

Travelport Digital 

Getting started with your first travel app



Introduction

If you or your travel agency has never launched an app, there are undoubtedly going to be a thousand questions floating around your head. How much will it cost, how long will it take, who will build it, will it be a success? This guide is designed to help you answer those questions and examine the various options that are available today.

Your starting point is to uncover the truth, to better understand the strategic importance of mobile and how travel agencies use it to build brand awareness, reduce travel friction and stress, create new revenue streams, reduce costs and keep travelers engaged in the travel program. With this insight you'll be armed with all the data you need to convince your board to invest in a new mobile app and get started with selecting the right vendor or building a team in-house.

It's easy to build an app but it's very difficult to get it right. As such, we'll examine when to go in-house or outsource the development and how to choose the right people or partners for success. Next, we'll help you to chart the course in building all the fundamental tools and features you'll need to have in place, with an eye on the overall mobile ecosystem, so you can add new developments or integrations in future.

With your new app almost there, you'll need to stay focused on your launch plan. We'll help you determine the metrics and KPIs and what a fully integrated marketing campaign will look like. By following this proven path to success you'll deliver a seamless mobile travel experience that will drive traveler engagement, have downloads thriving, social media buzzing and brand awareness soaring to help your brand stand out in a crowded market. Plus, beyond the hype surrounding the launch, we aim to help you plan for continued growth and success beyond the first few months.

At Travelport Digital we understand that no two businesses are the same, but, having worked with some of the best travel brands in the world to make their apps a success, we feel this flexible guide with practical insights can be adopted by any travel agency or travel brand, particularly those who have never had an app or whose mobile strategy is struggling.

So let's get started.

Content

Why mobile?

- 5 The shifting mobile landscape
- 7 Comparing mobile apps and web
- 8 The key benefits of going mobile

01

Key functionality

- 26 Getting the basics right

04

In-house or outsource?

- 14 Outsource v in-house
- 16 Pros and cons
- 19 Choosing the right vendor

02

Launch planning

- 29 The launch plan
- 30 App launch timeline

05

App success

- 22 Building a team for success

03

Metrics

- 39 Metrics for success

06



Why mobile?



Why mobile



In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

01

The shifting mobile landscape

To give your first app project some context, it's important we take a look at how we got to where we are today.

Just over a decade ago, the smartphone market was still in its infancy, with less than 3% of the market using one, and brands such as Nokia and Blackberry still at the top. Then something monumental happened. The iPhone was launched in 2007 and twelve months later Apple introduced the App Store. This changed everything.

The 10 years since the launch of the iPhone have seen incredible change in the travel industry. Air travel has effectively doubled since 2007, and there are now over 4 billion travelers via air each year. Back in 2008 we saw 51% of people using travel agents for flight booking and 47% for hotel booking but fast forward to 2017 and this number has reduced significantly with just 8% using a travel agent or call centre to book flights.

The landscape has shifted and travel agencies need to respond to this change by reaching their customers through the channel that they use most - mobile. Today 64% of all business travelers use mobile devices to check travel itineraries one or more times a day

So, what's on the horizon for mobile in the travel ecosystem? Well, most data points to accelerated and continued growth. The rise of the millennial traveler, who is highly adept at embracing and using apps and mobile has increased customer expectation and a sharper consumer savviness has provided a potent environment for mobile and the digital landscape to flourish, resulting in a transformation of the travel industry.

It's all very good us listing the macro impact of mobile apps, but how does this affect travel agencies beyond flight and hotel booking? For travel agencies, mobile plays a pivotal role because it is the only device your consumers have by their side at all stages of the customer journey; when searching and booking travel, as they go through the airport, when they're at destination and when they complete their return leg.

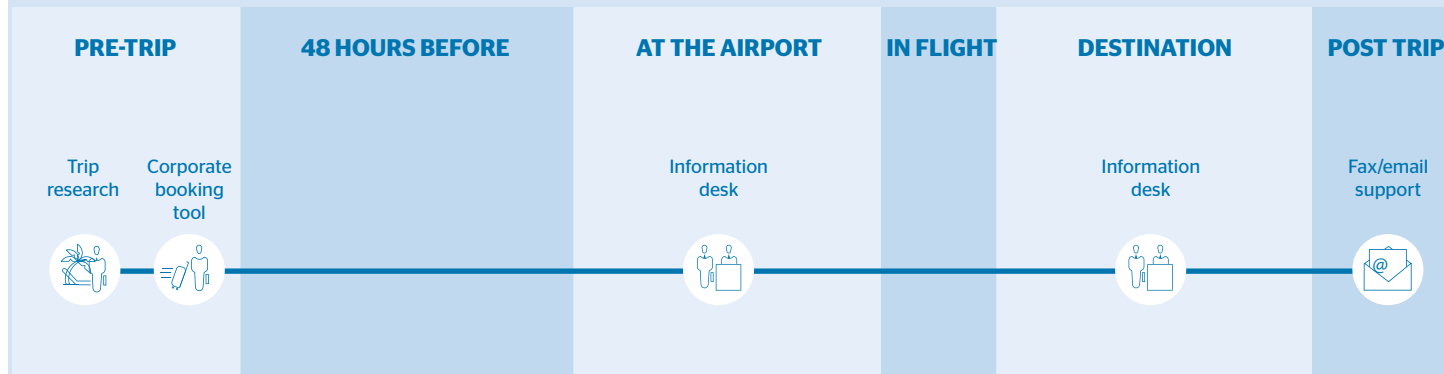
Without a mobile app your agency has a limited presence in the end-to-end journey. Corporate travelers are constantly on the go and are no longer tethered to their laptop so they now demand ways in which they can consume information in real-time. The traditional model of travelers walking into an agency or picking up the phone to talk to someone have changed considerably. In a world dominated by digital, personalized experiences this older model of travel commerce can appear commoditized and

crude; focused on the destination and one off transactions as opposed to helping improve the overall experience for the traveler. The evolution of mobile technology has changed that however.

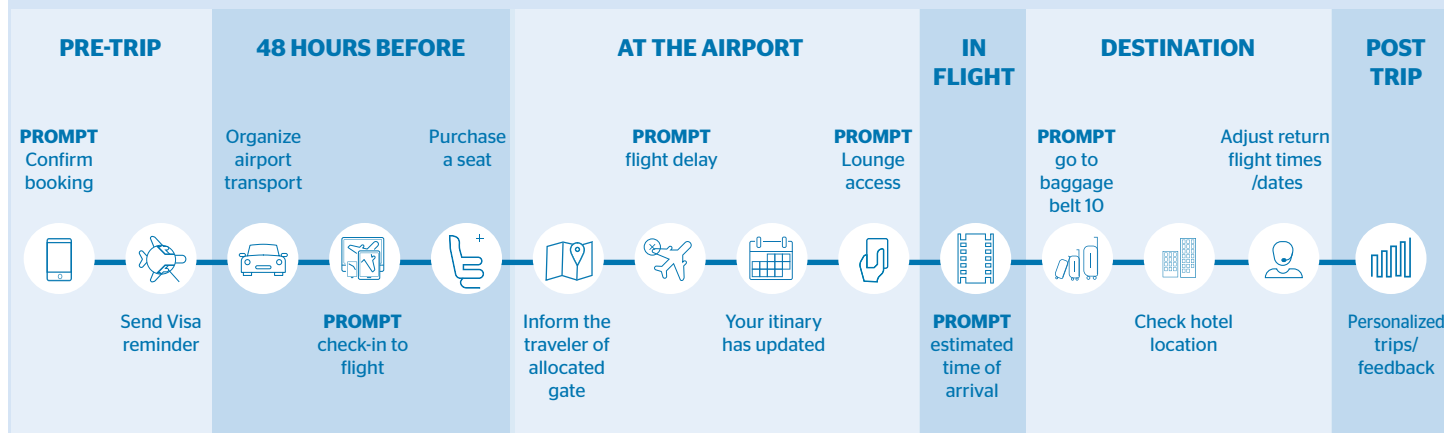
Picture your travel agency now with your new (and successful app!). Your travelers will have their very own personalized travel companion right in the palm of their hand. You can send a contextual push notification to notify them about visa and check-in reminders. At the airport you can let them know of any flight changes, cancellations, gate changes or what belt their baggage will be arriving on. When they arrive in their destination you can send information to ensure they stay within policy, such as what's included in their hotel package, preferred local vendors and what their daily expense limit is. Easy. Seamless. Contextual. Personal. All via a mobile app.

At this point you might say, "I can do all of this via desktop, email or my responsive website". And yes, you can do some of this (more on that later) however what you lack is **the UX, the contextual, real-time nature of mobile** and the **engagement** which this provides. For example, email click-through rates in travel are just 2%, whereas the open rate of a push notification via mobile can be up to 6%.

Bringing you from **limited** engagement...



...to **multiple touchpoints** for engagement



Comparing mobile apps and web

Up until recently “mobile” really meant either mobile apps, found in places like the App Store, or mobile web, accessible via URLs. What we see now is that travelers are increasingly turning to the app experience, rather than mobile web, to search and book flights and accommodation and keep up to date with every aspect of their trip.

Therefore agencies need to find a way to capture these trends and ensure that this engagement and transactions are happening through their own branded app rather than a third-party.

A recent global study we carried out showed that 58% of people prefer apps to search for flights and 53% preferred

“In 2018 alone over 5.7 million travelers will download a third-party travel app”

apps to find accommodation. We found that consumers want a lightning-fast mobile experience, which they feel is best delivered through apps. Travelers also value the additional functionality and features that the native platforms bring.

Travel agencies that can match their app experience to consumer expectations will drive more engagement, increase brand awareness, create more long term value for the traveler and deliver better return on their mobile investment. Those that don't will lose control of the traveler relationship to third-party apps, undermine their brand value and struggle to keep travelers engaged in the travel program, which will result in an increase in out of policy booking.

