Entering the apposphere:
mobile apps take off

The move from the desktop internet computing of the 90s to the new era of mobile internet is happening with unprecedented velocity - eight times as fast as the PC web was adopted.

Unsurprisingly lots of businesses are wanting to seize commercial advantage – and that means Apps, lots of Apps. But before dipping a toe into the unknown apospheric conditions of mobile app development, it might pay to find out just what you're getting yourself in for, where to start, and just how a mobile app can help, or hurt, your business. iStart investigates...

BY BELINDA SIMCOX

t makes sense. You probably already have a smart-phone and wonder how you ever lived without it. Smart devices of today have the same capability of a lunar mission in 1969 and, according to Google, approximately 15% of all Web traffic is now mobile. These days, not having a mobile presence is almost like closing your website one day each week.

So, in the interests of staying relevant to your customers, how does that translate for your business? Is your company leading or lagging? Are you watching the hype and speed of the mobile industry's growth trajectory and nervously wondering how to best incorporate and leverage this new medium?

It's certainly not too late to be early, but be warned - many businesses enamoured by the iPhone Effect, are leaping onto the "let's build an app" bandwagon with little thought towards what end. With an ill-considered mobile strategy, businesses risk alienating their customers and undermining their brand and reputation. The market for phone and tablet apps is highly competitive, with about 400,000 iPhone/iPad apps and around 200,000 Android apps available. And of those apps that people actually find and download to their smart device, many are tried once then abandoned.

To avoid your app being part of the debris, it is critically important to keep in the forefront of your mind just what your business objective, and nature of your mobile user, is.

A mobile phone is an innately personal communication device, seldom shared. 90% of the mobile population keeps their cell phone within arm's reach, using it to browse on the fly. And as people upgrade to smartphones, a time shift is occurring, with 60% of their activity being new behaviour as they consume the web, games, maps, streaming videos, social networks, utilities and much more.

According to Google, mobile searches on average increase 50 fold when people upgrade their device to a smartphone. The 3 converging disruptive giants, Facebook, Apple and Google, are compounding this acceleration. So as you embark on your journey, think "SoLoMo" (Social + Local + Mobile), a term coined by VC maverick John Doerr to encapsulate the unique construct of the mobile consumer. Mobile now means your audience is active at any location and at any time, in their pocket or in the palm of their hand.

Mobile is a complicated beast. A highly fragmented wild west of fast paced digital innovation. If you are looking to take on this creature and, in particular, planning to launch a mobile app for your business, this is a guide to help towards your success.

The following insights were provided in collaboration with some of NZ's and Australia's leading mobile tech companies, all with a first-hand experience of launching mobile apps.

Guy Horrocks Founder of Carnival Labs, a local New Zealand mobile development house with over 60 iPhone, iPad and Android apps under their belt, many of which are for heavyweight international brands such as Kraft Foods, HBO, Estee Lauder, Gloria Jeans, as well as companies closer to home, such as Weta Digital and the NZ Herald. With well over 10 million downloads, many of their apps have been featured, made Top 100's, hit number one spots in the app store, and won numerous awards. Guy was a previous co-founder of Polar Bear Farm, the world's first commercial iPhone app company.

Andrew Plimmer CEO of Motim Technologies, developers of mobile campaigns for the likes of Nike, Disney, Coca Cola and Ford. Motim focus on developing technology to enable businesses to create compelling interaction with their media in a variety of different formats, leveraging their intellectual property in computer vision, signal processing, 3D graphics, augmented reality, game mechanics and interaction design.

Bruce Young CEO of Speedwell eBusiness Solutions, the largest independent web development firm in Queensland. They also specialise in iPhone Applications that align with and enhance existing digital presence by giving customers eBusiness tools and functionality with the convenience of mobile technology. Speedwell was responsible for the complex build of Domino's runaway success number one iPhone app (Australia) that recently launched in NZ.

Peter Watling Orsome Software. Peter is an experienced iOS developer with a number of successful mobile applications under his belt, who developed the award winning enterprise iPad app for Harcourts International as a business tool used by their real estate agents. »

Discovery, Planning & Functional Design

What are your business objectives?

