

# Marketing your app

In this chapter we cover the major ways you can attract more users and when to use a particular tactic.

## The life cycle of an app

Let's get the ego thing out of the way: you built your app to be used. You built your app for thousands - no - millions of users, and it won't improve the world, or your bank balance, if you're the only one using it. But your chances of going from tens of downloads to millions can be improved by having a marketing plan. Thinking about the life cycle of an app can be an effective way to create a plan because you can match certain tactics to phases of the app. As an example, we've outlined six different phases of an app's lifecycle and tactics relevant to those stages.

### Phase 1: Concepting

At this stage your app is conceptual and you haven't written a single line of code or even have a name for your app, so how can you market it? In the concept stage you're marketing yourself and your ability, not necessarily your app.

**Crowdfunding:** If your app needs funding then a crowdfunding platform (see Chapter 2) is a good way to validate your idea and source income. When you post your app on a crowdfunding site, you're in effect posting your first ad. You're announcing to the world what it is you want to build and why it's a good idea, but really you're promoting yourself. View websites like AppStori and Appbackr for crowdfunding examples.

**Building a website and social network presence:** Even without a working app, you can still begin to establish your brand through a simple website and build your community on social networks, like Google+. Whether your crowdfunding appeal is successful or not, you've still exposed your idea to interested people who may become testers or paying users later on. So set up a way for these people to follow your story and begin to build a community. Grand Cru is a development company based in Finland that focuses on mobile and social games. Prior to the launch of their debut game, Supernauts, they created an online presence with their website and also created a social network page to build excitement.

### Phase 2: Testing

By now, the alpha version of your app is in the hands of a few trusted testers. You're ironing out the kinks and adapting your app to early user feedback. At this point, focus on getting the basics right.

**Name your app.** You might not consider your app's name to be a part of your marketing strategy, but get it wrong at your peril. If you choose a name that doesn't resonate with users, is too hard to pronounce or is misleading then your app may flounder. Check out Dan Rose's article, 'Top 10 Tips for Naming Your App', on the Creative Bloq website for some excellent advice.

Marvin Paul, co-founder of Out of Milk, knew that a good name was important to their overall strategy. *"For me, the name is very important. I feel lucky that we came up with the name 'Out of Milk'. Before I start any project I need a name for it. So for this app I posted a message to my friends asking for name suggestions for a shopping list app, and people gave me some ideas. The final name didn't come about through that, but it was a good process and helped us eliminate some ideas. Eventually, we chose a well-known expression."*

**Design your app icon.** Your app icon may be small, but it does so much. It serves as a key visual element on your app store listing page to draw users in; it captures what your app is about in a single image, and it serves as the button that will get tapped countless number of times each day by users to open up your app. A good

designer can help you realize what you want to communicate with your icon. Or, you can do it yourself, which is what Szymon Klimaszewski, creator of the Blood Pressure app did. The logo for his app looks good and conveys the purpose of the app. *“Having a good app icon is very important. Fortunately I’m familiar with Maya, a 3D software design package, Photoshop and Gimp because of my interest in graphics. That gave me a knowledge base to create a logo myself. I had the idea of a heart icon, and I wanted to connect this idea with blood pressure, and the idea of an ECG graph. So the icon was designed and became my logo.”*

AdMob research shows that 54% of smartphone users in China think an attractive app icon and logo is an important part of the overall app experience, and users in other markets agreed.

**Tell friends and family.** During this phase you can establish beta testing groups among friends and family. Consider them to be your inner circle of testers, but keep them engaged and empowered by listening to their feedback. Create simple surveys using tools like Google Spreadsheets to collect their thoughts in a structured way. You may want to cast a wider net and solicit testers via social networks.

### Phase 3: Launching

The day has come, your app has launched and it’s available for download by users other than your friends. You await eagerly the world’s reckoning.

**Create an excellent app store listing.** By now, you’ll have an app store listing, and getting this page right will be critical to your success because it’s your global shop window. Here are some pointers:

**Invest in high-quality screenshots.** Many users view screenshots before downloading an app to see what they’re getting. Make sure the screenshots in your listing give the user a good overview of the major app screens, or have them ‘tell the story’ of your app. And be authentic; make sure they’re accurate and up to date. PicsArt has great visuals on their listings page.

**Invest in a video.** As users browse through an app store deciding which app to download, it’s useful to have as much information about the app as possible. Videos are an excellent way to show a user the app’s functionality, especially for paid apps.

## INTERVIEW

# Sylvain Gauchet

Is a co-founder of Apptamin, which specializes in creating videos for apps.

*“Video is one part of the marketing puzzle but it’s an important one because next to trying an app, it’s the best way for a user to know what an app is about and explain its value.”*

*“Different apps require different types of video. For instance, videos for games should show the gameplay. For other apps it’s good to explain the use case and show how the user will be using it in situ. Ideally videos should be between 30 to 60 seconds long.”*



“Videos can have multiple uses. Once you have a video you can put it on the Play Store of course, but you can also add it to your website. You can also create a shorter version for use in mobile video ads.”