Rather than showing signs of ‘app fatigue’ now seen in other industries, travel apps are continuing their growth in downloads and monthly active users. 82% of travelers we questioned said they will be downloading the same number or more travel apps than they did the previous year. Research has also found that travel apps rank in one of the highest (54%) for re-installs so people keep coming back.

Let's take a look in more detail at the benefits having a mobile app can bring to a travel agency, and indeed the challenges travel agencies face that mobile can help solve.

88%

of activity on smartphones and tablets originates from apps

56%

of business travelers are demanding more robust mobile tools to help with business travel

\$94bn

of travel bookings are expected to come from mobile by 2019

The key benefits of going mobile

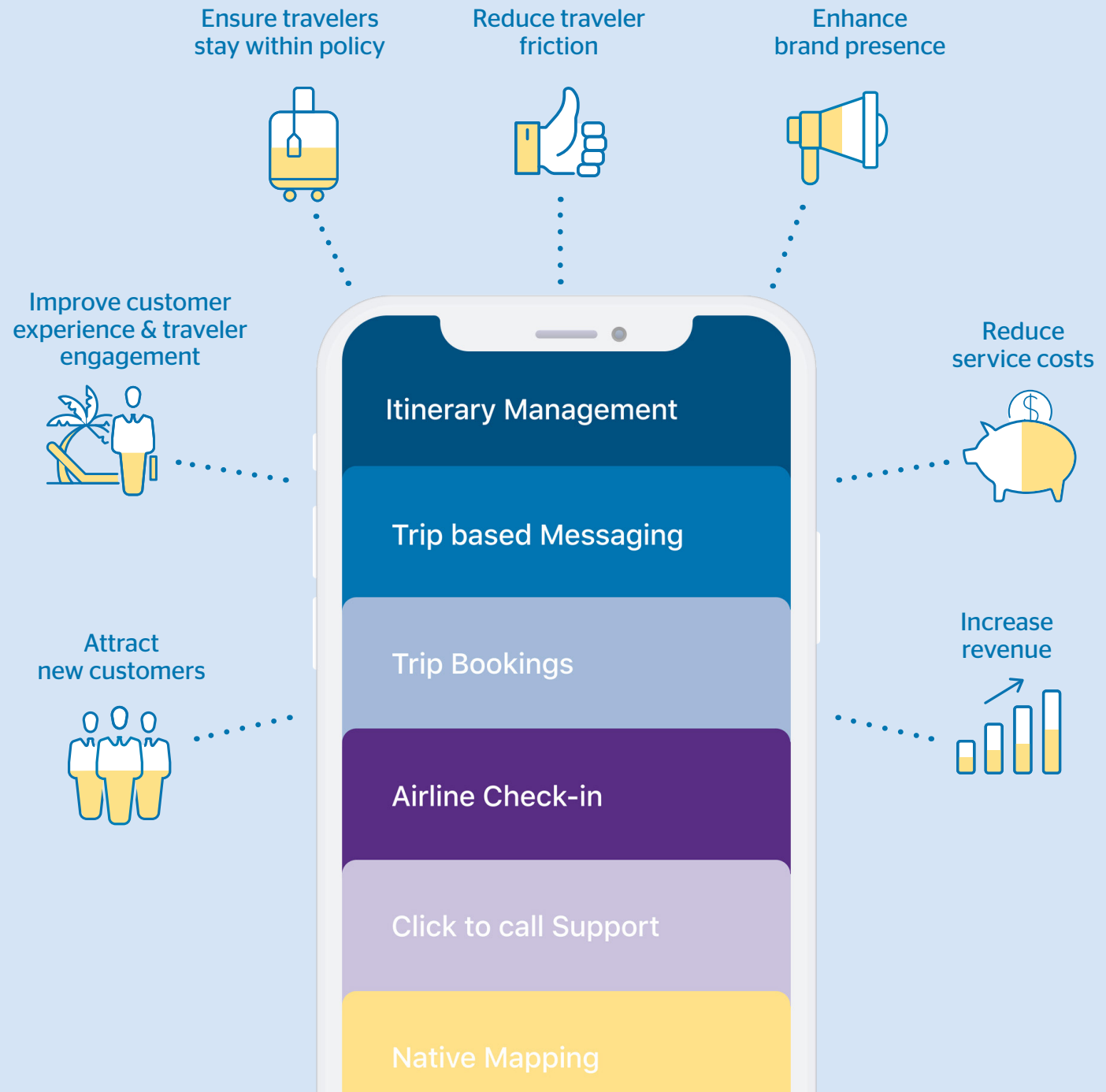
Travel brands that can match their app experience to consumer expectations can realize significant benefits, so let's take a look at why a travel brand should invest in mobile.

A mobile app can reduce traveler friction

Apps can help improve your customers experience and take the stress out of travel by making time consuming tasks as easy and seamless as possible. With a purpose built mobile app travel agencies and TMCs can provide travelers with a platform to manage their itinerary, get instant access to specialized agent support and organize their complex travel plans on the go, all directly from their mobile device.

In times of disruption travel agencies can get ahead of the game by providing real-time updates on flight delays or cancellations so they can amend their travel plans on the go.

Travelers are now looking to self-serve much more as in many cases it's easier, and faster for them to do it



themselves. Functionality such as airline check-in, native device mapping and directions are enabling them to self-serve without having to reach out to a travel agent. Travelers can also add their own segments or trips manually so that they appear in their mobile itinerary and benefit from regular reminders about that segment throughout the journey. Click to call options also allow quick and easy access to any questions they may have.

However, for all of this to work it's essential that your app is as intuitive and usable as possible. The better your app is the higher your app store ratings will be. These ratings are not simply a vanity metric - they are a key driver for engagement with your mobile offering, as boosting an average star rating from 2 or 3 to a 4 has been shown to double downloads.

A mobile app helps enhance your travel agency's brand presence

The consumerization of travel and the increasing availability of third-party apps has created a need for travel agencies to build out their own mobile solutions. The harsh reality is that in the minds of many travelers these third-party apps are viewed as the actual provider of their travel services which undermines the travel agency's brand equity.

On average a traveler will use up to 16 categories of travel apps throughout their trip, so staying at the forefront of the travelers mind is extremely important for a travel agency.

With a fully branded app travel agencies can stay connected to the traveler at all times by providing instant access to the content they want, when they need

it, through the channel they use most often - mobile. It also opens up new opportunities to establish strong brand connections directly with the traveler beyond just desktop, leading to greater engagement, improved customer satisfaction and stronger brand recognition.

To unlock all the possibilities of mobile travel, brands need to do more than just 'have an app', they need to actively work to drive engagement and improve retention and booking rates. Those who want to leverage mobile to its full potential must gain an understanding of a new set of strategies, tactics, analytics and data points that underpin it. But more on that later.

A mobile app helps keep travelers engaged post booking

Travelers today desire the personal touch of engaging directly with the travel brand throughout their journey with 64% of all business travelers using mobile devices to check travel itineraries one or more times a day. However very few TMCs or travel agencies actually have a post booking contact strategy. Mobile provides an abundance of new opportunities for agencies to leverage direct communication with travelers. A robust app helps solve the post booking challenge, by providing updated flight times, departure gates, hotel locations or car hire details that become part of the travelers' daily online interactions.

Research has shown that travel managers believe mobility (booking through mobile, mobile itinerary management and staying in touch via messaging) is a top priority. Incorporating features such as new trip alerts, contextual trip updates, the ability to import new trips to their itinerary and the provision of richer trip information, a mobile app enables travel agencies to forge a direct line of engagement with the traveler.

60%+

of business travelers indicated a robust, efficient mobile platform was a key driver in a successful travel program

66%

of business travelers have a travel app installed on their smartphone

7/10

of travelers booked travel outside their company's booking tool in the past year

These features provide the traveler with valuable trip-related information at the right time giving them a more compelling reason to engage with your agency far beyond simply researching and booking a flight or hotel accommodation and help keep travelers engaged in the travel program.

A mobile app helps ensure travelers stay within policy

With over 68% of business travelers booking more than half of their corporate trips using non-approved consumer channels it's fair to say that out of policy bookings still remains a significant challenge.

While the trend towards rogue booking has been aided by mobile technology this same technology provides travel agencies with a significant opportunity. By developing an end-to-end mobile experience TMCs and travel agencies can easily identify itineraries that don't have a hotel reservation, alert the traveler, and allow the traveler to simply click to make the reservation all directly from within the app. However, online booking is only one element.

“In 2017 it was estimated that millennials spent \$200 billion in the US alone and that they will have the most spending power of any generation in 2018.”

BCD case study

BCD Travel's digital platform TripSource has helped them deliver end-to-end trip management enabling them to simplify the travel experience, increase traveler engagement and deliver superior service for business travelers.



8 million+

Trips served to date

94%

Returning users year on year

1 million+

App downloads

“Mobile is crucial to an omnichannel strategy that connects travelers to the TMC via phone, online portal, email, text—any channel they choose”



John Snyder
CEO
BCD Travel

If we consider the use of mobile features such as push notifications, chatbots and click to call travel assistance travel agencies can easily target points in the journey where travelers are at most risk of stepping out of policy and provide contextual updates and reminders about preferred vendors, negotiated rates, last minute deals, local transport updates and more.

The impact of your investment in mobile cannot be underestimated with companies seeing an increase of up to 44% in policy compliance as a result of providing an end-to-end mobile solution for travel management.