Forget the technology. Knowing your business purpose, what you are trying to achieve, and with whom, must be foremost in your mind. Just wanting to build an iPhone app that does "x" is not enough.

"If you start with just the piece of technology then you are using a device to fill a hole that you do not know the shape of yet," says Bruce Young from Speedwell, the iPhone app development company for Domino's Pizza.

"If you start with your desired business outcome, then the means and the technology solution will resolve from that."

Your desired outcomes may be increased sales transactions, increased customer awareness, or enhanced customer support, or to make it more convenient for clients to do business with you. Or they may be to educate, to expand your business into a new market, or to decrease costs and increase communication efficiencies internally. Having a clear idea of what you do allows you to formulate a plan as to how to do it better.

What value is your app?

If your goal is to create awareness of your brand, ask yourself, 'what brand impression do you want to leave users with?' Perhaps it's appropriate to consider incorporating game play mechanics into your app to make it fun and, potentially, contagious, so that people will share with their friends and espouse your brand values in the marketplace. Or maybe its primary value will be business efficiencies. If you have identified that 85% of your calls are enquiries to find out when a delivery is going to arrive, then you would be looking to create something fundamentally functional in nature, making the user experience more efficient and engaging.

Big brand or unknown?

Guy Horrocks from Carnival Labs points out that it makes a difference, as to the type of app you design, whether you are a big-name brand or an unknown. If you are well known you can get away with focusing your design purely on an app that serves your business and your users, since you already have an audience catchment. If, however, you do not already have a strong brand presence, then consider, in your functional design, an app that will captivate and attract media attention, that will stand out above the noise of the other millions of apps you are competing against.

K.I.S.S.

Don't complicate and clog your app with too many features. Make it outstanding at one thing, rather than medio-cre at many things. "Traditionally, a big problem with most companies is they want to put many features into an app, whereas most people would rather download a converter, or a Dictaphone," says Horrocks. "They don't want to download the whole Microsoft Office suite in one application, because that goes against how they use their phone".

Similarly, it pays to split features out into different applications catering to different classes of users. People tend to use apps very simply. Phone calls, messaging, news apps, Facebook, recipe lists, to-do lists, games, weather... People load up the best one in that class, and that's where you want to be: getting 4 or 5 stars in app store ratings – 'Apple's endorsement effect'.

Don't design a 'Mini-Me'

A common mistake made by many is to treat a mobile device as a miniature PC browser screen, and to try to replicate their website on a device, ignoring the unique features inherent in smart devices. The best examples of mobile apps and websites optimised for mobile are the ones that understand the nature of the mobile user in-context: where and what they are doing as they use it, what they are looking for, and their challenges with the smaller interface. Minimising the number of touches to get to functions, small screen real estate issues, limited download speeds and specific data plans must be considered. Ignore these at your peril, because you risk creating frustration for your consumers, and with it, a negative brand perception.

Mobile site + a mobile app?

While mobile websites will display on the device's browser, a native application can leverage raw information from the device's inbuilt hardware, sensors and chip sub-systems, providing you with a far wider reaching application intelligence. The native experience enables smooth quick flick transitions between screens and a fast, responsive intuitive interface. While the browsing experience is growing more sophisticated, with much industry investment to leverage HTML5 capabilities, it is still very much reliant on devices' internet connection rates at this time.

If you have a website then mobile is just another platform it needs to work on. With Google already seeing 15% of internet traffic originating from mobile devices, do you want to turn your back on that many visitors, and be far less likely to get found in the search engines on mobile devices? Ensuring your website is optimised for mobile is a must; an app is an optional extra. In part, it comes down to your budget. Building a mobile HTML5 website is generally more affordable than building a native app, plus, a mobile site will work on multiple platforms.

Be wary not to just build an app for an app's sake. The intention is to promote, not damage, your brand. Undertaking an app development project requires a deeper

WHAT MOBILE OPERATING SYSTEMS ARE WE USING TO BROWSE THE WEB?

