CRAFTING A SUCCESSFUL MOBILE APPLICATION LAUNCH STRATEGY

An NSJCM White Paper

INTRODUCTION

You've just created a fantastic app and are ready to release it. Don't let your hard work got to waste! Build a successful, sustainable app launch strategy and let other people know about the great product you have created.

As of November 2011, the number of apps in the app stores have skyrocketed:

600,000 apps in the Apple iTunes App store

500,000 in the Google Android Market store

Of these, only 459,000 and 319,000 respectively are currently active*, meaning that the apps have not been pulled from the stores for outdated and/or inappropriate content. With all those active apps, how can you compete? How can you gain the attention of users in app stores dominated by big-brand apps?

As of November 30, 2011, 90 percent of top brands are entering the app market, accounting for 2,343 apps**. Big brands don't necessarily have to make money via their apps; what they're mainly seeking is brand awareness— although Disney, Adobe, and Thomson Reuters are making big bucks with their app offerings. The big brands have the most apps, also:

Disney: 636 apps across all stores

Sony: 285 apps

BMW: 63 apps

Expanding your app's awareness and keeping it visible are critical to success in the app market. There are only so many apps that fit on a screen when users are browsing app stores. You certainly don't want your customers to have to scroll through multiple screens to find your app. The first apps that appear in the app stores have high positive review numbers or have been recognized by the app markets, such as being "New and Noteworthy" in the Apple iTunes store.

CRAFTING YOUR BASIC LAUNCH STRATEGY

Launching an app is like any other product launch. However, there is one game-changing difference —the app store. It's difficult enough for a consumer to find a specific app they are searching for, let alone navigate the expanding selection in every category. In the face of this competition, being prepared is absolutely necessary to achieve success in your app's launch however you want to define it.

To start your strategy, you need to define your goals. Defining your goals helps you decide what is the most important thing you want to achieve with your app. You also need to decide what makes the app successful. What constitutes success for you:

✔ If you designed the app to make money, then you will want to form a marketing strategy around pushing sales.

✔ If you are more concerned with providing the app as an educational service, then the number of downloads is more important and the number of reviews you can get. Downloads are essentially testimonials about the effectiveness of the app.

✔ If you want the app to spread brand awareness, then app downloads and reviews are both important measurments of success as well.

The following questions are just a few suggestions as to the goals, objectives, and success measures you could decide on when thinking about your own app. It's imparative you think about and define these goals first, since they will be the same motives you return to when making key decisions about your app:

Overall Objective for Your App	Standards to Measure Your App's Success
• To make money	• Ratings in the app store
• To provide an educational service	• Money made from the app
• To provide an employee tool for gathering data	• Number of loyal users you are able to attract
• To provide entertainment	• Number of downloads
• To create brand loyalty	
• To create a lifestyle for your customers to be a part of	

It's a good idea to also consider questions like the follwing, so that you can create a specifically targeted pitch around your app and find the best way to persuade your customers that they need it:

How is this app different from your existing products?

How does this app differ from your main competitors' apps that are already in the app stores?

What benefits does it provide your customers?

Who are your target customers, and what is the best way to reach them?

After answering these questions you will have a far more specific idea of not just your own goals and objectives but also the type of audience you must target.

Your next step is to choose the best marketing methods to launch your app. Use the next page to set up your goals and definitions of success, and refer to that document often—especially when you come to detours during planning your app launch.

Setting Goals

My app should:

- [ ] Make Money
- [ ] Provide an educational service
- [ ] Provide an employee tool for gathering data
- [ ] Provide entertainment
- [ ] Create brand loyalty
- [ ] Create a lifestyle

My app will be successful if it:

- [ ] Acquires a high rating in the app store
- [ ] Generates revenue for my company
- [ ] Attracts a high number of loyal users that use and rely on it regularly, give feedback, and want updates

Defining Goals

How is this app different from your existing products (if you have a new product or services line)?

How does my app differ from my competitors' apps?