A mobile app can reduce agency service costs

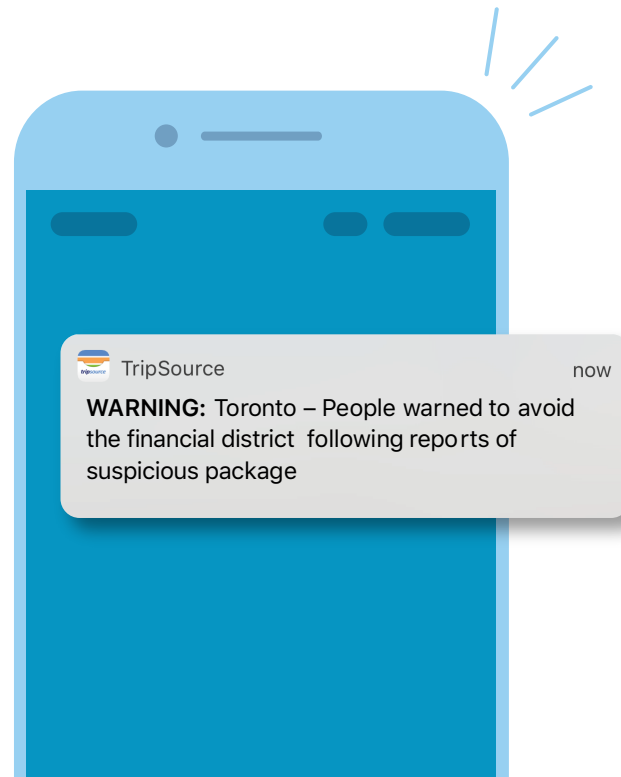
Based on our research travel agencies are spending over 2.5 hours a day fulfilling tasks such as schedule changes, visa reminders, check-in alerts and pre-trip and in-trip queries that could be easily addressed through a mobile app. Self-serve features such as itinerary management, airline check-in, native device mapping and the ability to import trips through scanning of third-party confirmation emails all help to reduce the volume of agent calls.

If you take a step back and consider how this applies to your business you start to get a sense of the value mobile can bring to your business from both a customer service and cost perspective.

By enabling travelers to self-serve via mobile a travel agency can drive down global call volumes considerably. The benefits for this are quantifiable as it leads to faster response time in call centres, reduced waiting times, significant saving in operational costs and also allows travel agencies to focus their agents time on more complex, specialist enquiries where travelers need them most.

A mobile app can help you deliver on your duty of care

In an increasingly hostile global environment risk management has become an integral part of any businesses' travel program. Now more than ever the need for companies to protect their employees while they are traveling is a key priority. Complying with duty of care obligations at a basic level means that employers must protect the health, safety and security of an employee wherever they work, so far as practically possible. Mobile apps can play a key part in this by offering security features such as safety check-in's, messaging solutions that enable agencies to send real time alerts and notifications about any potential hazards to their travelers whilst travelling, as well as more advanced features such as GPS tracking or geo-fencing.



A mobile app can increase revenue

Mobile offers the potential for travel agencies to drive revenue in ways that aren't possible via other channels, with apps leading the way. An average of €111 (\$127) is spent in-app, versus €87 (\$100) on desktop and €79 (\$91) on mobile web.

For travel agencies there are multiple opportunities to market and sell content through their own branded app. This could include hotel, car, rail and flight booking in addition to seat upgrades, airport transfers and airport fast track. Agents are also uniquely placed to be able to detect segment gaps, for example if a flight is booked but no hotel attached, a notification can be triggered with a hotel suggestion to click and book. Integrations with third-party suppliers such as Airhelp or Uber can also increase revenue opportunities.

With mobile there are more meaningful touchpoints to encourage repeat business. With the right mobile app revenue strategy in place the ROI can be extremely profitable.

A mobile app helps attract new customers

Mobile gives travel agencies the ability to engage customers throughout the entire trip lifecycle as you know where they are, when and why. With this information you can truly personalize the customer experience by providing them with the right information at exactly the right time to keep them coming back to your branded app and engaged in your travel program.

Travel agencies do a huge amount of work for the traveler that often isn't highlighted as many travelers don't know who their travel agency is. Having a branded app gives

agencies the opportunity to start building a relationship with the traveler and helps create awareness of the work that is being done behind the scenes.

Through mobile specific features such as contextual messaging, agencies can help create a positive experience for their travelers which helps to increase loyalty so that when a time occurs when there are any issues it can not only soften the blow but the app can also help.

“38% of millennials travel for work, compared with just 23% and 8% of Gen-Xers and baby boomers, respectively.”

\$4

Typical cost per contact for calls handled by agents

68%

Business travelers book more than half of corporate trips using non-approved channels

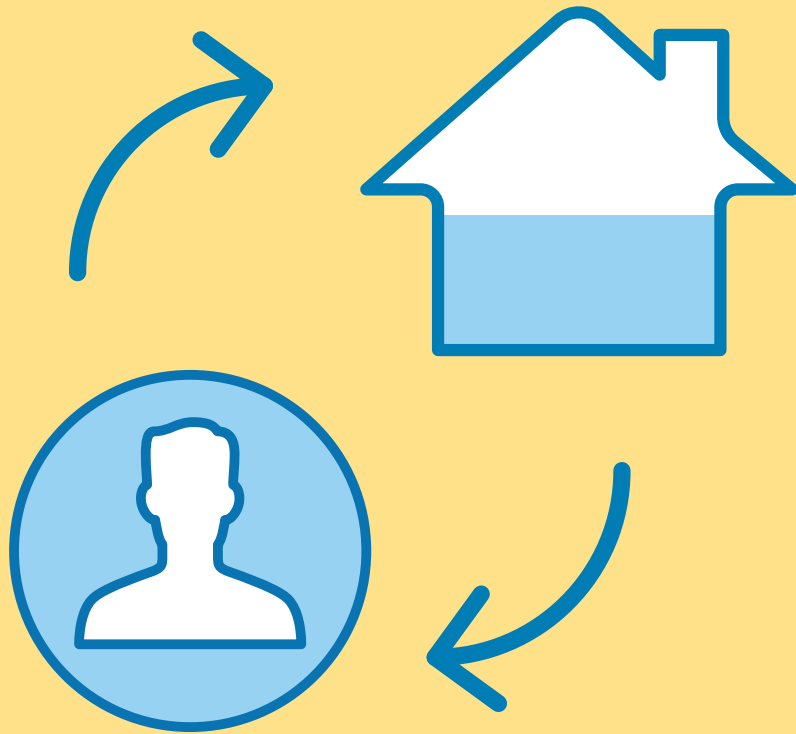
\$200bn

This year it is estimated that millennials in the U.S. alone will be spending \$200 billion

**“Another key area
of focus is mobile
tools – essential for
traveler loyalty”**

**Doug Anderson
CEO, AMEX GBT**





In-house or outsource?



Why mobile



In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

02

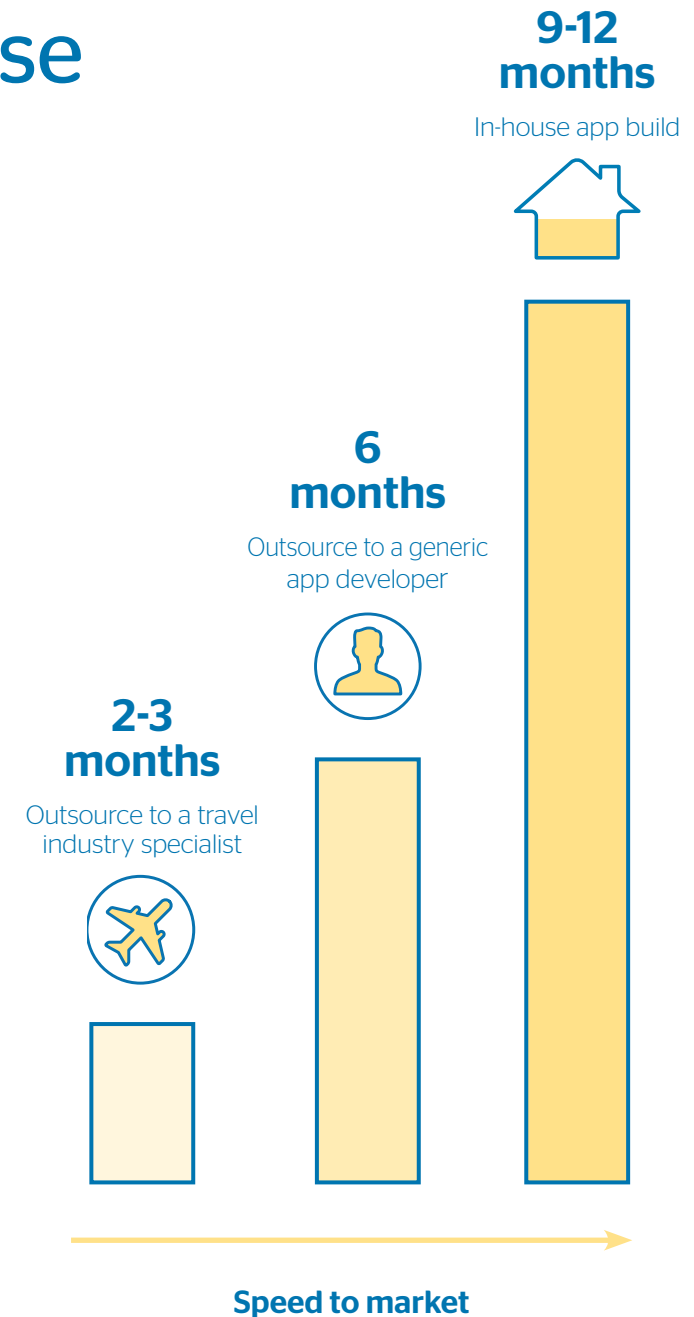
The big question – outsource v in-house

When getting started with a mobile app one of the first questions that comes to mind is – who will design and develop our app? Do you outsource the app development or keep it all in-house?

It's a big decision for any travel agency to make and as the saying goes 'there are two sides to every story'. There are many things to take into consideration such as cost, expertise and speed to market.

On the next page we evaluate the pros and cons of each approach to provide you with a summary to help you make that decision a bit easier.