AUSTRALIA:
iOS – 73.77%
Android – 13.49%
Symbian OS – 7.85%
BlackBerry OS – 2.23%
Samsung – 0.58%
Windows Phone – 0.57%
Sony Ericsson – 0.53%
Other – 0.49%
Unknown – 0.41%

NEW ZEALAND:
iOS – 67.23%
Symbian OS – 12.16%
Android – 8.51%
Sony Ericsson – 3.55%
Unknown – 3.19%
Playstation – 2.14%
Samsung - 1.7%
BlackBerry OS – 0.71%
Other – 0.8%

(As of April 2011 via StatCounter Global Stats)

*Note: these figures indicate only web browsing via mobile devices, not mobile ownership.

business commitment in order for it to succeed beyond the launch date. Do you have sufficient budget to market it to stand out in a very crowded market, plus the resources to manage bug fixes, enhancements and cross channel extension? You will need to invest double digits to build your app, promote it, and to provide on-going support and updates, so if it does not benefit your business, it is better to focus purely on mobilising your website.

Which platform?

The high-end mobile smart device race and the platforms they run on is like a scatter gun, accelerating and fragmenting. At present, it looks to be developing into a three horse race between Apple, with their proprietary iOS platform, Google, with their open Android platform, and Microsoft, with their new Windows Phone 7 platform (particularly so with their new partnership with Nokia). Apps for the iPhone are written in a different language than those for the Android, or any of the other platforms for that matter, and each of these has a different user interface experience, meaning that native apps for each of these platforms are not compatible.

In terms of predictions, currently iOS is the most elegant operating system and app distribution model, and will continue to retain share. The free and open Android operating system will continue its rapid growth trajectory, as Google improves the core operating system and as more OEMs select it as their platform of choice. Android took the number one position of the world's leading mobile device platform late last year, however Apple's iOS still leads in Australia and New Zealand. In emerging and low-end markets, Nokia's Symbian platform will likely persist for a few years yet, but has left the high-end smartphone race. Blackberry's hold on the enterprise market is fast eroding and will likely continue to drop, as iOS and Android become more enterprise friendly.

Choosing which platform you build for depends on which phones and platform(s) your users have, and whether you are targeting a niche or a mass market. Historically, iPhone users were mid-twenties and up, tech savvy and with higher incomes, however iOS devices are now becoming more mainstream. In New Zealand, Telecom and 2 Degrees are pushing the Android and enticing more people with lower priced smartphones, so the demographic of your user could well influence your platform decision.

As you make your selection, keep in mind that for each device you build for, you will need to support upgrades and enhance it on an ongoing basis. In the Android ecosystem many independent OEMs (already 50 so far) are launching new devices with limited industry standards or consistency between screen size, resolution and feature sets, so if you plan to build an Android app, keep in mind this compounding complexity. Google is starting to enforce standards on their platform however all things considered, it is probably best to pick the three most popular models and design for those.

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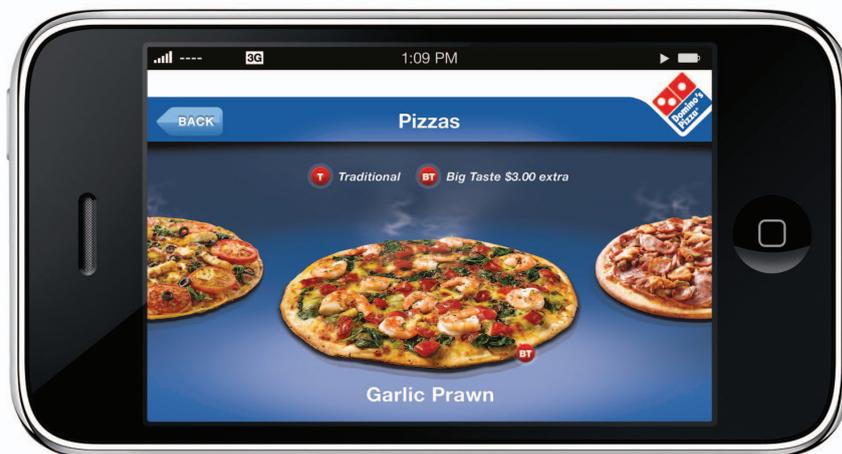
CASE EXAMPLE:
DOMINO'S PIZZA iPHONE APP

It's Australasia's number one free iPhone application launched in New Zealand in February this year after widespread success in Australia. Within five days of launch in Australia, the Domino's Pizza App, available for iPhone and iPod touch, was the number one free app in iTunes, downloaded more than 50,000 times in the first week, and generating A$1 million dollars in sales revenue in the first two months, and A$2 million dollars in the first three months. It is now also available to Kiwis and is achieving similar success.