What benefits does my app provide customers?

Targeting Customers

The approximate age range of my customers is:

The approximate ratio of males to females in the group of customers I'm targeting is:

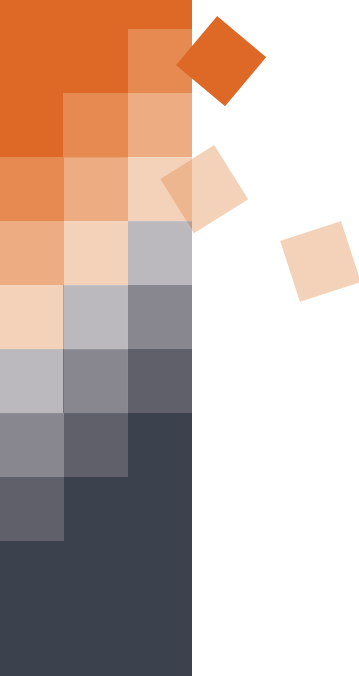| My audience is primarily made up of:	
☐ Business professionals	☐ Do-it-yourselfers
☐ Tech industry geeks	☐ Home improvement gurus
☐ Stay-at-home moms	☐ Statistics nuts
☐ Road warriors	☐ Starving students
☐ Sports fanatics	☐ Gamers
☐ Book fiends	☐ Fashion addicts
☐ Health/exercise fiends	

MARKETING METHODS

A product launch includes all the methods of mass marketing we are familiar with along with a few more:

- TV
- Print
- Radio
- Web
  -- Social Media

- Sponsorship
- Promotional evens
- In-app ads

By choosing marketing methods from this list and using them to promote your app, you are increasing your chances of success because you are reaching out to your audience and telling them about it.

TV REACHES MILLIONS OF VIEWERS

You may not think it, but tv is still the most familiar marketing method, and it reaches millions of viewers. A large number of people still get their news about new products and events through television. While a television commercial may be too expensive to buy, you can still contact a news station with the story of your app or purchase a short, promotional air-time space in a local news program or independent station.

Nielson predicted that 115.9 million homes would have access to TV during the 2010-11 season—up 1 million from 2009-10. Viewers watch an average of 30 plus hours of television per week*, which means your dollars spent on advertising your app are going a long way to reach the widest audience possible.

CASE STUDY: Lime Marketing

Basic Company Information
Lime Marketing is a Utah-based company that specializes in app development, web development, videography, animation, and design. They help their clients with anything from designing and developing a website to creating and implementing mobile apps.

The App
In 2009 LIME Marketing launched an app integrating both the iPhone and iPad called Ping Pong Battle. To play, the user connects their iPhone, which acts as a paddle, to their iPad, which acts as the ping-pong table. LIME's goal at the time was simply to explore the game concept of virtual ping pong using the then new accelerometer technology in the iPhone. The app is priced at $4.99.

Launch Strategy

Lime Marketing implemented three marketing methods:

1. Using a sponsorship from ping-pong suppliers Killer Spin
2. Blog reviews of the app on TechCrunch and Gizmodo (a popular blog covering technology)
3. A local television spot showcasing the app on Fox News (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xUFbZmCWIU).

Currently it is in the process of being updated with a redesigned user interface and other added features.

Results

The Ping Pong Battle app got hundreds of downloads. For a newly established company as small as Lime, that is an amazing statistic for their first app launch. The app led to the creations of a loyal fan base, which aids in the company's word-of-mouth marketing strategies. The app also aided in company marketing development, since it generated international attention with a Dutch magazine review.

PRINT ATTRACTS INTERESTED READERS

Print is also a classic and traditional marketing method you could use to promote your app that many consumers still use.

Newspapers and magazines reach customers in your market

Many magazines and newspapers carry ads for apps. You could buy an ad and put a QR code (or other barcode) that can be scanned by smartphone users, linking them directly with the app store in order to download the app. You could also pitch reporters and magazine writers to get a news story about your app in a local paper or magazine.