“Building a mobile app with an in-house team can be 3 times more expensive than outsourcing to a dedicated mobile travel partner”



In-house



Pros

- ✓ **Aligning to your business requirements**
No one understands your business objectives better than your own team
- ✓ **Project management**
Greater control and simplified sign-off process
- ✓ **Confidentiality**
De-risk the leakage of any sensitive or confidential company information
- ✓ **Industry knowledge**
In-depth understanding of your industry, bypassing any learning curve
- ✓ **Flexibility and differentiation**
Flexibility to make changes to scope
- ✓ **Technology**
Control of the technology strategy to align with wider business goals

Cons

- ✗ **Expertise**
Gaps in knowledge on mobile specific expertise can lead to slow development
- ✗ **Resource**
Expense of resource investment with the threat of attrition
- ✗ **Software delivery**
Risk of partial or complete failure as well as maintenance of increasingly large code base
- ✗ **Adaptability**
Keeping up to speed with new technology and innovations which can cause a strain on development time
- ✗ **Speed and cost**
It can take up to 3 times longer to develop an app in-house with the added cost of building an internal mobile team

Outsource



Pros

- ✓ **Resource efficiency**
Flexibility and cost efficiency of resources while outsourcing the risk of employee turnover
- ✓ **Quality & control**
Control what is being produced whilst being guided by experts
- ✓ **Speed to market**
Hit the ground running with a team who is laser focused on your app
- ✓ **Maintenance & support**
Keep up to speed with new innovations whilst benefiting from 24/7 support
- ✓ **Domain expertise**
Access the extensive experience and successful track record of an industry specialist resulting in a more cost effective, superior app

Cons

- ✗ **Confidentiality**
Endanger data privacy with risk of leakage of confidential information
- ✗ **Expectations**
Risk of what is being delivered being different to expectations
- ✗ **Flexibility**
Difficulty changing the scope of project, resulting in extra expense or delay
- ✗ **Control**
Lack of control over development process

In-house



Pros

Aligning to your business requirements

- No one understands your brand, business goals, app vision, customer needs and competitor landscape better than your own team.

Industry knowledge

- Living and breathing your business every day gives you an in-depth understanding of your industry, leapfrogging any learning curve a third-party supplier may need to go through.

Project management

- Project is entirely managed in-house so you have greater control.
- Sign off process can be quicker if everyone is in the same location.

Flexibility and differentiation

- Build what you want.
- If you decide to change the course of the app project, there is greater flexibility (and potentially less cost implications) when developing in-house.

Confidentiality

- As the project will be handled internally no confidential or sensitive information is handed over to a third-party supplier.

Technology

- You have control of the technology strategy, ensuring it's aligned with wider business goals.



Cons

Speed to market

- It can take up to 3 times longer to develop an app in-house rather than outsourcing.
- According to research by Outsystems 40% of IT professionals said that it took between 6 months to over a year to deliver a finished app.
- With an industry expert you can go live with a robust mobile app within 3 months.

Expertise

- Mobile and mobile app development is different so very specific expertise is required such as developers and designers that are versed on mobile development, usability, user experience and UI.
- Gaps in knowledge can lead to slow development.

Resources

- People investment can take time and money with the project lasting three times longer when developing a mobile app in-house.
- Threat of attrition once skills have been honed in-house.
- The opportunity cost of deploying a team on a mobile project vs working on other priorities internally.

Adaptability

- Mobile is constantly evolving and changing, the team needs to keep up to speed with new technology and innovations which could cause a strain on development time.

Software delivery

- Risk of partial or complete failure.
- Expanding maintenance of increasingly large code base and legacy code.

Cost

- Building an in-house team can be expensive. You need to ensure you hire the right people with mobile specific skills. Additional costs of new hires also need to be taken into consideration; on-boarding, hardware, software and time off (vacation, illness etc).
- Overall the cost of the project can be up to \$2 million, with further cost implications to maintain and upgrade the app as well as maintaining the in-house team.
- Systems can be expensive to implement and must work with all systems already in place.

Integrations and partnerships

- It can be difficult to dedicate the resource in-house to handle integrations or partnerships. A partner can already have relationships in place or integrations done with other customers.

Outsource



Pros

Experience

- Benefit from the experience a mobile partner can bring in terms of design, development and usability as well as knowledge in what has worked and maybe not worked so well.

Domain expertise

- Gain from the track record, experience and expertise a partner brings from working with other industry brands, truly understanding the nuances.
- Marketing is imperative when launching an app and driving continuous downloads and usage. Working with a partner that can bring best practice mobile marketing techniques can really help your app succeed.
- Broader industry knowledge (if you select a travel mobile specialist) that can keep an eye on market and user trends.

Accelerated speed to market

- An accomplished partner has the teams, experience and expertise in place to hit the ground running; rapidly shortening the time it takes in getting your app to market.
- Your app could be live within 12 weeks rather than 12 months with a dedicated industry specialist mobile partner.

Value add

- Benefit from other areas of support your partner may be able to give you such as help submitting to the app stores, how to market your app and other consulting specific to your industry.

Resource efficiency

- There is greater flexibility of resources with a partner; ramping up and ramping down on demand without hiring and organizational impact, as well as no outlay in terms of on-boarding, vacation time etc.

Laser focus

- While in-house teams can get caught up in every day demands, your app will be the key focus for your mobile partner.

Lower risk

- A partner understands how to manage and deliver mobile software, with a tried and tested deployment and QA process specifically for mobile applications.
- Outsource the risk of employee turnover.

Quality

- Your testimonial is extremely important to a partner, therefore they want to produce the highest quality work as word of mouth is a powerful tool.
- You buy into the scalability of an app with a partner and benefit from the quality of work that has been done for other brands similar to yours.

Maintenance

- Once an app is launched it needs to be maintained and updated with new features and functionality. A good partner will keep on top of all new innovations on your behalf.

Support

- Most partners will offer 24/7 support should there be any issues with your app. Dedicating this time can be tricky when supporting in-house.

Control

- While your app development might be outsourced, you still have control over what is being produced, with the added benefit of being guided by experts.



Cons

Confidentiality

- When outsourcing there is always an element of risk when it comes to confidential information. Third-parties often need access to your back systems. This risk can be easily mitigated by the signing of an NDA.

Expectations

- When outsourcing there can be a difference in expectations from what is briefed to what is executed on. Regular communications between both parties as well as clear documentation and detailed product description can alleviate this.

Flexibility

- Should requirements change there can be difficulty in making changes to the project, especially if a supplier is operating a waterfall rather than agile approach to development (a fixed scope rather than shorter 'sprints' of development), which can be expensive and result in delays.

Control

- When outsourcing you always have to relinquish some form of control but regular, robust communication and clear project description and plans can ensure that the control still remains in the hands of the client.

Choosing the right vendor

If you have decided to outsource your app development it's important to choose the right vendor. One who not only can 'build an app' but has the domain expertise to build one specific to your industry. It's imperative that they have a proven track record within the travel industry, know how to build iOS and Android and will guide you through the best practice development.

How do you go about selecting a mobile partner who not only responds to your business needs but truly understands them? Here are some key questions you should ask to help you gauge the best potential supplier:

Do they have expertise in the travel industry?

Travel industry mobile solutions are not static or self-contained; they have to talk to and integrate with complex third-parties systems.

You should be confident in your mobile partners knowledge and understanding of your business and their ability to integrate third-party tools and data sources, and ensure that these varied external services are wrapped into a seamless user experience for your travelers.

The ultimate goal should be a mobile offering that manages technical integration while delivering a user experience that is exceptional (rather than merely functional).

Do they have a reputation for delivering successful travel apps?

Factors like travel industry specific experience, industry reputation and app store ratings of previous work are important when selecting a mobile partner. It is also useful to look at how your mobile partner is perceived by its industry peers. Have they won any awards of note for mobile innovation or a brilliant smartphone app?

Can they deliver, not just on app development, but also on strategy, design and UX?

Some technology businesses can't offer the full spectrum of services required to create a highly successful mobile offering that includes user experience design/user interface design, coding, testing, launch, mobile marketing support, app store optimization guidance and marketing strategy.

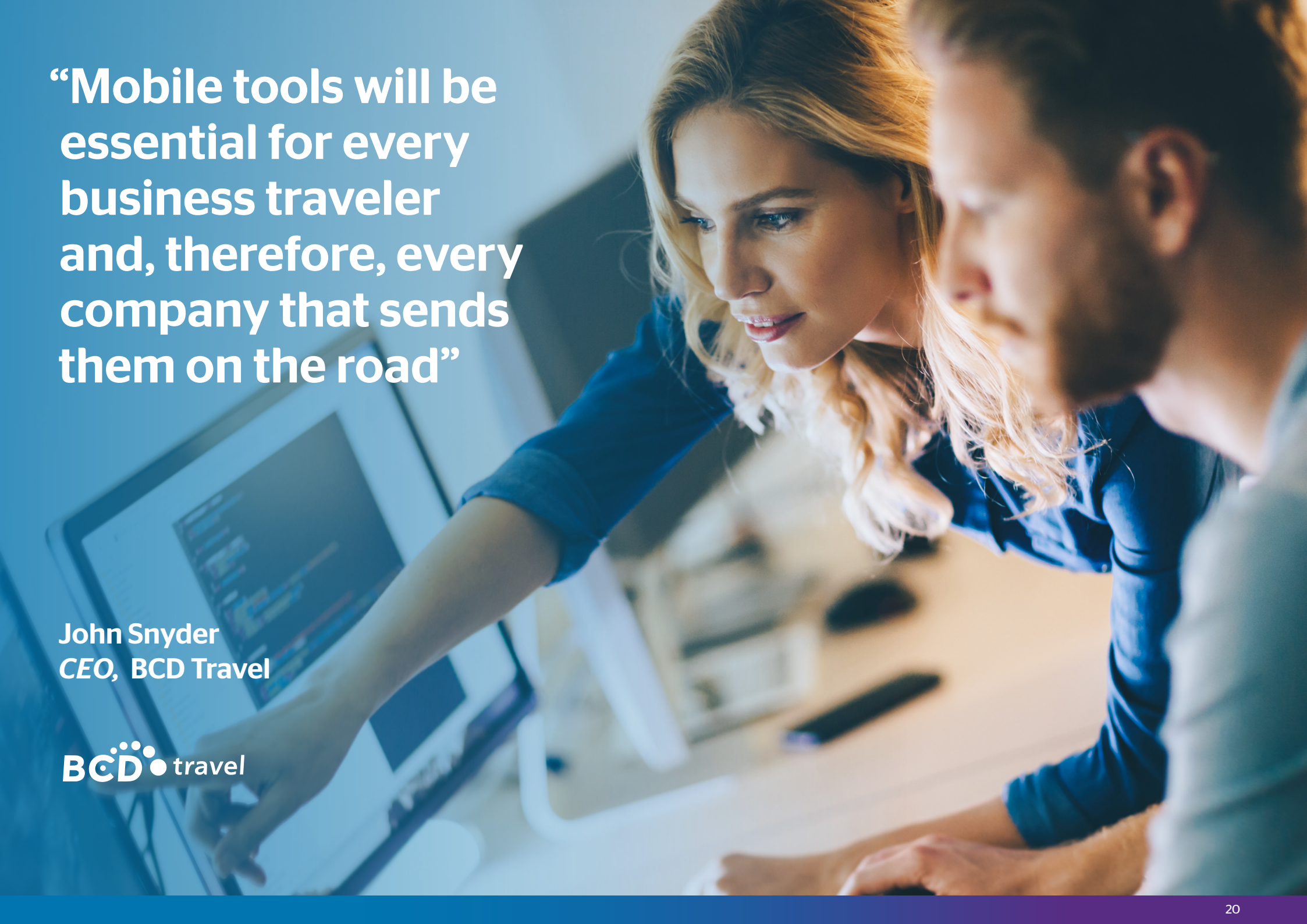
What level of support can you demand from your mobile partner?

