects clear to you?
- 6) Read through the fine print and esnure you get the source code of the app.
- 7) Ensure there is clear testing plan to fix the reported bugs.

Do List

- + Read contract carefully and request for amendments if necessary.
- + Request for a contract walkthrough if required.
- + Check the feature list once again for the last time. :)
- + Be ready for at least 10-15 % variation in cost and time.

Don't List

Nothing as such, just focus on the "Do List" :)

Tip: If you feel you are still burgeoning with ideas then just build a list and keep them aside. Introducing them at this stage will not help the development instead will disturb the process. Share them with the developers at a later stage or maybe in second phase.

Stage 4: Design

Creating wireframes, mockups and design.

After signing the contract this is the most crucial stage. This stage will define how your app will actually look like. This stage will make or break your app. You have a choice here, either to get the app designed by an external designer or rely on the designer of your developer company. Either way here is a guide to get it right:-

- 1) First thing first get a wireframe done.
- 2) Cross check if the wireframe comprises of all the features that you want.
- 3) Post wireframe approval get the actual app designed.
- 4) Check the navigation flow of the app.

Going through the above process you will have the app design with you. It's the time to follow these points to ensure that you are on the right track :-

- 1) Share the design with the user group that you created.
- 2) Take there feedback and get that incorporated.
- 3) Benchmark it with the app that you short-listed earlier.
- 4) Also, see how the app icon will look like.
- 5) Discuss the app behavior on different screen sizes with the designer.

Freezing the design is very important, leaving any open ended items will later disturb your time line and cost.

Do List

- + Check if all the features are retained in the wireframe & design.
- + Design should address the various screen sizes.
- + Freeze the design.

Don't List

- Don't go to a designer before approving the wireframes.
- Don't copy, take inspiration from other apps but be original. :)

Tip: If the app is female oriented, take feedback from a female. Your target audience needs to be at the core of the design. Your are building an app for them not for yourself. :)

Stage 5: Development

Building the app, putting the code together.

If you have spent good time on getting the desired result at earlier stages then this will be a breeze for you. Development process is a stage which can be easily monitored because you have set clear milestones and deliverables. Still, here are some points you should keep in mind:-

- 1) Revisit the schedule and see if design had any implications on it.
- 2) Expect atleast one or two builds per week from the developers.
- 3) Give them feedback in a written format and get on a call after that.
- 4) After every feedback keep asking if there is any change in schedule.
- 5) Keep each build in a separate folder with dates clearly mentioned.
- 6) Keep the feedback for a particular build in the respective folder.
- 7) Keep a weekly meeting with the developers.

If you keep a tight vigil on the prograss of the project according to the above mentioned points you will have an Alpha app which works but before moving to the next stage, ensure you have cross checked following things:-

- 1) All features are incorporated as planned?
- 2) Design is implemented as per the plan?
- 3) Is the user group happy with alpha version of the app?

From this stage you will move to the Qulaity Assurance stage where the app will be tested rigourously. Be ready to miss your weekend parties, your

Do List

- + Cross check feature list implementation.
- + Check user behavior scenarios.
- + Keep checking the schedule. 10-15% variation is acceptable.
- + Always give feedback in written format.

Don't List

- Don't panic, and expect everything to work in first few builds.
- Don't worry about few crashes that will be fixed in the next stage but keeping a record and informing the developer on time is a good practice.

Tip: Stick to the weekly meeting schedule, it keeps you in control and also put necessary pressure on the development team.

Stage 6: Quality Assurance

Fixing the bugs, tinkering the app into the right shape.

Quality assurance usually go hand in hand with the development. You will normally get builds after the testing team has approved it. Quality is not a separate item but part of the process which runs in the background during development. Post development it comes into prominence and takes the front seat. Few things you should keep in mind at this stage are:-

- 1) Ensure that you have atleast one handset for each platform with you.
- 2) Test it feature wise on each platform.
- 3) Check for any blurred images or graphics.
- 4) Test the app from the end users perspective.
- 5) Record any discrepancies according to the respective platform.
- 6) Collect test reports from your user group. See if they have found anything.

After you report back any discrepancies and give your feedback then developer will come back to you with an updated app. You might have to repeat these steps couple of times before you finally declare that the app is according to your expectation.

Its finally the time you can move to the next stage and prepare for the app launch.

Do List

- + Follow each of the 5 points mentioned carefully.
- + Always delete the previous build before testing the new build.
- + Document everything you can. It helps a lot.
- + Officially inform your acceptance of the app to the developer.
- + If your app uses data connection then test it on different networks.
- + Go slow, spend good time testing it, speed wont help. :)

Don't List

- Don't forget to check the crashes that you documented in the previous stage.

Tip: Testing an app needs patience. Referring your feature list and testing each one carefully on all the platform will help a lot. Don't hurry up in launching the app. Take your time, test it well. :)

Stage 7: Launch

Fire the rocket and watch it fly high.

After, all the hard work you are finally ready to launch your app. We assume by now you have already opened accounts on various mobile app stores. In order to submit your app you might need help from the development team or prepare yourself for following things :-

- 1) Meta Data for app store submission (app description, keyword etc).
- 2) Screen shots of the app to upload on the app store.
- 3) A support landing page or website for the app.

So, you make the final payment to the developer and your app goes live. At this stage don't forget to collect the source code from the developer if you have earlier agreed upon that.

Go ahead and execute your marketing plan. Post Launch do watch your apps progress carefully and based on the market response, if you feel there should be some more features then follow the same steps again. Happy APPing! :)

Do List

- + Write the description of the app in a very simple language.
- + Keep it short and use points if necessary.
- + Use relevant keywords for your app to help users discover it.
- + Keep the app landing page in line with the app design.
- + Put a feedback form on your web page.

Don't List

- Don't forget to closely monitor the app store, it provides very detailed statistics which will help you plan your moves accordingly.

Tip: If you can get a video made about how to use the app or how does it help the end user then it will be fantastic. You can use this video as a powerfull marketing tool on your website, social media etc.

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Thankyou