CASE STUDY: Chase Bank

Basic Company Information

JP Morgan Chase Bank is a personal and commercial banking company. They have been collectively serving their customers since 1955; once mobile devices became more popular in the early 2000s, they began implementing mobile banking options for their customers.

The App

Chase Bank's mobile banking app allows for customers to perform a wide variety of banking needs for both commercial and personal bankers. The personal banking app allows customers to do everything from pay friends who also bank with Chase to deposit checks by snapping a picture of the front and back of the check. Customers can pay bills, set up automatic bill pay, view statements and balances, and transfer funds between their different accounts .

DIRECT MAIL SERVES YOUR LOYAL CUSTOMERS

If you have a list of customers you send direct mail to, it is still an effective method of marketing, particularly if your customers are specifically interested in your products and brand. You can mail out brochures or include advertising for the app in your other printed mailers, making your customer aware of the app and its approximate launch date.

Press Releases Spark Attention

Another print-marketing method you could use is the press release. If you write and pitch a press release well, it can generate some pre-launch buzz for your app. When writing your press releases, always remember to find the right contact to send it to—a reporter or editor who covers those stories—and include keywords specific to your app. Also, publish the press release online, as this will give the search engines something to associate with your app keywords. It will aslo allow you to pitch your app to online press sources.

CASE STUDY: City of Salt Lake City

Basic Company Information
Salt Lake City is the principal city serving the rapidly growing western market area of the United States. Located at the crossroads of the two major east-west and north-south interstates and served by an international airport with over 800 flights per day, Salt Lake City is the economic, financial, healthcare and distribution hub for Utah, Southeastern Idaho, Southwestern Wyoming, Eastern Nevada and Western Colorado.

The App
The Salt Lake City government recently released an app called Salt Lake City 311. This app is available to iOS users and offers citizens of the city a means of communicating basic maintenance problems or crime reports directly to city officials. The app uploads all reports generated by citizens directly to a work order database, which automatically sends them to the appropriate department

responsible. Salt Lake City determined that their app would be successful if citizens' complaints were being fielded to the appropriate department and addressed in a timely mannerbalances, and transfer funds between their different accounts.

Launch Strategies
To launch the app, the city used these marketing methods:

1. Sent out a press release
2. Held a press conference.

http://www.slcgov.com/slc311/

Results
Two local newspapers wrote stories on the app, which provided word-of-mouth marketing for the app.

RADIO PROMOTIONS BUILD EXCITEMENT

Another traditional marketing stragtegy, radio ads are still a great means of mass marketing. Think about how much time people spend in their cars commuting to and from work. There you have a captive audience!

Consider creating ads for local radio stations or scheduling an interview with a local radio celebrity to pitch your app. Give away promo codes on air or use the time to create a buzz around the app launch date.

WEB MARKETING HAS UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

The number of methods available for web advertising is huge, as is the audience you can reach there. You must, however, carefully plan a strategy to target the right audience.

Email Treats Customers Like VIPs

If you already have an email database of customers, this is a great tool to promote your app. You could offer exclusive views of the project pre-launch and promo codes to email-only recipients. Don't forget to ask for their advice and suggestions when it comes to improving the app as they are your exclusive community. Remember—you want them to be your brand advocates.

Online Ads Locate Your Target MArket

You could use standard web advertising, such as banner ads; however, these are becoming widely ignored by web users. You might explore "pay-per-click (PPC)" ads, where you literally pay the ad publisher every time customers click your ad. The ads are also based around keywords and search engine use—both things that will help your marketing focus on your target customers. Also, find out where customers in your target market hang out when online, and become actively involved with marketing in those areas of the web.

Social Networks Specialize in Trendsetting

Social networks are now thought of the most as a means of advertising new products. However, you must have a strategy when it comes to using these channels. Find specific, niche platforms that you can tailor around your app. If the app centers around photos, for example, consider the microblogging services Tumblr or Instagram to advertise it.