Lack of support when things go wrong is a major pain point for digital consumers who have come to rely

heavily on their personal devices for travel support and information. Does your mobile partner offer a 24-hour support resource to fix problems as and when they arise? Can they deliver a great app within a strict time frame? Speed to market is vital in order to keep on top of a rapidly changing mobile travel landscape. If you have a stringent deadline that you need to adhere to, you need a company that will deliver on your expectations within the required timeframe.

Can your mobile partner support app launch to drive downloads and usage?

Marketing is very often a neglected and underestimated component of app development and delivery timeline. Your mobile partner should have a proven marketing strategy that will help launch your app, ensuring optimization techniques are in place for visibility in the app store.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue shirt, is pointing at a laptop screen. A man with a beard, wearing a blue shirt, is looking at the screen. The background is a blurred office environment with another laptop and a desk.

“Mobile tools will be essential for every business traveler and, therefore, every company that sends them on the road”

John Snyder
CEO, BCD Travel

BCD  **travel**



App success



Why mobile



In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

03

Building a team for success

When getting started with your first travel app getting the right team in place is critical to ensuring its success. Regardless of whether you decide to build the app in-house or outsource the development a travel agency needs to build a team to get behind the project, however size of the team will vary.

Before the project is even signed-off there needs to be support across the business, from the board level down, so that the entire company knows the importance of mobile to the future success of the business. Investing in mobile is not a one off “build it and it will be done” approach. It’s a project that needs continuous investment in both time and effort to get it right.

“90% of travel brands said that having a mobile strategy is ‘critical’ or ‘very important’ to the future success of their organization”

To kick-start a mobile project there are a number of key stakeholders who are involved in getting the project signed off:

- **Senior leadership team**
- **CTO/IT lead**
- **Head of Operations**
- **eCommerce/Digital**
- **Procurement**

Once the project has internal sign-off there are a number of people across the business who are integral to the success of an app. Resource requirements change in phases over the lifecycle of a project but can be broken down into phases:

- **Initiation & product demonstration**
 - o eCommerce/Digital
 - o Mobile Technology Specialist
- **Contract negotiations & commercial approval**
 - o CEO/CTO
 - o Procurement
 - o eCommerce/Digital
- **Integration & app build**
 - o Mobile Technology Specialist
 - o eCommerce/Digital

- App launch

- Marketing - pre launch and launch plan

- Ongoing - live app

- eCommerce/Digital input for any future feature roadmap requests
- Marketing input for any sales or push notification campaigns

The full extent of the mobile team is dependent on whether you decide to go in-house or outsource to a mobile partner. In-house your team will consist of 15+ people, with that resource drastically reduced to 4 key people when you outsource. Let's take a look at how each of these teams break down.

In-house

When setting up an internal mobile team there are a number of key skill sets that need to be employed, requiring a substantial investment from a TMC or travel agency beyond the typical team. It can take a while to get the team ramped up so time needs to be taken into consideration when building out the internal team.

“Outsourcing to a travel industry mobile partner requires a resource of 2-4 people, a significant resource reduction compared to a 15+ in-house team”

The team structure would require:

- 1 Team lead
- 2-3 iOS developers
- 2-3 Android developers
- 2-3 Backend server engineers
- 2 QA testers
- 1 Automation engineer
- 1 Technical architect
- 1 UI designer
- 1 UX designer
- 1 Product owner
- 1 Project manager
- 1 Marketing manager

The average salary* for a mobile team is as follows:

- Tech team lead: \$110,263
- Mobile developer: \$106,772
- Android developer: \$118,176
- iOS developer: \$115,285
- Backend server engineer: \$103,984
- QA tester: \$69,862
- Automation engineer: \$93,111
- Architects: \$123,257
- UI designer: \$88,389
- UX designer: \$96,384
- Product owner: \$101,376
- Project manager: \$100,743

**indeed.com U.S. salary review 2017*

Depending on the required speed-to-market the team can be increased or decreased accordingly. It's important to bear in mind however that the launch is just the start of your app build. Team requirements need to also factor in future features as well as additional resource needed from other key teams across the business such as customer experience and marketing for the strategic launch.

The cost of building out an internal mobile team could be in the range of \$1.5 - 2 million.

Outsource

While there are different outsourcing options for travel agencies there is real value in outsourcing to a dedicated travel industry partner. One of the biggest benefits is the significant reduction in resource required as the solution is ready made for the travel industry.

Furthermore a specialist partner will understand the complexities of being able to roll out industry specific tools, APIs and integrations and help with launch strategy, especially when it comes to mobile marketing and optimization techniques for app store visibility.

Once the decision has been made from the C-Level/board down the core headcount to run a mobile project with a dedicated industry partner is typically only 3-4 people, a significant reduction in resource compared to the 15+ person in-house team.

The resource requirement needed from a travel agency perspective when outsourcing mobile app development includes:

- Mobile technology specialist

- Ensure smooth integration with existing systems and processes to ensure that the agency is making the best use of their new mobile service

- Marketing

- Marketing is integral to the success of your app, if people don't know about it they won't be able to download and use it. Marketing support doesn't start with the launch of an app and end there, it needs to be an ongoing strategy pre, during and post launch. To mitigate against attrition there needs to be an ongoing plan to acquire and engage customers.
- An industry specialist can assist in your marketing efforts, giving you a mobile app marketing blueprint to ensure success

- eCommerce/Digital

- The eCommerce or Digital function often leads the requirements and manages the project management of the app build. They ensure the app is delivered on time and with all the required product features and functionality.



Key functionality



Why mobile



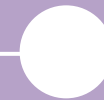
In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

04

Getting the basics right

When launching your first mobile app it's important to get the basic MVP (minimum viable product) right and ensure that it ties back to your mobile strategy. These core features and functionality will help drive engagement, enhance brand presence, reduce service costs, improve customer experience and justify the ROI in investing in mobile.

Your TMC/agency app should incorporate the following:

- Sophisticated trip management

- End-to-end mobile itinerary capabilities that update automatically
- Automatic and manual trip retrieval
- Detailed trip segments (flight, rail, hotel and car hire)
- Offline availability
- Calendar sync to connect itinerary into device calendar

- Contextual trip based messaging capabilities

- Flight status alerts that inform travelers of trip changes such as flight delays, cancellations, diversions, gate changes and bag carousel locations

- Ability to send trip specific alerts to remind users about items such as upcoming trips, trip benefits, security alerts and more
- Ability to create bespoke, agency defined communications to send targeted messages encouraging in program behavior
- Ability to send rich push notifications, for example adding attention grabbing message headlines, engaging images or emojis to messages to increase engagement and open rates
- Geofence notifications to trigger notifications based on user location
- Message centre - the ability to send longer and more informative messages and store historical messages

- Self-serve functionality

- Click to call agent support
- Import of external bookings from third-parties including flights, hotels and car hire
- Trip sharing from the app via branded email to keep colleagues, friends and family informed of plans
- Ability to make additional trip bookings, such as hotel attachment to a flight segment
- Airline check-in - ability for the traveler to check-in to their flight directly from the app

