



Mobile App Frequently Asked Questions - The Tech Talk Series



Does an app sound like a good idea for your business? Maybe you've got questions. Get your queries answered by TheAppMatch's Jarrod Robinson, in this episode of SuperFastBusiness.



Jarrod Robinson

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 705, and we're going to be talking about apps, and in particular answering some common questions, some frequently asked questions about apps and how relevant they are and some of the technical nuances. And for that, of course, I've brought along my special guest, friend Jarrod Robinson from [TheAppMatch.com](https://www.theappmatch.com). Welcome, Jarrod.

Jarrod: Thanks for having me back.

James: Well, I love our [tech talk podcast](#). You are the ultimate gadgets aficionado. I love your intrigue and savvy around this particular part of the market. You're always sharing great apps with me and you know a lot about them. And of course, you've created this whole business around listening to a customer's challenge, like what they're doing with their business. And then you match them up with the right app that's pretty much ready to go for them. And then you submit it to Apple, and now they have their own beautiful branded app that does what they need it to do, and they didn't have to do the whole development from scratch thing, which could be very expensive and time-consuming and ends up being a complete mess. So TheAppMatch.com is a brilliant concept, and I've been working with you closely on the the genesis of that product from when it was born to now, and you have a really solid client roster. You got some fantastic clients in there. So clearly, it's doing well. I've been enjoying the [app for SuperFastBusiness](#) and also for [SilverCircle](#). Members love it.

But I do have a few questions for you today, Jarrod. So are you ready?

Jarrod: Yeah, apps come with questions. I'm ready to go.

Apps versus mobile websites

James: Okay, so if I have a mobile website, should I still have an app? Because, you know, like a lot of browsers, they'll quickly sort of adapt to the mobile version, but what makes an app different to having just a mobile version of my website?

Jarrod: Yeah, it's like the next step up. Like, I think everyone by default should be having a responsive website. And yeah, that big phase that went through about three years ago where everyone was moving to mobile responsive, and...

James: [Mobile first design](#).

Jarrold: Yeah, like, it makes sense because most of the activity happens mobile. But if you sort of take that a little bit further, most activity that people take on their phone happens to be inside of an app. So a very small percentage of what we tend to do happens via browsing your mobile device. And yeah, if you're thinking about what the user prefers, they would prefer, and there's evidence to support that that, you know, around 90 percent of the stuff that we do on our devices happens to be in-app. So you're sort of cashing in on that whole user preference of you know, they would prefer to do this. And the fact that you can, you know, measure things that you might not have been able to do before, you can work offline, you can then start to, you know, use the devices' capabilities more effectively, which you can't do via website. So that includes things like push notifications, and being able to use the camera and all those sorts of things. But I guess the real secret is, users would prefer it. And for you, you then start to be able to cash in on some of the improved user experience stuff that comes from that.

James: Well, I mean, we can do this challenge – we can go to our Moments app on Apple and see what we're spending time on. We can also pay attention to today. I mean, even if you have a look at your home screen and see what apps are there, I'm willing to bet that some of the most frequently used apps are there, pretty common. I imagine people are using things like their email app, their social media apps, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

Jarrold: Yeah. They're definitely not going to Facebook.com to see Facebook, if they're on their mobile. Like, Facebook is a great example of it. You know, one of the largest companies in the world, they've got a great mobile responsive site. But their users still choose to go to the app, because it's just that significantly better, you know, even easier to access and manage and that's what a good app should be.

James: Yeah, I'm thinking about things. I use a surf check app. I use messages, I use my own forum. Even Google, they have really good apps for sheets and docs, if you're using that sort of stuff. And then there's little, you know, music apps to play songs, there's Skype app for communication. So apps seem to be where it's at. But I think one of the obvious things is having your business brand sitting there on the homepage of that valuable real estate that people are picking up all day long, is really strong. And if you want retention for your membership, if you want repeat purchases, if you want that in-app ability to message people, then having an app is a wonderful enhancement over just a mobile website.

Jarrood: Yeah. You wouldn't probably not pick one or the other, you'd definitely run with both. But yeah, it is a great enhancement.

James: You'd definitely have both. Definitely have both.

Is the field too competitive?

So the next thing, if you have decided that you want an app, you might be sort of logically thinking, Okay, well, there's just so many apps. Isn't it too competitive to get downloads now?