Domino's business objectives were part brand-building, part sales driven. And defining their objectives went hand-in-hand with defining the measurements for achieving them. Specifically, Domino's two primary KPI's were percentage of sales generated from the app compared to online ordering, and the direct branding result of the number of apps downloaded. Their Online Marketing Manager, Michael Gillespie, says they wanted first-mover advantage to position themselves as innovation leaders in

the emerging mobile space. Domino's wanted to give busy customers the freedom to place an order when and however it suited them, or, "a Domino's store in the palm of their hands".

Domino's chose the controlled Apple iOS environment to ensure a reliable brand and application experience for the end consumer, playing to the strengths of the iPhone's vibrant colours, touch screen, and incredible functionality. Domino's wanted users to be able to do all they could do with the online system, but on the go, such as ordering outside their office or in transit, giving customers a flexibility they had not had in the past. With more than a million pizza combinations, the new app gives consumers complete control of the ordering process; they can place a pick-up or delivery order, access hot offers, pay by cash or credit and even track their order to see when their order is ready. Customers are also able to create an account and save their favourite orders for next time, to make the ordering process even faster.

The award-winning
Harcourts App,
'Mobile Agent'

Enterprise apps for your business

Mobile apps are not just for the consumer. You can also build and distribute proprietary enterprise applications to connect your business to members of your organization in new ways. The major platforms provide developers with enterprise software development kits to create, deploy and manage apps directly. Distribution to your staff can be via a simple email link to install the app onto the device, or in a closed enterprise-class app store with provisioning based on user permissions and profile. For example, sales reps could have access to a different app selection set than operational staff.

Harcourts International Ltd, after the success of their consumer iPhone app 'Mobile Agent', and in collaboration with their app developer Orsome Software, rolled out their game-changing enterprise iPad app, 'eCampaign', an efficient and intuitive business tool for their sales consultants to use to aid clients in the decision making process. The app recently won Harcourts a top industry award for "Best New Media" at the Leading Real Estate Companies of the World conference in Las Vegas.

Gregg Toyama, head of e-Business at Harcourts explains that the functionality of the iPad allows sales consultants to professionally demonstrate key elements of the marketing and pricing strategy to their clients in a rich, interactive mul-

timedia format, while they were out of the office.

"The real-time mapping of 'for sale' and 'sold' property data on Google maps has been well received and the ability to instantly access both offline and online marketing programs within a fully integrated platform brings us right into the 21st Century," said Toyoma.

Toyoma also found that once they started to work with their developer on the project, many more options to display and demonstrate their products and services to their clients opened up.

Measurement and KPI's

There is incredible dexterity and depth in the tracking processes available with mobile apps. Applications can interact with smart device sensors, GPS and other in-built hardware and systems, revealing a far richer data intelligence about usage of the apps, user location, time and context, than potentially any other engagement mechanism. With this ability comes both business opportunity and, of course, ethical responsibility.

From the most basic of calculations (such as the number of app downloads), to the most granular of data (event logs, click paths, device versions, screen orientation, Wi-Fi or carrier, active and repeat users, fails and error reports, removed apps etc), the potential for what can be measured is exten-

CASE EXAMPLE:
NZ HERALD iPAD APP

The NZ Herald iPad app was launched July 2010, the same day that the iPad was launched in NZ. The results were both immediate and striking: over 10,000 unique browsers, each viewing an average of 400,000 pages each week.

The key objectives were clear from the outset: the purpose of the project was to extend the reach of the NZ Herald brand and position the NZ Herald as an innovation leader in the industry.