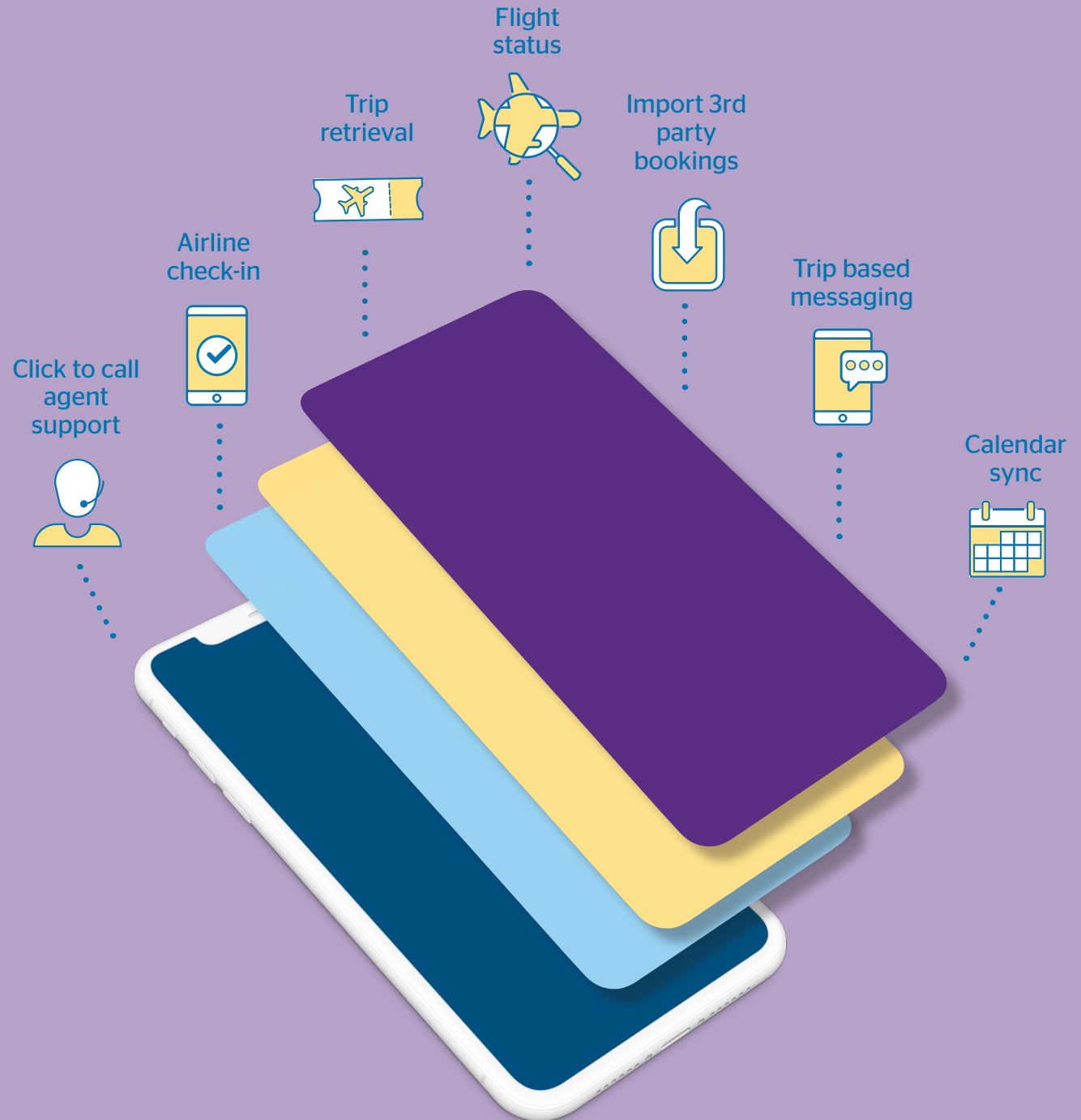
- Localization

- Available in multiple languages

- Analytics & reporting

- Generate key insights on app usage, acquisition, audience type and behaviors
- Track the effectiveness of your messaging campaigns, for example, determine how many additional hotel bookings your targeted messaging campaign has delivered, it's incremental revenue increase and improvement to your trip attachment rate
- Generate commercially orientated reporting to determine how your data can be leveraged to improve your business and deliver actionable user intelligence

In addition to getting the key functionality right, it's important to delight your customers with user-centric design leveraging OS technology for speedy, seamless usage. The importance of good UX and UI cannot be underestimated, every tap and click needs to deliver a slick experience to avoid any user frustration.





Launch planning



Why mobile



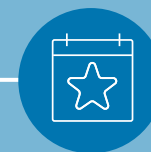
In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

05

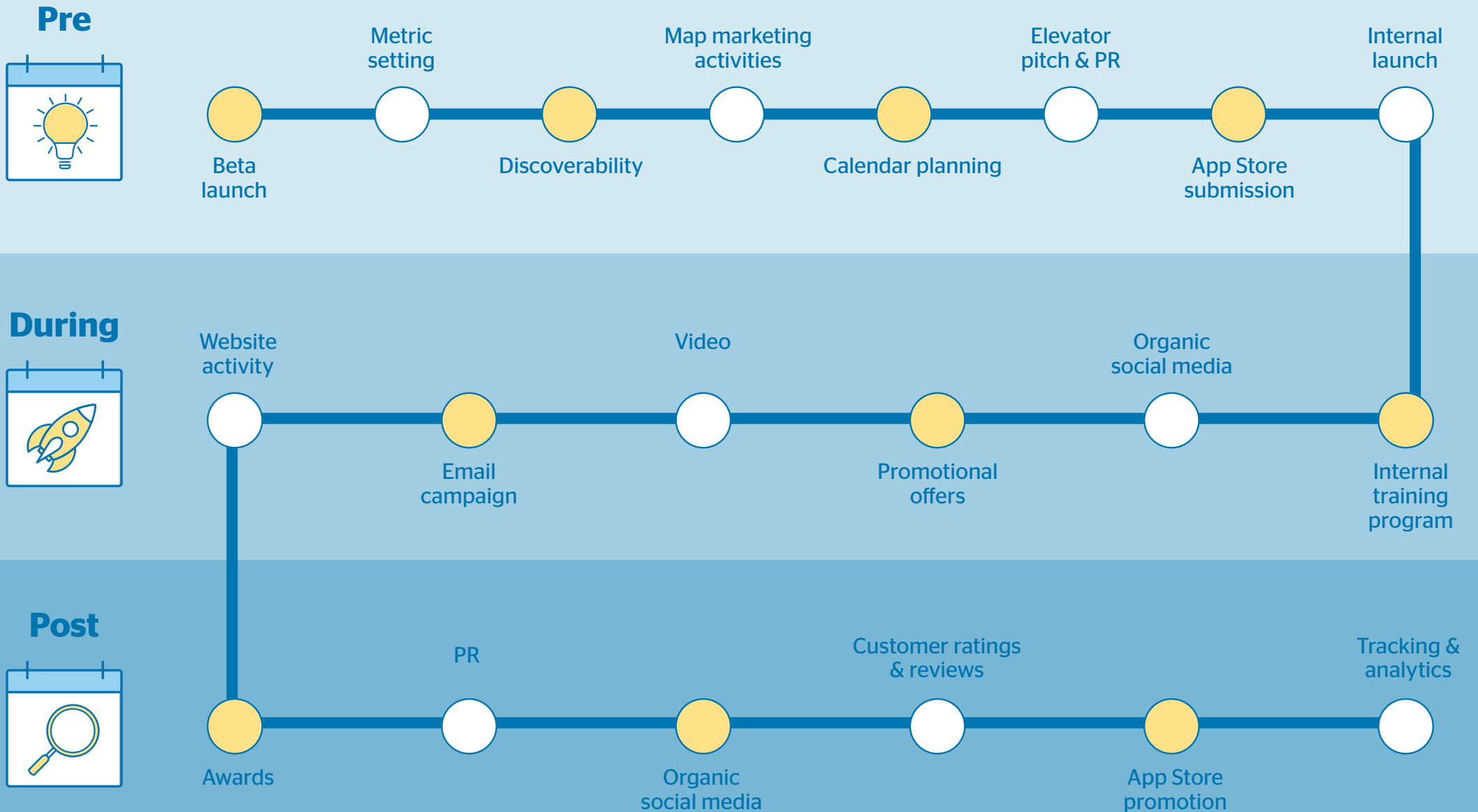
The launch plan

So, your stakeholders are convinced, you've decided on in-house or outsourcing, you've even mapped out the functionality for version 1.0 to 1.5. Now it's just a case of "build it and they will come". Not quite...

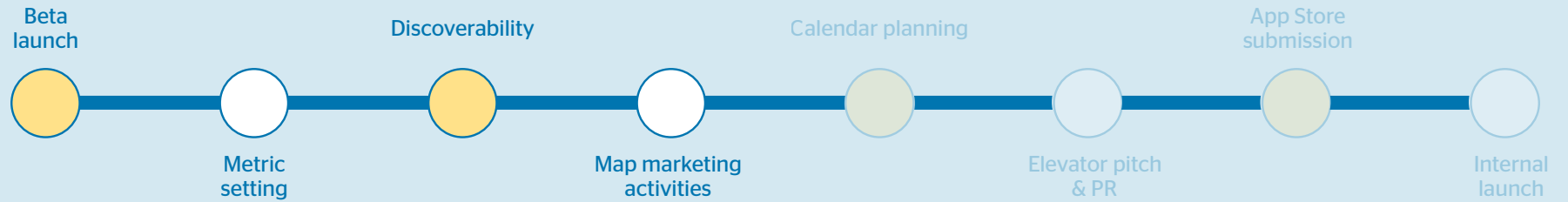
With an app market of over 6.5 million apps and 1,000 new apps being released every single day it's vital that your app doesn't fall at the first and possibly the biggest hurdle, the launch itself.

However, before you create an explosive 'big bang' day one campaign don't forget that while an app launch may be big hurdle, it's not the only one when it comes to making your app a success. Too many travel brands create a single peaked mountain of downloads that then tails off into a set of minor speed bumps for the rest of its mobile shelf life. If you want a successful app, then think pre, during and post launch when planning your strategy or that beautifully developed and functionality rich app will just become a faceless number 6,567,897 on the app stores.

App launch timeline



Pre



As with every launch planning is key, but remember the planning process doesn't start at day one of your app launch, or even a week before. It needs to be a coordinated effort that starts at least three months prior to launch so that you can gain real traction in terms of download and usage.

Here is a run down of what you need to do before your app is actually launched.

Test

It's vital that you get your app into the hands of your users (both internally and ideally externally) as soon as possible before launch so they can test it for you and keep you up-to-date on any glitches or bugs in your app. Test Flight, Fabric, Google Groups; the choices for testing your app with real actual users are rich and varied.

Research

(Only required for in-house app development as a good mobile partner will complete this for you)

Conduct user testing sessions. This will ensure that you haven't made assumptions in the design phase about what your customers want. This will help keep your solutions relevant, useful and delightful for your users and fix any issues that may arise.