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JARROD ROBINSON

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Jarrold: Yeah, there is. There once was a time where it was, you know, we would say there was like, 1000 apps on the store in the very early days. But, we're at millions now. And the thing is, it's still a drop in the bucket compared to the spaces that we compete with heavily, and that is like websites. You know, if you put your keywords into search engines, you'll find ridiculous amounts of results appear. But you can do the very same thing on the App Store and you're likely to probably find nothing. And that presents some pretty big opportunities, because the competition is low. The only thing that's really quite changed is, you know, that whole time where you would be able to put up gimmick apps, that sort of thing has disappeared. What they really want on the store now is just high-quality apps. So if you've got a high-quality app, you're serving a legitimate user base and an audience and that might be your membership and your members, then it's very relevant to them. So you're going to be sort of on your own in terms of serving that particular group of people. So it's almost a massive advantage to be in the App Store, because of the fact there's low competition compared to the website presence.

James: Perfect. Well, in case of mine, like, I'm steering people to my own membership app, because I've got the app download icon on my website. If they go to the website from their browser on the phone, people nag them. Nag's probably a harsh word, isn't it? It will prompt them to download the app. So it's automatic. That's just a piece of code that you helped us put on the website. The other thing is, we send it in our thank you, onboarding, make sure people get the app. We even talk about it in our sales approach to let people know, hey, you could have James in your pocket. I'm just sort of leveraging that famous Steve Jobs thing about having all the songs in your pocket. You can have your coach in the pocket with the app. So people who are buying my program are being directed to my app, so I don't have to compete with all the other apps on the store. They're not interested in everyone else's coaching app, because they've got my app. And you know, I tell them that it's there, so good old email and a thank you page can help tremendously.

What's a native app? What's a hybrid?

So let's just recap what the difference is between native and hybrid apps. Because we hear these names talked about; we've had various episodes on it, but it is a question that comes up all the time.

Jarrold: Yeah. People ask the question, you know, what's a native app? What's a hybrid app? And if you were to sort of really cut through the difference, a native app is one that is built with the native language of that platform. So Apple have their own language, you build it with fully that language. And then you know, Google have their own language as well and you build with that. So you've got two separate apps that need to be built and maintained. Usually, there's two different developers, and you've got to wrestle between trying to have features that are available in both, whereas a hybrid approach is, you can theoretically build from the one code base. That's really good for something that also gets asked later down the track about apps costing a lot of money. If you can build from one code base, obviously, it's going to become more affordable.



But the the hybrid approach is really good for the type of apps that you and I have, James, where we have a WordPress site or some sort of other third party intermediary that we want to show content from, or we've got like a membership plugin that's managing the access of, you know, the information that people get access to. Because we use hybrid, we're able to leverage those things more effectively by using the website where appropriate, and then also leaning on native stuff where appropriate. The end result for a user is, they shouldn't really know any difference. Like, most people using our apps could care less whether it's native or hybrid. There's just this ongoing bit of a myth that if you build with a hybrid approach, then you're building an inferior app. And that's just not really the case anymore.

James: Yeah, I think it's a classic case of, you know, when I was with Mercedes-Benz, a lot of consumers wouldn't really know much about what is a guibo coupling or a chrome vanadium stem valve lifters and so forth. Like, they didn't need to know the tech that was underneath or inside the engine to help them drive the car. They were interested in the motoring experience. So if your customer's getting good experience, and if you as the owner are having a streamlined app that's not causing a hassle, then it doesn't really matter whether it's native or hybrid; it's doing the job.

Making it better for less

Jarrold: Yeah. And this sort of flows into the other common question we get from people around affordability and how we're able to deliver an app that's high quality at a more affordable rate than quotes they may have received. Just the other day, someone said they had been quoted \$40,000 to build their membership app. And when we sort of did some digging around that, absolutely, you could spend 40,000, if you build it from the ground up fully native, and you wanted to touch on both Android and Google. Because you would be pioneering much of the integrations that made that possible. So of course, you have to build from the ground up and spend a lot of money. But if you use the hybrid approach, then you can start to leverage the web part when it makes sense to handle, like, the permissions. But then you can start to use native where appropriate. So dramatically cuts the cost of development and makes it a lot more simple. And that's sort of what we lean on.

James: I coach a lot of membership business owners and the ones who've spent the most on membership solutions, like building custom components and chasing their sort of dream usability and complexity levels, etc., they all end up having to hire multiple developers, chief technical officers. They spend a fortune on it. And without exception, they say, James, I wish I'd just gone off the shelf. I wish I'd just took an off-the-shelf solution. And I was faced with that solution back 10 years ago. I could have spent two and a half thousand dollars a month to have a membership platform that was going to do similar things to what the solution I'd chose at the time did. And I'm so glad I just went with off the shelf. So wherever you can get something that's already been done, that will be way better. If you can just have the skin customized to reflect your brand, that's ideal, because someone's already done the work. In fact, the only people who should be spending 40 grand on an app are probably people who intend to resell that over and over and over again as a platform, right?

