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How To Create A Thriving Enterprise App

10 STEPS TO MAXIMIZING USER ENGAGEMENT

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So, you've built a brilliant new app for your business.

It has the potential to ignite sales, streamline operations, and wow customers. The technology is state-of-the-art, the design is beautiful. Soon, piles of paperwork will be replaced by a few easy swipes on the tablet.

Your employees will love it. Right?

That depends. Actually, we've seen some pretty incredible apps wither away and die because their owners forgot the most critical part of app development: getting users as excited about the app as you are. And retraining them to incorporate it into their daily routines.

Whatever your app—whether it's a new sales presentation tool, a virtual product demo, a time-tracking utility, a pricing estimator or any other kind of business tool—**these 10 important steps can ensure your app has a long and prosperous life.**

1 BRAND IT.

Like any newborn, your app needs a name.

Choose something your users can appreciate, something that conveys the app's unique features and personality.

Then, give it an identity. Create an icon. Design a look that can be used on the materials you'll develop to market this app to your employees. Write a one-sentence tagline that clarifies its purpose and power. If you're developing a series of apps, create a synergistic theme to tie them together.

Remember, your app's brand will produce a strong first impression. It will speak volumes to your users about how well-designed the app is, whether it might be a pleasure or a chore to use, and if it seems worth embracing. It will also communicate how much you have invested into the app.

Create a brand that works in your favor.

2 TEASE IT.

A month or two before you deploy your new app, start building a sense of anticipation. Begin with some mystery and intrigue—don't give it all away up front. "Leak" the word that things are about to get easier/better/faster/more exciting/more fun. **Keep your employees guessing about the rest.**

- **Take a multi-layered approach.** Use posters, eblasts, web banners, video and more to hit your audience from every direction.
- **Leverage social environments** (and social media) to drop hints and let users feed off each other's anticipation.
- **Start using the branded look and feel** from the very first communication—so it will be consistently recognizable.
- **Focus first on your core users**—usually your staff or sales team—but consider if and when it might be helpful to also tease this release to additional users like your B2B customers—or even their end customers.

3 LAUNCH IT.

Start things off with a bang. When you deploy your app, do it with a level of energy that drives your employees to try the app immediately and pushes them through the first few weeks of adjustment.

- Think about how and when you can make the biggest splash. Often this can be achieved at a live event, like an annual meeting.
- Be strategic about the time of year and other things that may be going on internally. For example, don't launch a new sales app right before your biggest sales push of the year—allow your reps time to learn and get comfortable with the new app before they are in high-pressure situations.
- Decide whether it will be more impactful to launch to a smaller group of users first—perhaps your “power players”—before rolling it out to everyone else. A phased launch is often highly effective at building buzz, working out any initial kinks, and further increasing anticipation among the masses.

4 SELL IT.

Do not assume your employees will automatically see the value in your new app.

Market to them as though they had to buy the app—because, in a way, they do. They need to buy in. They need to invest time and energy into learning the app and integrating it into their routines. They need to understand the features and benefits.

Most of all, they need to know clearly what's in it for them. Changing their habits will cost your employees something. Use all available means to win them over and get them excited about transitioning to a new way of working:

- Blanket the workplace with printed materials like posters, banners, flyers, brochures, table tents in the break rooms, etc.
- Create a similar effect online with banner ads, eblasts, splash pages, video animations, and more.
- As quickly as possible, start sharing success stories. If a certain sales rep has doubled her commission since she started using the app, let everyone know. If your highest performing employees are using the app, spread the word. Help your users visualize what the app is doing for others and what it could do for them.
- Demonstrate the value of the app in any way you can. Employees aren't going to change their behavior to include this new app if they don't have a compelling reason to do so.

5 ACCESSORIZE IT.

Think about what will help your users get the most out of this app. Will they need any additional supplies, like a folder, easel, screen-cleaning cloth, stylus, case, a keyboard, or anything else?

For instance, if your retail reps will be using a product selector app with store customers, equipping them with special holsters can ensure their tablets are always handy for on-the-spot service. A special handle could make it even easier for them to hold the tablet and share the screen with customers. Or, if your app will be used in remote locations, you might want to provide a hot spot accessory to your team.

- Brand as many of your accessories as possible—including the tablet itself—to drive awareness and excitement around the app.
- Depending on whether these items are requirements or nice-to-haves—and based on your budget—you can provide a kit of accessories at launch or hold a contest to provide them as giveaways.
- Use accessories not only to equip your users for success—but also to increase the “fun factor” of your new app.

6 INCENTIVIZE IT.

Again, don't assume employees will instantly start incorporating your new app into their workflow.