Beta launch

Once you have released your app use the first few weeks of your app release to monitor usage. Track your social channels for any issues and keep an eye on those all important reviews in the app stores. These first weeks are the perfect opportunity to make sure your app is as good as it can be so that when you do push the button on promotion your app is loved by the masses.

Define metrics

What does success look like? Define the success metrics of your app - are you looking to reach a certain number of downloads, registrations or active users? Do you want to increase digital transactions? What engagement metrics do you want to realise? Whatever your KPIs are make sure to measure them from day one and beyond.

Make it discoverable

More than 60% of apps on the App Store are discovered by search so it's vital that you invest in ASO. Use this time pre-launch to write chart topping elements of app store optimization like descriptions, keywords subtitles, and value driven messages for your screenshots.

The importance of your app name cannot be underestimated. Keep it simple and use your brand name where possible, you have spent a lot of time and effort building your brand therefore your app name should reflect that. It will also help with the searchability of your app when it is launched.

A good mobile partner will help you with this or complete it for you as a value-add.

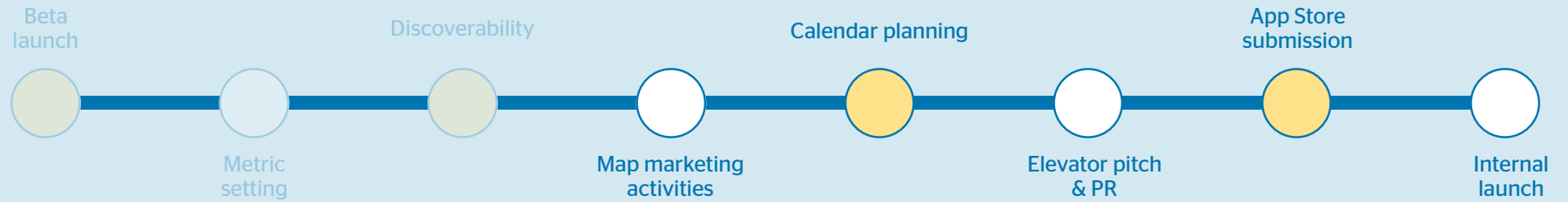
Map out your marketing activities

There are numerous marketing activities that need to be planned and activated before you even launch your app.

- Microsite

- Create a microsite or landing page where people can go for more information and register their interest. Make sure this is easily accessible from the main

Pre



website and has a simple URL structure for search engine crawlers to find.

- **Banner advertising**

- Create banner advertising for homepage placement on your website.

- **Video**

- Create a promotional video for your app launch to showcase the benefits of your app.

- **Social media**

- Most travel agencies will have spent time and effort building a loyal following across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc, so make sure to use these channels to create a teaser campaign to create hype around your new app.

Calendar planning

Create a campaign calendar with all the various marketing activities you have planned for pre-launch, launch and post-launch. Ensure it isn't brushed aside once the app is launched - that is the critical time for you to really accelerate marketing efforts.

Create your elevator pitch

Create an app press kit to generate interest around the app and circulate it to relevant press and bloggers. It should include:

- **App icons in different sizes**
- **Screenshots to tell a story**
- **Video to attract attention**

Lay the foundations for what's coming next, leave them wanting to know more!

Compose a media list including traditional media as well as blogger outreach; their influence among your target audience can be extremely valuable.

Internal launch

Your employees are one of the best ways of getting word of mouth out about your app - think of how far a net you could cast if all your employees put something on their

social media channels about your great new app? Send an internal email out with links to all the collateral, landing page as well as links to download the app.

App Store submission

A week before launch the time has come to submit your app to the app stores. Make sure you have everything ready in advance, including any localization if your app is in different languages, so there are no delays. Read up on all the submission guidelines to ensure you don't run into any problems getting your app approved.

- **Your iOS submission should include**

- Title, subtitle, category, description, promo text, keywords, screenshots, app preview videos, app icon

- **Your Google Play submission should include**

- Title, category, short description, full description, screenshots, app promotion video and app icon

A good third-party supplier will help submit your app for you.

During



When you are about to launch your app there are a number of activities that travel brands can do to create that 'big bang' and really build the momentum that has already started in the run up to launching an app.

Website activity

Your website is one of your greatest assets when promoting your app. Promote it via the homepage using a banner ad, a scrolling banner along the top or in prominent section elsewhere on the homepage depending on your website design.

Microsite

Update your microsite to include the main features and benefits of your app features, using screens and videos. Add share links so that visitors can easily download your app in the app stores.

Offline marketing

Think outside of the obvious channels and consider all the various touchpoints that you have control over. Agents are one of the best assets a TMC or travel agency has for promoting their mobile app.

Email campaigns

There are huge opportunities to let your existing customers know about your app through email campaigns, such as;

- **Promote the app** in booking confirmations
- **Communicate new features and functionality** as you add to it over time
- **Send follow up emails** to those who download, thanking them and providing instructions on how to make the most of it
- For those who didn't install, **follow up with emails** encouraging them to do so.

Video

Create videos to showcase and guide users through new features and functionality. Use these across the app stores, website, microsite and social media.

Promotional offers

An app specific promotional offer is a great way to incentivize customers to increase average segments per trip. Offers can vary from increasing hotel and car attachments to travel enhancements such as airport transfers and parking right through to in-destination activities.

Organic social media

Posting on social media is an effective way to let your existing follower base know about the app and all the benefits it has to offer. Create a buzz on social media now your app is launching.

During



Website activity



Email campaign



Video



Promotional offers



Organic social media



Internal training program



Paid social

Paid social can be very important however it is dependent on the size of your TMC or customer base. You may be better off focusing your time on educating and updating your agents and agencies on the app so they can in turn drive downloads with end travelers.

Develop a training program

Training programs can be extremely effective for the roll out of your app so that the features and benefits can be clearly communicated to key stakeholders and client facing teams - the larger the agency, the more comprehensive the program needs to be.

One of the best ways to do this is by rolling out a conference or roadshow to educate agents and agencies on the value of the app and why it's important to the

success of their business. Planning is key for an initiative like this, event activities should include:

- **App video** showcasing the benefits to both the agency and end travelers
- **App brochure** highlighting key features and functionality
- **Presentation** on a guide to using the app and how to market it to your end travelers
- **Microsite** to house all of the above that agencies or agents can return to time after time

Post



Once your app is launched the marketing activity should not just stop there. Acquiring customers is one thing, but airlines need to continue to engage their customers to build relationships and increase brand loyalty. Marketing is crucial to ensure user acquisition, retention and ultimately app monetization.

Awards

Award wins are a low cost (and often free) way of gaining third-party credibility for your app. Create an annual awards calendar that incorporates global and/or regional awards. Once you've nailed down one application creating additional ones won't be too time consuming, they usually just need to be tweaked according to each specific application. Be sure to create a buzz around any award wins or shortlists by sharing the news through your social channels, PR, blog etc.

PR

With thousands of apps launched every day a well executed PR plan can be the difference between an ok app and a great app. Following on from prepping your media list and your app assets, such as videos, screenshots, app icons reach out to all the relevant media. Make sure to include blogger outreach. While some blogs may not have as big a following as media outlets, their influence can be priceless.

Organic social media

Continually share new updates and features over time; use videos and infographic style imagery to bring features to life.

Customer ratings and reviews

Customers are your biggest advocates and their ratings and reviews are a critical tool for your brand. In-app prompts allow users to give an app rating without being redirected to the App Store. They were introduced by Apple in 2017 and are a powerful way of increasing ratings (especially positive ones) with only small code change required to implement. You are restricted to a maximum of 3 pop ups a year so use them wisely! Request reviews at 'peak happiness points' and ensure you wait until after a specific number of logins or certain time period.

App Store promotion

Getting featured on the app stores can have a huge impact in terms of downloads. In addition to 'App of the Day' where Apple chooses one app each day to feature, iOS apps are also featured on apple.com and within iTunes. For Android, in addition to paying for Google Play app install ads, you can also submit your app to the Early Access Beta Programme for promotion.

The following tips will increase the likelihood of your app being featured;

- **Use the latest OS feature updates**
- **Localize your app**
 - o The local Apple teams ultimately decide on which apps to feature
- Make sure your **iOS and Android apps** are **designed specifically for each channel**
- **Update it frequently**
- **Invest in App Store Optimization (ASO)**
- **Build a relationship with Apple**
 - o You can contact them directly to request a promotion

Post



Tracking and analytics

In addition to analytics from iTunes Connect and Google Play Statistics, within Google Analytics you can gain access to iOS and Google Play campaign tracking URL builders, at no cost. These will allow you to track installs of your app against the source, so that you can understand the best performing channels and make effective, data-driven marketing decisions in the future.

Create a custom dashboard using one of the many free online tools available to visually represent your app performance and easily share with others.

Getting your app marketing strategy right takes time and involves an ongoing process of continuous research and refinement. There is no 'one size fits all' approach, it's up to you to figure out what works best for your agency.

540%

Increasing your app's rating from 2-star to 4-star can result in a 540% increase in app store conversion rates

2,172%

An 'App of the Day' feature can drive downloads of your iOS app by up to 2,172%

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie, is seated in a car. He is looking down at a smartphone held in his right hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing the interior of the car and a window with some light coming through. The overall tone is professional and modern.

“Business and leisure travelers no longer just want mobile technology to transform their travel experience, it is an expectation.”

Marco Ciocchetti
CEO, XL Travel Group





Metrics



Why mobile



In-house or outsource



App success



Key functionality



Launch planning



Metrics

Metrics for success

When launching your app it's important to set KPIs from the outset so you can measure how effective your app is. Data analytics for mobile is quite different to that of traditional web.

It's no longer about website traffic, page views or time on page; with mobile it's now about gathering insights into how your travelers behave on their trips and the services they desire on the move. Having a clear set of objectives related to your mobile strategy is key, otherwise you won't know if you are succeeding or how to make decisions in the future.