**SYLVAIN GAUCHET**  
*Co-Founder, Apptamin*

*“Also, a video is a good way to engage journalists and bloggers. These people receive many press releases for apps but won’t be able to download each app to try. Including a video link gives them a taste of the app and encourages them to download it so they can review it in full.”*

But remember, *“Having a good video won’t fix a bad app, so make sure your product is good.”*

We like Vyclone’s clever video, which serves to promote the app but also doubles up as a demonstration of what the app does!

**Write good copy and choose good keywords.** Browsing the app stores is the most common way that users discover new apps, according to AdMob research. In our survey, on average 25% of users found new apps in that way, followed by recommendations from friends and family, at slightly over 18%.[27]

So writing a good title and description in your listing, and choosing relevant keywords, can be essential to help drive discovery of your app.

There are many app listing pages which are poorly written, so keep in mind these tips when writing your listing:

Write for your audience. For example, if your app is an educational tool for kids (such as Splash Math), call out the benefits to the parents.

Don’t make it hard for users to understand what the app does. State its purpose up front and include 2-3 of the app’s killer features.

Highlight great reviews and testimonials, from either users or the press if you have them. Vyclone does a good job of this.

Be clear about its limitations. The description for the Blood Pressure app, for instance, makes it clear that users still need a blood pressure monitor to use the app.

**Use house ads and cross promotion.** If you have a portfolio of apps with existing users already, why not give your app a shot in the arm at launch by using house ads? These are ad units which help you cross-promote your new app to users of your other established apps. When it comes to set-up, manually placing these ads in your apps would be time consuming, so many developers choose an ad network to handle the ad serving. AdMob offers a free house ad service, and has a simple process for creating house ad campaigns. You can refine the targeting settings of the campaign to reach the right audience (such as showing ads to users in certain countries, or even targeting ads based on demographic criteria). When you choose an ad network look for those options as they’ll help you achieve better results.



Paid user acquisition is an important pillar for any consumer business looking to win in mobile. Depending on your strategy and goals, using in-app campaigns to drive the first wave of downloads can be a good place to start.

**ZUBAIR JANDALI**

*Head of App Developer Ad Sales, Google*

With AdMob, you can combine house ads with mediation (see Chapter 4) to take advantage of every impression in your app. This is useful when the networks in your mediation stack can't fill an ad request. Instead of an empty ad slot, you can show ads from your house ad campaign instead to promote your other apps. This can help you attain new users at no cost.

App development company Fingersoft had a lot of success promoting their Hill Climb Racing game with house ads. It wasn't their first app: other apps, created in 2011 and 2012, such as 'Cartoon Camera,' and 'Night Vision Camera' already had users, so it made sense to cross-promote and leverage that user base.[28]

**Try peer-to-peer distribution.** There are two major ways that peer-to-peer distribution can help you acquire many new users. First, it's a method of marketing where you partner with other developers to advertise your app on their apps. Developers you seek out for this purpose may have a good-sized portfolio of apps, or maybe a handful of really popular ones, but the point is they have a much larger volume of users than you that they can leverage. So why not seek out friendly developers open to doing a deal with you? As you reach out, be prepared to bargain because these types of deals are unlikely to be free. In many cases the distributing developer will want a share of your app's revenue.

Second, a more formal version of peer-to-peer distribution is when the larger party publishes the app on behalf of the smaller party. It's a chance for you to piggyback on others' success and it's been proven to work well. Some large developers, Rovio for example, launched their Stars program recently which is designed to help app developers with distribution (Rovio has a user base numbering more than 100 million across their games). Kalle Kaivola, Senior Vice President of Product & Publishing at Rovio Entertainment, explains some of the benefits: "We have a lot to offer to the developers in terms of helping them put the finishing touches to the project. Under Rovio Stars we do a bit more than a traditional publisher does in helping with the game project, things such as lending our expertise in QA and marketing." [29]

**Leverage social media and blogs.** If you maintain a blog, or are active across several social media channels, then time your launch announcements in a coordinated way to maximize the impact. And don't desert your followers. If you start using social networks then post regular updates; it's the only way you'll maintain a following.

Granted, not everyone has time to manage a social network. So another tactic is to let your users do your social marketing for you. If you have a great app then users will tell their friends about it. You can enable these conversations by adding social features to your app. We like how social sharing has been integrated into the Hill Climb Racing game. After you crash your car, the app generates a screenshot which you can post to your social networks along with your score.

## Phase 4: Accelerating

The stage where your app gains traction and acquires many more users, i.e. the tipping point, is likely to be one of the most critical. If you reach this point you may find many new marketing opportunities coming your way.