Consider providing some personal motivation in addition to the general marketing efforts. Ideas include:

- Temporarily incentivise sales reps with higher commissions on deals they close using the app.
- Create valuable content (new sales sheets, business updates, etc.) that will not be available anywhere else—only via the app.

7 SUPPORT IT.

Make this transition as easy as possible by providing all the training and support your employees need.

The more confident they are about using the app, the more they will.

Training: Make sure every user is crystal clear on how to access and use all of the app's features and capabilities.

- For ultra-simple apps, this can be done through virtual demos and quick in-app instructions, but most of the time, you'll want to provide in-person, online or live video training as well as user manuals.
- Remember to train new tablet users on the basics—how to open apps, swipe through screens, etc.
- Offer a steady supply of shortcuts, tips and real-life examples.
- Provide ongoing training as new features are added and best practices evolve.

Troubleshooting: Have an arsenal of resources available to help your users when they get stuck. You don't want a bump in the road to derail any of your users.

Provide any or all of these:

- In-app support
- A dedicated website (or intranet/extranet site) with FAQs, tips and troubleshooting
- Personal support via phone or email
- Cultivate a community of power users who can support and encourage their peers.

Tracking: Be sure you are monitoring usage and results. Leverage the info you collect to drive your next steps.

- Run analytics on a frequent basis to track who is using the app, which features they are using most, and what kind of results the app is producing.
- If users are getting stuck or confused by a certain feature, send out communications to help avoid problems and start building a fix into your next upgrade.

Listening: Once the app is out there and being used, your users may begin to discover issues you hadn't anticipated. This is simply a case of you don't know what you don't know while building an app. Some things have to be learned along the way. Be active about gathering feedback and suggestions from your users. They will be your best source for learning what's working and what's not.

- Keep a process in place for reporting bugs.
- Formulate a "council" of opinion leaders, perhaps one from every business unit, to gain well-rounded insights across the board.
- Don't forget to collect success stories as well! These will be important to share with other employees.

8 BUZZ ABOUT IT.

It's important to keep talking about your app—before, during and after launch, and for as long as you want it to remain alive.

Develop a few standard means of communication—maybe a regular column in the company newsletter, a weekly blog post, a monthly eblast, a series of videos, or a combination of these and more. Establishing multiple communication vehicles will ensure you regularly catch all of your audience in one way or another.

Share all kinds of information with your users:

- Tips and best practices
- Success stories
- New features and additions

- App metrics—who is using the app, what features they are using most, how it is impacting sales, etc.
- Real-life demos
- And more!

Remember to communicate with all levels of your audience. For example, if you've designed a product selector app that will be primarily used by your sales team, be sure to keep the rest of your employees aware of it too—and let your customers know about the app's value and ease, as well. Customize your communications to each segment of your audience so each one knows what's in it for them.

9 MAINTAIN IT.

An app that is being regularly cared for will stay vibrant and valuable to its users. On the flip side, as soon as users notice that an app's content is becoming stale or things aren't running smoothly, they'll stop coming back. **Don't let your app go dormant, keep it fresh so engagement stays strong.**

- This builds on what we've talked about above. Take care of issues and bugs as they arise.
- Schedule user audits to keep your user base up-to-date and clean.
- If your app is linked to product information, pricing, etc., be sure it stays updated with the very latest data at all times.

10 OPTIMIZE & EVOLVE IT.

When you stop investing, your users will too. Release new versions of your app on a regular basis to make sure it remains an exciting and worthwhile destination for your users. If the app starts to feel retro or if other tools become easier or more efficient to use, you will start to lose interest and user engagement will start slipping.

- Use the feedback and analytics you've collected to build improvements into each update.
- Build new tools and features into the app so users continue to have new reasons to use it. Be strategic about this—you don't have to pack the app with every feature on its first release. Consider saving some for the second or third iteration.
- Let your users know you've been listening to them. When you release a new update, be sure to communicate that it includes new features and improvements that they have requested.

AND, REPEAT.

Each time you launch a new version of the app, follow the steps listed above: Update the branding if needed, tease and market the new release, support your users through the transition, and continue to collect feedback and update your app on a regular basis.

For most businesses, it's helpful to have a partner in this process—an expert that can walk them through all the steps needed to ensure a thriving app. Many app developers are strong on the technology side but don't offer much support beyond that.

Design Center ensures both cutting-edge app technology and effective user engagement with its comprehensive App Deployment and Management program that has been successfully applied to over 200 apps.

Connect with Design Center for more insights into keeping users engaged with your new app.