Jarrold: Yeah. Like, some cases, fully custom apps that, you know, like you mentioned a couple of your surfing-related apps. Like, there's no existing infrastructure, they've really got to build from the ground up. So, those sort of cases.

James: Yeah. And then they have to sell ads on it, they have to make it a thing. And I think probably most of them lose money. I've seen, you know, some of them change sponsors occasionally. I know that all of those surfing apps are drawing from more or less the same source of the wave data. There's only two possible sources and they skin it differently. I think there's three that I use depending on which country I'm in, and they would cost a bomb to maintain and there's no money in it, I'm pretty sure.

Jarrold: The easy part for us is, because we use hybrid, it doesn't really matter to us what membership plugin people are using to manage their content. Like, we can integrate with them because we integrate on a different level than a fully native option. And the end user doesn't notice anything. They see their content, but it just means we haven't had to go in and build a native integration between every single membership platform, because that would just be a nightmare to maintain, and the customer would have to pay a lot more.

James: Would you say it's more or less creating a little branded browser?

Jarrold: Yeah, it definitely has elements of that. But we also get to benefit on the native side as well. So we get the best of both worlds. You know, just today, I was doing some work on a dynamic level in my own app, changing things in real time and then having that experience be present in the app that people were using. You can't do that with native – you'd have to submit a new version to Apple, you would have to hopefully get it approved, and that's got a detriment to how swift you can operate.

Apple's 30 percent

James: Let's talk about the submitting to Apple part. That's a fascinating one. Because I know there has been some chaos and carnage at times where they just reject stuff for no apparent reason. Actually, I had an Apple [video](#) channel, and they just turned it off. They said it no longer complies, and I don't know what I did wrong, and I don't have any recourse and I just switched to [YouTube](#). So, bad luck, Apple, but it's one reason to [own the racecourse](#), right? It was really quite interesting.

But, you know, we have this situation where Apple are pretty keen on getting their 30 percent of your revenue through their payment gateway. And I'm wondering if some of the decisions as to approve or disapprove depend on whether they think that you're denying them that 30 percent. So when do I actually need to pay Apple or Google the 30 percent revenue?

Jarrold: Yeah, this is a big one. And we commonly have to explain this to people who are running membership sites, because they obviously sell access to a membership. And like, theoretically speaking, if the service is provided inside of an app, and the person can unlock that thing from inside the app, that's when you have to use Apple or Google gateways to purchase that content. So the way that you deal with this is like how Netflix does. You might have signed up for Netflix at some time, and many years ago, you could do it in their app, but these days, you can't. You actually have to purchase it outside of their platform, maybe via email when you sign up for a trial. And then you use the app as a vehicle purely to login. The same is true for your [SilverCircle app](#). We don't do the purchasing inside of the app. It's just done outside of the app, and then the app becomes a vehicle where people can log in. So that's the distinction. If you're wanting to make offers to your customers in the app for purchases or for upgrades, then yeah, you're going to have to offer the 30 percent revenue to Apple for that purchase. But if the transaction happens outside of the app, then no, you don't. It's a different ballgame. More like Netflix.

James: Right. So, Netflix is clever, because it would cost them a fortune if they had to pay the tollway. But obviously, a lot of people, including myself, use that Netflix app on the phone, especially when you travel, with a VPN app, because they're pretty fussy about what country you're in.

Let's talk about, why do I have to pay a monthly fee when I submit my app? Like, can you just program the app, make it live?

Jarrold: You could, and it would be a period of time where it would be totally fine and live and active. But unfortunately, these things mature, and they require ongoing maintenance. And that's a good thing, because you bring with it lots of new features and functions that the device can access. But net costs, it's like anything, you know, your server has hosting costs. If you turned that off, your website would stop functioning. A lot of your email...

James: Gmail, it's got costs, you know, my CRM costs.

Jarrold: Yeah, Gmail, your subscribers to your email list, you have to pay for access.

James: Basically, most of the good things, there's an ongoing fee, because it's going to be ongoing development and changes, right?

Jarrold: Hundred percent. Yeah. And particularly with apps, like, you need to be submitting new versions regularly. Otherwise, they start to shed them from their database. They don't want inactive apps on their list. So by having, a monthly ongoing fee, you're basically protecting yourself from having that happen to you, and you get to lock in the value that your app has produced for you over a long period of time, without having to even think about it. So, you know, the people who we build apps for, they don't even know what's happening in the background with their app, which is the whole goal that we have for them. They just build their content, they just do what they do, and the app just happens in the background without them really needing to think about it.

James: The app's like the pipeline to the customer.

Jarrold: Yeah.