Having a clear outline of what needed to be accomplished, as well has having an understanding of the end user and how they would interact with the technology, allowed design elements to be properly nailed down in the initial planning stages.

"With the help of Shift and Carnival Labs we custom-built the NZ Herald iPad App and focused our attention on building an app which specifically plays to the strengths of the device," says Spencer Bailey, GM, APN Online NZ.

"Readers can touch, zoom, tap, pinch and dive-in to the latest news coverage, exclusive video and engaging photojournalism."

Proper planning and clear objectives have seen the response to the project come up as nothing short of amazing. When you consider the low click-through rates usually offered by banner advertising, NZ Herald's results show just what can be accomplished when objectives are clear and a project is well executed – including an astounding 30% advertising interaction rate, with 10,000 unique visitors per week (each viewing an average of 40 pages each).

"With the launch of the iPad App we've extended the reach of our brand with the new platform, allowing us to engage with readers during times when it is traditionally quieter on the website," says Bailey.

"It has also opened up new revenue opportunities with advertisers keen to embrace the technology and reach a quality audience of early adopters and mobile professionals".

"We've delivered interaction rates of over 30% for advertisers in the App – proving what a user-friendly and engaging iPad App can achieve."

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sive, to say the least. To be clear, what is trackable does not identify the actual person, but rather the device's unique identifier. Unlike PC tracking mechanisms such as cookies however, which can easily be removed or blocked by a user, device ID's cannot be. Therefore, due to the highly personal nature of a mobile device it is critical that your business is transparent, using best practices with accessible terms of service and privacy policy and seeking opt-in permission before accessing data. Meanwhile the hotly contested, 'Do Not Track' privacy issue, is currently being considered internationally.

As Andrew Plimmer from Motim Technologies points out, "consumers should always be aware of the services they are selecting. For example, if you are going to gather location information, the consumer needs to be aware of that and have the option to make that available or not. Though marketing data is anonymous, privacy issues should still always be a major consideration when designing applications."

As well as measuring to help improve and evolve your app, you also, of course, want to measure your project's performance towards success. Your business objectives will be the guide to determining these KPIs. Once you have defined your objectives in the planning process, identify how you will assess those outcomes. For example, if your objective is to increase customer retention, do not just measure how many

times your app is downloaded, but also usage and loyalty: that means average time usage, number of repeat usage, and number of app removals.

Resourcing your Project: the Steps, Stages and Timeframe

Identify your key players and resources

As early as possible identify what relative skill sets each partner has. In addition to your internal project manager leading and guiding the project, you will need represented, either internally or outsourced:

• IT to integrate with your back office, call centre, web content, inventory, API's, web services

• Creative - this may be an internal or external agency, or your mobile app development partner may have user experience and user interface design capabilities

• Your internal marketing person/team

• Exec level stake holders, CEO

Play to your strengths. If you have high quality IT infra-

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structure discuss with your mobile app development partner how they can connect with that rather than replace it. If you have an exceptional internal creative department, then make a first attempt at UI (User Interface) design, which your app development partner can then mould into the mobile context.

Resource internally or outsource

The question of whether your own IT team builds your app(s) or you outsource the project to specialists, in part, comes down to time, and your IT team's prior app development experience. Even if you do intend to grow your team's mobile app development capability internally, it is advisable to initially outsource to qualified professionals where mobile app development is their core competency. Your IT team can gain exposure to specialist expertise and learn vicariously, and you won't have to add risk and time to the project by cross-skilling existing employees.

Assuming you do outsource, you will provide a brief, including your preliminary thinking, discovery, planning and scoping. Through your dialogue with your developer, more considerations and adjustments will come to light. This is all part of the refining process, and allows you to get a feel for the competency of potential vendors. Source a proposal from them that includes:
• Design summary
• Confirmation of technical specification including integration and capabilities
• Time frames

• Costings
• Commercial terms of business
• Ownership of the application
• Maintenance and support post launch (bug fixes, revisions, enhancements) and SLA's

A proposal is a reciprocating process between you and the vendor to establish a mutual understanding before signoff.