Also, use social networks to gather and provide testimonials and reviews by users; post them on your app website and social profiles. You can do this by tracking down influential or heavily-followed social media participants who your app's branding. Before you ask these participants to become part of your app advertising, however, you must build meaningful relationships with them. Understand what will help them succeed or how you can help them. Once again, building a community-based network of relationships is the best form of advertising you can use in terms of social channels.

Online Videos Create a Sense of Intimacy

Online videos (posted to YouTube, hulu, or other video websites) give your customers a sense of connectedness and intimacy; videos are a must for app promotion. *During the month of October, 2011, YouTube had 161,000,000 plus unique viewers. YouTube was also the second most used search engine (second only to Google)**. Creating a YouTube community or pairing with a YouTube celebrity is an excellent choice of marketing channels to promote your app.

Podcasts and LiveChats Get People Talking

You could use recorded reviews or discussions of your app through podcasts. Podcasts can be made available for download in the Apple iTunes store, or on the app's webpage, and appeal to a certain user demographic.

You could also conduct live chats in real-time. These have been very popular on Twitter and Google+ for inviting users interested in the product to ask questions and give feedback. The live-chat method could be really effective if you are building a culture or lifestyle around your app and you include discussion of more than just the app.

Bloggers Rule in Your Market

Reaching out to bloggers interested in products like yours, or who maintain a community of your targeted market will help spread awareness of your app. Targeting bloggers is the same as identifying and targeting influential social media participants—it's about community.

Be careful whom you pitch your app to. Do your research and don't spam a number of bloggers that would have no relevance to your target market or app. Be honest, open, and friendly; and consider how you can help them rather than just how they could help you.

CASE STUDY: Skullcandy

Basic Company Information
From their website:
"Skullcandy is a leading audio brand that reflects the collision of the music, fashion and action sports lifestyles. Our brand and distinctive logo symbolizes youth and rebellion, and embodies our motto, "Every revolution needs a soundtrack." Founded on innovation, we fuse bold color schemes, loud patterns, unique materials and creative packaging with the latest audio technologies and innovative functionalities to create new and unique product. Our headphones feature our distinctive Skullcandy sound and leading-edge design. We offer a wide array of styles and price points and are expanding our brand into complementary audio products and accessories."

The App
The Skullcandy v.2 app (the most current and successful is the second version of their original) is free and compatible with Android and iOS. They created a free app to increase their name recognition because they didn't need it to make them more money. They have done extremely well for themselves based on their products alone.

Here's where Skullcandy excelled in their mobile app development: they used the idea of an app to further propel the idea of the counter-culture they present in their products. For them, app "success" centered around creating a lifestyle and brand loyalty. They took the same principles behind Apple, Inc's business model to create an atmosphere of an exclusive club surrounding their brand.

Part of what made Apple's computer and music-listening devices skyrocket in sales in the mid-to-late nineties (and continue to do so) is the idea that if you buy an Apple product, you belong to a club that only lets the most tech-savvy, artistically-inclined, well-educated, ahead-of-the-times people become a member. Skullcandy did the same thing: they took a look at their consumers and created a persona in which to base an entire exclusive club around. The persona encompasses an under 35 year old whose hobbies include listening to music, surfing, skating, BMX-ing, skiing, and snowboarding - so they developed an app that this persona would use every day.

The persona travels a lot and is constantly outdoors engaging in various sports. Skullcandy built in a feature of the app that lets users know what the weather conditions are around the world, and not just the temperature or rain/wind/snow. There are in-depth snow and ocean reports so users can best plan their adventures. The app guides users to the best and most exclusive locations for BMX-ing, motocrossing, and skating. On top of all of this, Skullcandy has created playlists based on the persona's musical tastes and offers free streaming to users. There's also a video aspect of the app, so users may watch videos of DJs, action sports, and interviews with pro-riders and musicians. Lastly, the app offers free wallpaper downloads designed around the lifestyle and aesthetic of this specific counter-culture.

