How to go about developing your enterprise app

By Peter Scheffel
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Having a mobile app doesn't distinguish you anymore - that period is long gone. But not having a mobile app, and not having some basic functions that competitors in your industry have, makes it impossible for you to successfully operate. I believe your app really is your ticket to the game.

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A mobile enterprise app is designed for your business and co-ordinates your content and information management systems which can be directly accessed on your mobile phone. With more business occurring outside the office block – having access to your customers on the move is increasingly important.

With a recent success using Xamarin and shared code while leaving the business logic and security protocols in place, BBD understands that each project comes with its own set of variables. Despite the many different approaches to enterprise apps, below are five important aspects to consider before developing your own.

1. More than just native apps

Your first choice must be around what model will work best for your business and employee needs.

You have a few options here. A native app is developed specifically for either iOS or Android, while a hybrid app installs like a native app, but works as a mini website. You also have the option to share between your app and your website.

2. Type of app

These days you have to support Apple and Android, but it is extremely expensive to have two separate teams developing for iOS and Android concurrently. If you still want to go native, you luckily have choices, and it's getting simpler.

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One of the options is to develop using a toolset such a Xamarin which allows you to share code across multiple platforms. Although you still need the specific skills for the stack, time and effort will be reduced.

Moreover, the Xamarin App Player allows the developer to instantly see changes you've made to your code. This effectively shows you what you've done directly on your mobile phone – lessening the project cycle time.

Microsoft has also been attempting to make the process easier with a set of tools which allow a developer to compile Apple apps in the cloud using Visual Studio App Centre. This relieves you of the model where you had to have an Apple computer to compile for the iPhone/iPad apps.

3. Timeline

Companies who want to rapidly deploy can become frustrated by the workflow and approval processes of the app stores delaying the release of an app. To counteract this, there are new ways using React Native which allows for dynamic apps that can be modified without going through the app store workflows.

In this way, React Native is making the development process more palatable for large organisations to be able to change and adapt their app quickly to respond to business needs.

4. Maintainability

One more important consideration that is often overlooked is that of maintainability. Quality requirements such as maintainability are important to ensure that the app really does work for you. It is in this way that you ensure continued efficiency and usability.

5. Budget

As with all projects, the budget is an important consideration. To a large degree, it will be your budget that will guide your decisions.

Have a clear figure in mind to help your developers shape a solution that works for you and that you can afford.

What baffles me is that this information isn't easily available in a search, and yet these are points every company must consider at some point. And if you haven't yet, now is the time.

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