Project owner

It's important to have someone who internally owns and manages the project, and is tasked with keeping everyone on track. To keep all parties involved and up-to-date, and to keep to budgets and timelines on track, a firm, informed hand is crucial. If a lot of integration with existing back-end business systems is required, then this role may even involve two people (one being from IT).

"Make sure you have someone who's squarely managing the project, knows where it is at, what stage it's at and the delivery and you're keeping everyone on track to those dates, budgets and time-lines", says Domino's Gillespie.

"It's not just the timing of getting everything right, it's in that overall holistic management and approach you've got to allow as well because, if things get a little bit off and you lose track of that, you might have one party going off on a tangent or different direction and you have to pull it back together. You obviously don't want that as it will slow down the release."

Project stages

The steps your project will follow are consistent with most software development project methodologies..

Planning

As advised earlier, establish business objectives early on. Get to know your user and ask "what value will this app offer to the user?" Above all, know what you are trying to achieve. Looking to increase sales? Focus only on that. Put your desired outcome at the front of your mind during the early stages, because this will inform the development of your design brief.

From the other side of the table, Andrew Plimmer, CEO of Motim Technologies, thinks about what his clients want in these terms:

"What does success look like? What will the user experience look like? Set measurable outcomes and work out how to measure them. Include the features required to meet those outcomes."

Build and iterate, develop and test

Throughout the process ensure that the lines of communication are well open. Know where the project is at all times. This does not mean micromanage every little element, but it does mean having someone in direct communication with the development partner, and someone who takes ultimate responsibility for the project.

"This will require about an hour per week of the client's project owner," says Plimmer, "who can then communicate back to the client project progress and on-going regular reviews of the state of the development and, in turn, return feedback to the development team rapidly given the nature of an agile environment. This is important."

Delivery phases

Alpha delivery This is an internally-based working solution that is reviewed by your company only, to ensure that the project is meeting its basic requirements. It is at this stage that bugs and inconsistencies can be revealed, and as a result of the alpha review, changes can be made prior to beta release.

Beta release This typically involves a controlled group of end users. Control groups are adopted to test the app and offer their feedback. Certain businesses will often have strong relationships with an existing client. This client can be used to provide honest feedback and from an end-user case perspective, the results of that trial can be examined prior to general release.

Soft launch Don't leap straight to the market.

"Avoid the big bang solution", says Plimmer.

"The danger with attempting a big bang solution is that you are trying to do everything in the first go. The opportunity you have with this type of software development is that you can do a soft launch and then update with new features and then update again and update again as you understand more and more about [user] behaviours. By having a more incremental approach you are minimising your exposure and maximising your learning opportunity"

> 66 You will have one shot to capture the interest of those leading edge consumers, who are going to download the app and tell their friends what they thought. If it looks interesting but has no content, they'll negatively comment, they will delete it, and they'll tell their friends not to bother 99

Andrew Plimmer, CEO of Motim Technologies

Promotion. Launch.

Aligning business systems

Are all your ducks in a row? Ensure you have all your business systems and marketing communications all aligned and backed up with substance before you launch, to ensure you deliver on your value proposition. Make sure you have a fast response agreement in place with your app development partner to monitor reviews and ensure fast turnaround iterations. Who's monitoring feedback? If there is an issue that was not caught in beta trialling, the last thing you want to have to deal with is a busy development partner who is not available.

"You will have one shot to capture the interest of those leading edge consumers," says Plimmer, "who are going to download the app and tell their friends what they thought. If it looks interesting but has no content, they'll negatively comment, they will delete it, and they'll tell their friends not to bother."

Front load your marketing spend

You are launching your solution into a very crowded market place - there are very many apps (around 400,000 for iPhone and around half that for Android for example) and many competitors for users' eyeballs and short mobile attention spans.

So, what is your angle? What is your value proposition? »

Ensure that your key marketing message is communicating value above all else. What are the users' reasons for adopting it over other previous traditional means? Without a point of difference and a clear-cut user benefit, people won't see a reason to actually take the time to download or use it.