Launch Strategies
Skullcandy used a few different venues to launch their app:

1. Print ads in the kinds of publications they know their persona looks at regularly (skate, surf, BMX, motocross, and teen-lifestyle magazines)
2. Social media platforms such as a Facebook page and Twitter announcements

Results
Various online and written publications have written and reviewed the app, which further exposed the company, brand, and app. Out of over 9,000 reviews, it has an average rating of 4.5 stars, out of 5 stars, in the Apple app store.

SPONSORSHIP IS A WIN-WIN SITUATION
Sponsorships are a great way to promote your app in an industry or lifestyle/culture that customers in your target market identify with. If you want to seriously consider sponsorship, prepare a demo and pitch it to sponsors before submitting your app for acceptance in the app store, so that you can craft a co-promotion campaign that will benefit both of you.

PROMOTIONAL EVENTS LET YOUR CUSTOMER TRY IT OUT
Promotional events are a fantastic way to not just present an app, but demo it as well. You can schedule a pre-release showing of your app at an event will allow you to reach out the customers in your target market and interactively build interest around your app. This is excellent word of mouth marketing and it builds a public reputation.

Tradeshows and Exibits Build Buzz with Professionals
Attending trade shows to give demos of your app (or simply to talk to people about it) is a great way to generate buzz. Schedule booths at exhibitions or trade shows for your business industry and show your app to people passing by. You could also ask individuals to give you app reviews.

Seminars Help Create a Network
You could coordinate a seminar around your product and service or attend a seminar with a colleague. Seminars are good promotional activities for networking or asking people to review your app.

Power Lunches Persuade Industry Leaders
These sorts of networking groups are a great place to present your latest project and get reviews and feedback as well. You could give out promotional codes and find other colleagues to co-promote with.

Contests Entice New Customers

Utilizing any of the forms of marketing for your app, implement a contest. Skullcandy created an earphone design contest to those who downloaded their mobile app and advertised the contest through a Facebook page. Holding a contest of some sort offers your customers an unconventional reason to want to download your app. An example is if yours is a graphic design business, offer a contest surrounding creating a logo for one of your clients and only those who download your app can enter the contest. Have the initial entry form and submission only offered through your app.

Also, consider speaking at some of these events or seminars. Your speech does not have to be centered around the app in particular to be effective. If you are launching a new company with the app, consider attending an entrepreneurial luncheon or event where you present your business venture and then explain the app that you are about to launch.

IN-APP ADS ROCKET YOUR RATINGS

In-app ads are advertisements that pop-up in an app after consumers have downloaded it. They open an app for, say, dictionary.com and then see a banner pop up at the bottom of their screen that advertises your app. Whether or not your app is one that consumers need to pay for, in-app ads improve your ranking in the app stores, which will improve your exposure to consumers and, ultimately, generate more and more downloads of your app. In the Apple App Store, the more downloads you have the higher your ranking will be; in the Android Market, app usage is what will approve your ranking.

It's a good idea to try and make your app available across all the platforms, so any way you look at it, you need to improve your app's ranking through downloads and usage. Paying to advertise your app through in-app ads is the best and quickest way to do just that. Once your app is highly rated in the app stores, you will start seeing more consumers downloading your app organically (without seeing your app through an in-app ad—consumers will find it by seeing it in the rankings in the app stores). Once you have downloads of your app coming organically and from ads, it will start to really take off. If your app was initially free, you could then begin charging for it since your rankings, download rate, and usage rate will be quite high.

Remember that you don't have to use every marketing method listed above. Each media reaches a specific audience through a specific venue and are best used when selected with your target market in mind.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations! By crafting a launch strategy you are on your way to launching a successful app. Once you have successfully launch your app, you will want to track the user statistics. Get customer feedback, learn who your most loyal app users are, and interact with them. These are the best ways to ensure your app's continuing success.