James: So if Apple can see which ones are inactive or what, can we see it? Can we measure things that are happening in our app, like any sort of stats or track things that are coming as a result of the app versus through browsers or desktops?

Jarrold: Yeah. This is a whole ball game that is open to so many possibilities that you really can't make present in just a website alone. So you can measure, like, app downloads; you can measure, like, if someone has uninstalled the app as well. So there's stats that give you that sort of information. You can track every conversion that you would be able to track in your web system. So it's quite robust, but you open yourself up to a whole new data set that you can't get from just pure website alone.

So a lot of our revenue that we can detect from our app is trackable through our systems, because, you know, when someone logs into an app, we can detect it as on the app versus via the browser. And then we can see that some of those customers hang around for longer than the people who aren't using the app. And that sort of comes back to that very first question we had about why would you use it. It becomes more affordable, and more user-friendly. And the net result should be that that has an impact on how long people stay. And we can see that stuff with stats in the apps that we manage.

How complicated is the upkeep?

James: Yeah, nice. So I guess in summary, are apps complicated to manage and maintain, you know, with the updates and software changes and Apple marketplace updates? Like, my phone and iPad and computer, they're constantly getting updates. Just Apple itself. You know, I'm using Apple. Like, we also looked into my own stats, didn't we, Jarrod, and found that almost all my customers use Apple.

Jarrod: Yes, it is pretty common.

James: It was phenomenal, actually. There was like, three Androids in there somewhere. But that was, you know, quite interesting to know. But I know I'm using the same platform as my customers. So these platforms are always updating. Yet you're running my app, so I don't really do anything. Sometimes I get a notification from something and I just send it to you. And you say, ignore it, or it's sorted or whatever. And it just seamlessly happens. And I think that's a tremendous service to have. But is that the same experience that other users are having? Or am I just getting special treatment?

Jarrod: Yeah, well, I think you've touched on what it is that we try and provide. If I was to answer this part truthfully, absolutely it is. If you wanted to handle your own maintenance and support from an Apple and a Google and all of that world, I think you would find it quite challenging just to keep up with what's required. However, if, you know, you go down the approach of utilizing a service to do it, then you shouldn't have to think about those things and you should really just have to focus on what it is that your app does. In your case, just answer questions in the forum.

James: Yeah. And I love that I can just log on to my app, answer the questions in my forum. That's kind of my job. I do it every day. I love it. And you know, it's on my phone, right there is a prompt. I don't have to write down, you know, or tie a piece of string string around my finger to remember to do it. It's right there in my face, the app every day. I do my job, and life's good. I get to go for a surf.

Something for everyone?

So if I'm a business owner or I've got a membership or a product or service or have smoothie recipes or fitness or whatever, would there be an app for me?

Jarrold: Yeah, that's a good question. There's a lot of people that come to us and they're interested, but they're not quite clear on, like, what it could be that they'd build. And we've helped some people take a piece of their membership out and turn it into an app, potentially. That's one one avenue. Maybe they want to have it as a lead-up product that leads to the membership, or they want to have an all-encompassing membership type app, which is a common type of approach that we've got. So realistically speaking, there's so many different ways that you could navigate it. And we sort of revel in that part of the job, of finding what the best path might be that leads to the overall goal. So if your overall goal is, you know, I want more members, maybe that makes sense to build a membership app that has a free component that leads people to a paid pathway. And that might be the first time people have considered that for their membership platform. But in the app context, that makes a lot of sense. Whereas other people that we build apps for sort of came to us thinking, Hey, I wanted to build an app for my membership, but they ended up doing something completely different, which was taking just a piece of content, repurposing it and turning that into its own product, and then generating quite a nice little bit of revenue from that key one product that'll lead to the membership later on. So there's lots of different ways. I think the easiest thing is just, you know, ask us and I think we can help carve the path.

James: Yeah, so we do that at TheAppMatch.com. We can ask you there; you've got some information on the website that would help someone navigate to the right solution. Of course, you've got support if there's any questions beyond that. Jarrold, you're always such a knowledgeable guest. I enjoy our little chats. And I've learned some things today about apps as well. But also, most importantly, on behalf of all the members of SuperFastBusiness and SilverCircle, we want to say thanks for making our app work so well. And it's no wonder you're having great success helping other people with their apps as well. I'm always recommending TheAppMatch.com because I know you get it done. So thank you for that.

Jarrold: A pleasure.

James: There you go. This is Episode 705. If you've got any questions for Jarrold, head over to TheAppMatch.com. Ask him if he's got the app for you. And of course, if you enjoy these shows, feel free to [leave a comment on the Apple iTunes marketplace](#). At least that'll keep my audio podcast ticking along, that would help. And it's great chatting to you and I'll catch up with you in the next episode.



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