**Featuring on the app stores.** To many developers this is the holy grail of free app marketing; a prominent position on an app store's front page, or at least on a category page, can significantly boost your number of users in a short space of time. For example, the messenger app Cubie was featured on the Google Play Store's frontpage for nine days, and according to their business development manager, James Hill, it had a huge effect, "Before we got on Google Play, our total downloads across iOS and Android were averaging between 15,000 to 20,000 per day. After being featured on Google Play, we were getting over 50,000 downloads per day on Android alone." [30]

So what's the catch? You can't choose to be featured on Google Play, the Play Store's editorial team picks you. However, you can improve your chances by building a great app which adheres to Android design best practices and also has a great rating from users. To learn more about featuring, read this overview on the Android Developer website.

**Respond to user feedback and fix bugs quickly.** While fixing bugs may not sound like a classic marketing tactic, it can directly impact your rating and hence downloads. During this phase of acceleration your users will surprise you by discovering new bugs, and frustrated users can be unforgiving in their reviews and give your app a low rating. But users are equally vocal and delighted when you fix the problem and you can end up with five-star reviews like this one for the Splash Math app: "Yay! The latest update has apparently resolved the issue with 4.3. The developer does care, and is listening."

**License your app to a publishing house.** As your app takes off you may suddenly have more work than you bargained for. You might have support issues to contend with (emails from users), as well as thinking about new ways to improve your app. That can leave you with little time to build an app for another platform, so licensing your app to a publishing house is an option. In this scenario you negotiate a deal with a publisher, whereby they pay you a licensing fee for a period of time to build, publish and promote your app. They earn a share of the profits from your app until the agreement expires.

## Phase 5: Leveling

You've achieved a steady number of users but growth has plateaued.

**Run paid in-app ad campaigns.** You can pay to advertise your app inside other apps, which is known as in-app advertising. It can be a very effective way to grow your user base because you're addressing a highly engaged audience. In other words, app users who are exposed to ads in apps are often willing to try new apps, and gratification is instant (courtesy of the app download). AdMob research shows that more than a quarter of smartphone users in the US and UK feel comfortable with in-app ads which promote games or apps similar to ones they already use. [31]

Costs for paid ad campaigns can be easier to manage once you have a reasonably-sized user base, and you understand more about how users are engaging with your app. One of the first mistakes an app developer makes when running a paid ad campaign is paying too much or too little for users. Once you have users, and you're collecting data on how much money you're making from your app, you can calculate your average revenue per user (ARPU) or even daily average revenue per user (DARPU) if you need it. This gives you a good guide for what a user is worth to you and can help you with your ads bidding strategy.

Each of your users earns you \$10.

The average cost per click of your campaign is \$0.10 and your number of clicks is 5000, so the cost of your campaign is \$500.

Your campaign has driven 100 installs.

Your cost per install (the cost of your campaign / number of installs) is \$5.

You know that each conversion, although costing you \$5, gives you a great chance of earning \$10 from each user!

Remember, downloads don't always equal customers and revenue. You'll want to track the effectiveness of each marketing channel where your ads are placed, since some may provide better users (more loyal ones, or higher spenders) than others.

## How to Optimize Paid Ad Campaigns

**Experiment with multiple ads.** Most ad networks give you the option of running multiple ads for free. So when you create your campaign don't settle for one text ad, try two or three, each with a different message and let the one that generates the most downloads be the one you use most frequently. With AdMob it's easy to edit your ads on the fly to keep your ad copy competitive and current.

**Try the Conversion Optimizer.** The Conversion Optimizer is a free tool in AdMob that helps you maximize the return on your investment. You set a target cost per acquisition (e.g. say you're willing to pay \$1 for each install), and the Conversion Optimizer will automatically adjust your campaign to serve ads to users who are most likely to click on the ad and install your app. Games developer GREE saw a 150% improvement in their app download rate when they used the tool.

**Know the value of different channels.** If you chose to run ads across different networks, you're likely to see a range of results with some performing better than others. Actively manage each channel so you know which are costing more than others.

**Track conversions.** Install conversion tracking into your app so you know which ads are driving installs. You can learn more about this topic with this article from the AdMob Help Center and can track conversions across Android and iOS.

**Use remarketing to boost engagement and revenue.** Let's say you've got fifty thousand users of your gaming app. Half are 7-day active users who spend a lot in your app, the rest are 30-day active users who don't spend much at all. If you could get the 30-day actives to play the game more often they'd become more engrossed in the narrative and would increase their spending. But how do you bring users back to your app? Remarketing lets you target users of your app with ad messages as they engage with other apps. This prompts them to return to your app, and you can incentivize their return with special offers or promotions.

## Phase 6: Declining

In this stage, your users are engaging with the app less frequently and the number of downloads is dropping. AdMob research shows that the number one reason for someone to stop using an app is simply because they lose interest, as the chart below illustrates.

Use this time to migrate your users to your new apps using the methods from the other phases we mention in this chapter, such as house ads, remarketing and social media.