As an agency or TMC, you will have different measures of success that are aligned to your business goals. You may be interested in improving service for repeat customers, reducing costs by promoting self-service or driving brand awareness for major corporate clients. Regardless of the business goal, it is important to be clear about what it is that the app will do and how that can be measured.

Once you have defined those business goals, the next step is to ensure that the key features in your mobile app are tracked so you can measure their impact on your business. Tracking can be as simple as recording what percentage

of your travelers are using your app to manage their trip, tracking each time an app user sees a screen, or each time a particular action is completed in a digital channel. Over time you'll want to see an upward trend in digital self-service usage and a downward trend in calls to your call centre for basic actions and information.

A robust data analytics platform can then aggregate these actions across all travelers over time to detect trends, measure campaign performance and indicate which features are being used most. Remember, features are needed to influence your customer's behavior, analytics are needed to confirm the change happened as intended.

For features that require several steps (such as booking/purchasing), ensure that all the steps are tracked. This will highlight how many users start to make a purchase and will then track them through the steps. Analyzing these steps as a funnel will highlight if customers are being lost or if there are problems getting them to the checkout. This analysis will allow you to ensure that you are maximizing the conversion rate and hence driving revenue.

People will only use your app if they see value in it. Measuring all the key features in your app can determine their relative importance and highlight where customers are dropping out. Travelers have different needs at each point in the trip, the week before, day before, day of

travel; mining tracking data and uncovering patterns of usage can keep you better informed about which traveler problems are worth solving, which features are most important and what functionality needs to be added.

In order to detect such patterns, it is vital to first configure the tracking to include information about the users' behavior on trips. If you send a messaging campaign to encouraging travelers to add a hotel booking to their trip which currently only has a flight booking, you want to be able to learn when is the most effective time to send that campaign. Is it 24 hours before departure or a week before departure? What time of day is most effective for delivery, morning or afternoon? Using a robust analytics system, it will be possible to identify different behaviors on different routes and in different markets. This will let you tailor the services that you offer to be the most appropriate for each traveler.

In the early days of your mobile application, you will be running lots of marketing campaigns to increase awareness among your customers to drive downloads and then increased usage of the app. Analytics will help you determine the effectiveness of these campaigns activity; how a channel is performing and how active users are on each channel. For example an outbound email campaign could be a primary driver of downloads so you could look to optimize activity on that channel rather than another that might not be working as well. Correctly tagging each and every link to the app stores will let your analytics service show you the answers to these questions, helping you refine your campaigns and understand the return on your investment.

Working with a partner who can offer you a robust analytics and reporting platform can help you determine how your data can be leveraged to improve your business and deliver actionable user intelligence.

App install/
uninstall



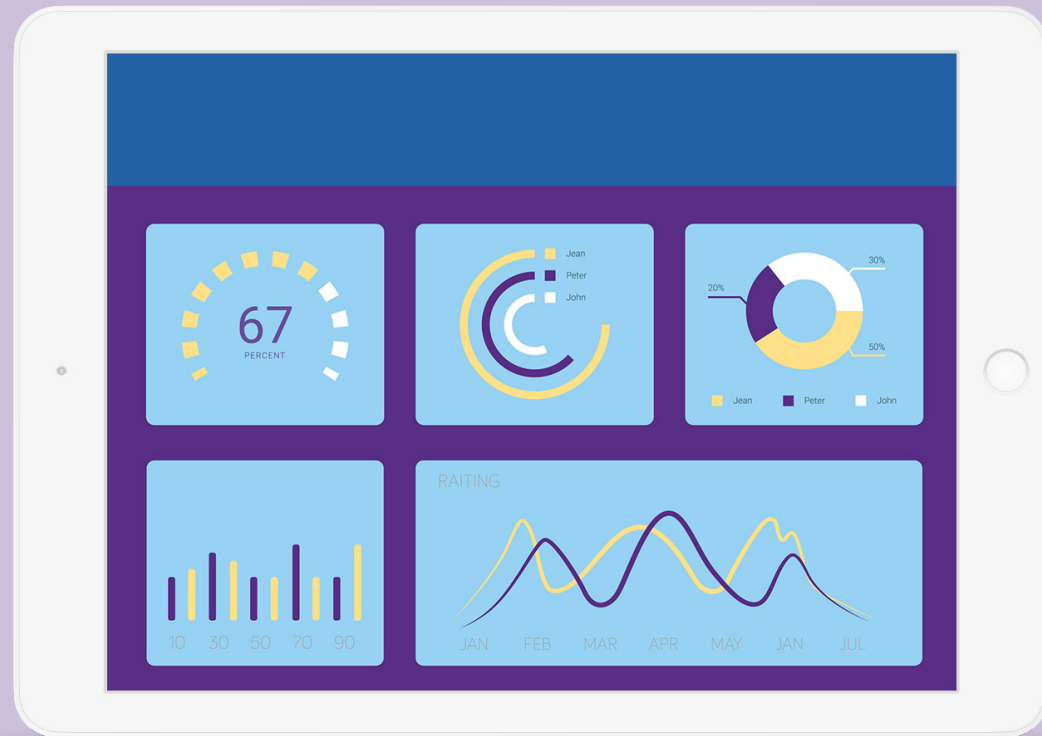
Monthly
active users



Campaign
tracking



Push messaging
engagement



Conclusion

We're living in a modern mobile world that has opened up a world of new possibilities for TMCs and travel agencies to capture changing consumer behaviors and deliver an experience that fits with this new 'on demand' culture.

Delivering a mobile capability is no longer a 'nice to have', it is now a necessity, as having a mobile app can have a transformative effect on a travel agency. It removes friction, takes the stress out of travel, influences in-program behavior, encourages policy compliance and delivers a premium brand experience. Through a variety of self-serve options, which are becoming increasingly more important to corporate travelers, you can improve the customer experience also make your agency more cost-efficient which will save time and money in the long run.

Mobile apps are not just a subset of a travel agents digital ecosystem. They're very much at the centre of propelling agencies forward towards strong growth and transforming their businesses. Driving engagement and shifting perceptions and opportunities.

It's not an easy path to follow. There's a lot to get wrong and more than a few mis-steps along the way (real transformation is never smooth). But if you follow the principles and best practices summarized in this guide, we're convinced you will succeed, just as the pioneers of mobile travel have succeeded before you.

Best of all: this journey is also hugely rewarding on a personal level. You'll deliver great results for your board, and you can transform how you service your travelers by being in their pocket every step of their journey. You can now enhance and improve their trip, compared to the old transactional world where post booking you were limited to no interaction with your travelers unless they were ringing

to complain! It's customer-driven, it drives successful business results and you'll experience a major shift from day one of your app launch.

The time has come for your mobile journey to begin, are you ready?

Sources

IATA, 2017; Business Insider UK, 'One in every 5 people in the world own a smartphone, one in every 17 own a tablet'; Brookfieldav.com, 2017 'Positive outlook for the airline industry'; Connectiontocruise.com, '10 myths about travel agencies'; SITA, 2016 'Passenger IT Trends Survey'; GBTA, 2016, 'GBTA Business Traveler Sentiment Index - Global Report 2016'; Comscore, 2017, 'The 2017 U.S mobile app report'; Criteo, 2017, 'Global Commerce Review 2017'; eMarketer, 2017, 'Mobile drives growth online travel bookings'; Travelport Digital, 2017, 'End traveller mobile research 2017'; Sensortower.com, 2018; Tune.com, 2017 'App reinstalls: A sleeping giant in mobile user acquisition'; Dcsplus.net, 2016, 'Business over pleasure: Top needs for today's corporate traveler'; Concur Report: 'Data, visibility and risk: How safe are your business travelers'; Travelport Global Traveler Research 2017; Travelwirenews.com, 2017, 'Travel managers make mobility the biggest priority in corporate travel'; Aberdeen Group Report, 2013, 'End-to-end visibility into T&E Expense Management: Mobile comes to the table'; Travelport, 2017, Travel Agent Survey; SMSGlobal.com, 2018, 'How to reduce call centre operating costs overnight'; Buyingbusinesstravel.com, 2017, 'Interview: Doug Anderson, CEO, American Express GBT'; Jeff Fromm & Christine Garton 'Marketing to Millennials; MarketRealist; Smartling Report 'Mobile apps rule in eCommerce conversion comparison'; Forbes, 2015, 'The millennial customer has \$200 billion to spend'; Hipmonk.com, 2016, 'Generation Gap: What your age says about how you travel'; Ascend '41 revealing statistics about millennials every marketer should know', June 2017; Think with Google 'Millennial travelers: mobile shopping and booking behaviour; Outsystems, State of application development : 2017 research report; Travelport Digital Mobile Trends Survey, 2017; Indeed.com 2017; Statistica 2017; Google/Ipsos, May 2015, Mobile App Marketing Insights: How Consumers Really Find and Use Your Apps (U.S.); Apptentive, 2015 Consumer survey: The mobile marketer's guide to App Store ratings & reviews; Apptopia, 2017, 'What getting featured in the new app store could mean for you'

About Travelport Digital

At Travelport Digital we deliver innovative digital travel solutions for airlines, TMCs and travel agencies to meet the expectations of today's ultra-connected travelers. We create superior, end-to-end travel experiences across multiple devices and channels with the latest in mobile technology, great UX and design, a travel focused product set and close collaboration with our clients. Our work enables airlines and travel companies to leverage 'every moment in travel' with mobile and digital services that transform how they interact with their customers.

- 43+ million app downloads (as of June 2018)
- 100 number 1 travel apps in App Store / Google Play
- 775 App Store promotions in the last two years
- 4.5 average app star rating
- 330+ mobile experts dedicated to travel
- 34 industry awards for our apps (2014 - Present)

Why not get in touch today:

+353 1 485 3452

hello@travelportdigital.com

travelportdigital.com