The great thing about mobile applications is their innate potential viral factor once in the app store. The store is a crowded environment however, so two things are critical: fast initial swell and high ratings. Both are essential to getting positioned in the app store in 'top listing' sections, and creating 'buzz' - the sound a viral campaign makes when it's working effectively. The top listing sections within stores are where the majority of users first look to download apps. Fast initial swell (through a powerful and effective launch strategy), and high ratings (by delivering a well planned, well designed and well built application) makes for that critical early success.

Essentially, you need to drive early and fast awareness. Here's how you do it:

Marketing and PR channels
Online

• Auto detect when your website is being visited by a mobile device and serve either an alternate landing page with a 'Click to Download' link to download the app from the app store. Or have a banner, prominent icon or link to do the same.

• eDM (Electronic Direct Mail) - Market to your existing opt-in databases via email and/or txt message campaigns. Leverage your existing customer loyalty.

• Discuss mobile advertising with your ad agency. This can include paid search advertising, in-app advertising to exclusively target the relevant app platform, and geo-targeting your ads to your local user.

• Mobile SEO - Ensure your site is mobile search engine friendly and optimised to achieve high rankings in organic search results

• Social media - leverage your and engaged users' social networks. Viral videos, users 'liking' your app on Facebook, using the buzz from that as material for PR exercises all provides solid endorsement of your app to the media-savvy consumer.

• Directly approach niche websites whose focus is on local mobile apps, such as NZ's *iPhoNewZealand.co.nz website,* and the local Android equivalent *androidmobile.co.nz* Also, Microsoft view New Zealand as a tier one mobile market and have a strong interest in supporting and promoting local apps.

Offline

• At your outlets, stores and offices, provide staff with t-shirts, urging customers to download your app. Switch out your in-store messages for mobile messages - if people are waiting in your store, that's a great opportunity for them to download your app. Similarly, include appeals to download the app with your branding material.

• DM (Direct Mail) to postal address databases and loyalty customers schemes, and include incentives for downloading.

• Appeal to local papers, web media and bloggers via a launch party. Invite influential people consistent with the media your audience engages with.

• Use any other means of above and below-the-line advertising you think will encourage your audience to participate.

Post launch

Post launch review

A post launch review is advisable and can be a revealing experience. You will already have your measurement and tracking lined up with your KPI's, and you will have the appropriate lines of responsibility for gathering and aggregating that data as part of your measurement plan.

Ask: What functions are people using the most? How long are they spending using them? At what time of day and at what locations? The answers to these questions, coupled with users' app store feedback, plus commentary in the blogosphere, Twittersphere and Facebook, all provide strong indications as to what needs attention. Use that feedback to address anything users are flagging as faults, giving poor ratings to or voicing their dissatisfaction about, and to leverage and enhance the more popular features of the app.

Measurement and analysis

As outlined earlier, analytics enables you to better understand how your users are interacting with your application and allows you to glean insights that will help you to improve your app, track conversions and optimise processes. They also enable you to track the health of your app, understand where the 'pain points' are, see how your application is performing comparatively in the market and set up other warnings for yourself so you'll know if something has gone wrong.

As well as tracking activity within the app and via the relevant app store, ensure you also track direct response metrics from your digital advertising and, where possible, your offline advertising. "To measure", as the saying goes, "is to know".

Support and enhance

But that's hardly the end of it. Now is the time to measure, review, enhance...rinse and repeat...and enjoy the learning process and the maturing of your product and this new channel of engagement. Exploit the opportunities it provides, engage more intimately and effectively with users, create valuable relationships with customers and, above all, enjoy the business rewards that your latest app project has provided. 🔳
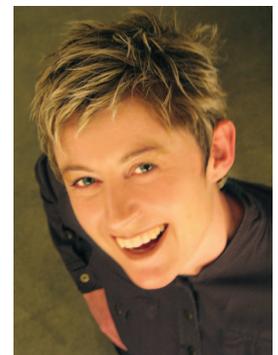
ABOUT BELINDA SIMCOX//

Belinda Simcox is an accomplished mobile technologist and seasoned internet veteran with a 25 year career in disruptive digital technologies in the United States and New Zealand, and was one of the early pioneers of mobile marketing in New Zealand back in 2004. Belinda currently lives in Auckland. www.belindasimcox.com