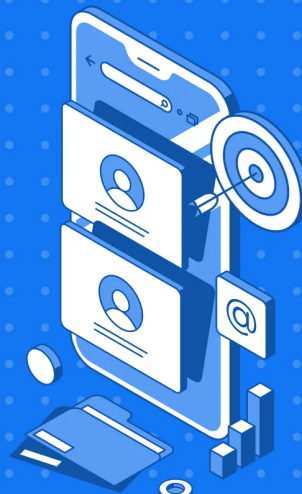


ISN'T IT A PROPER TIME TO GET YOUR OWN ENTERPRISE APP?



Standfirst:

If your managers are thinking that they need a mobile app to help them make the business more successful what are the technical decisions you need to make before you get started and how can you make sure they go down the right development route from the start?

Content:

In the recent report, Worldwide Enterprise Applications Forecast, 2015-2019, IDC have predicted that the enterprise app market is on a huge growth trajectory of 6.6% CAGR and will be worth over \$200 billion by 2019. This growth is being driven largely by medium and large organisations recognising that they have to make their business critical systems and information available to their staff at all time wherever they are. So now that your business has decided it's time to get you own enterprise app, what are the things you need to do to deliver it?. To help you out with developing something you may not have worked on before, we've looked at the different project elements you'll need to manage, and the app options you'll have to choose from, in order to develop the right enterprise app that will help your organisation be more profitable, productive and efficient.

The challenges of mobile app development projects

According to research that Mobile Enterprise carried out with CIOs, the three main challenges to overcome in enterprise app development projects are:

- Not having a formal mobile strategy in place
- Having an ineffective technological infrastructure
- There being insufficient budget to get the tools needed to get the job done.

To address these three elements you'll need to bring together the relevant teams that the app is going to work for to develop the mobile strategy together to ensure that it's going to do what you want it to. Once you've got this in place then you'll be able to identify what technology infrastructure you need to support it and can ensure that it's in place before the app is created and launched.

Budget is a tricky one. It goes without saying that there is no point in doing a half-baked job as the app will not then deliver all of the benefits you expect it to. So shop around to see where you can get the best deal for the budget you do have and ensure that everyone involved in the project understands that you need to spend in order to win. Or as the old saying goes, buy cheap – pay twice.

Once you have completed all the steps to get the development side of things right, one of the most important decisions about which operating platform is looked at in more detail below, then you need to focus on the testing, implementation and roll out planning. Change management is going to be key and the best way to help ensure the success of the app is to get people on board early so they have a chance to play and test the app before it goes live and can play the role of app evangelist with the rest of their team.

IOS or Android?

As you'd expect, there are pros and cons for both IOS and Android.

The biggest pro in favour of IOS is the enhanced security it offers. It's a much safer option for corporate data as if a tablet or phone gets lost or left behind somewhere and falls into the wrong hands, it's almost impossible to remove the data from it.

But in a budget conscious world the biggest drawback for IOS is the cost – the devices are more expensive to buy in the first place but they also do tend to last longer, whereas Android devices are cheaper but become obsolete quicker.

Development wise, the IOS platform is not as flexible and customisable as Android so there are fewer opportunities for the app to be adapted to exactly what the business needs and wants. But there is a lot to be said for the ease of working with the IOS templates and many people are more comfortable working with the IOS interface than Android.

In Android's favour is that as well as being more developer friendly, it also communicates better with external apps than IOS. This is probably a very important consideration if the business is going to want to develop apps for other business areas and systems and will want them all to talk to each other.

These decisions are also going to have be led by the mobile strategy that you create at the start of the project but essentially the decision boils down to whether your business needs more security or more flexibility and what it has to spend.

Once you've decided on your operating platform then there's the hybrid/native question to answer.

Should you go for a hybrid app?

You've probably used a hybrid mobile app before even if you're not really sure what the term means. They are built using a combination of web technologies such as HTML, CSS and JavaScript and then hosted inside a native app that uses a mobile device's WebView. Some of the more well-known brands that are using hybrid apps for their mobile strategy are Evernote, Amazon and LinkedIn. While they give a great mobile experience for users they are nowhere near as intuitive and flexible as the main site or as a native app could be.

So while hybrid mobile apps can be a good choice for small and simple tasks like basic e-commerce, note taking and messaging they simply can't do as much as native apps can, are not as user-friendly, and can't access all devices.

But, perhaps, the biggest drawback is that they are expensive to grow. Like the business you work in the enterprise app you create will need to be able to expand easily, so it really is best to go native from the start.

But it is going to be the more expensive option so how can you convince the budget holders and decisions makers that they should go native?

Making the business case for native

It will all come down to the bottom line. Seeing as the reason the company will want an enterprise mobile app in the first place is to become more efficient, productive and profitable then this is what the business case you put together has to focus on.

You need to take the time to define a proper business case that details three key elements:

1. Prioritises projects
2. Shows how you'll get user buy in
3. Reveals how you will measure success

While the first two should be relatively simple, unfortunately number three is a bit trickier. As although costs and revenue models for application development are pretty well-understood for most customer-facing web apps, figuring out the development and operational costs for mobile enterprise apps is a completely different ballgame, so you are going to face some additional challenges.

Measuring success

The main one being that it is often hard to determine what the ROI for employee-facing mobile apps will be if they don't fall into well-defined categories, such as sales and field force automation. Typically, the cost savings from enterprise mobile app projects are going to be associated with process transformations that are going to save money through time rather than a direct cost, making them difficult to assess, especially because most organisations have not calculated the time and effort

required by these processes and what that might mean in financial terms.

So in putting together your business case, it will probably help to separate costs and ROI into three categories: App Development Costs, Ongoing Operational Costs, and Calculating Benefits, Cost Savings and Revenue. Again, the first two are pretty self-explanatory and should be easy enough to figure out but the third is where things could get a little more difficult.

Defining project benefits

But never fear, it is not impossible! So we think the best way you can present a cost benefit for developing a native mobile app is to define project benefits metrics based on efficiency, effectiveness and error reduction. Try to think of this in tangible and intangible ways. For example, how much time did people take before to do the tasks the app will streamline?

Also think about how the app can reduce the load on admin staff and customer service teams. Will the impact be significant enough to lower telecom costs? How can people do more with mobile apps during time when they previously wouldn't be able to work – when travelling, for example? Could they make more sales, complete reports, update CRM systems? How much could stationery cost be cut through using less paper by switching to direct data entry into a mobile device or by making brochures available just online? And following on from that, how much would that enable you to cut printing and shipping costs?

So as you can see, there are many ways to prove ROI in your business case it's just a case of you really knowing exactly what the benefits of a native app can bring for the business as well as the developers.

