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## Should I Make an App for That? 5 Questions to Answer before Developing Your Own Mobile App

“There’s an app for that” has become a punchline, because it seems like people want to make a mobile app to solve every problem you’ve ever had. But unless the mobile app you want to develop for your business really does solve a new problem (or solves a problem better than any other existing app), it may not be worth the time and money it takes to develop your own mobile app.

Sure, it’s tempting to think your company needs one, too. With 1.6 million apps available for download in the Google Play store and 1.5 million apps in the Apple store ([stats from Statista](#)), and two-thirds of the American population in possession of a smartphone, **businesses and marketers know the way to reach customers is on their mobile devices**. Users are downloading an incredible number of apps to personalize their mobile experiences, so why not get some skin in the game, right?

The truth is that you don’t always need an app. Here at RTS Labs, when a client feels they need a mobile app, we walk them through a very specific process before we decide on the right technology solution.

If you are looking for a tech solution for your business and aren’t quite sure whether a mobile app is the right solution or not, take a look at RTS Labs’ **5 questions to answer before developing your own mobile app** to gain some insight and clarity.

### Does it solve a business pain point?

The most important thing to ask yourself first is *why*. Why do you want an app? Is it for the “cool factor,” or is there a business pain point you are hoping to solve? If you answered yes to the latter, continue reading. If you answered yes to the former, go back to the drawing board. If you are going to invest in something like a mobile app, you should make sure it’s solving a problem.

### What is the goal?

Sometimes companies confuse needing a mobile responsive website or custom application with needing a native mobile app. What you need will depend on what your goals are for the app you are looking to build. If the goal is to simply take people to your website, or for your users to

have the same experience across any device, then what you might need is a website with responsive design. If your goal is to create something that serves many different functions, then it's quite possible that you need software - perhaps in the form of a custom application solution.

Native mobile apps are for serving a specific function. Think of some of the apps you have on your phone. Facebook's Messenger app is specifically for checking your personal messages from Facebook and communicating with friends. It works the way texting works, but it's unlimited and doesn't charge individual text message fees the way phone companies do. It serves a specific function and solves a problem better than existing solutions.

Maybe you have a fitness app that handles the very specific task of tracking your miles or the calories you've burned. On the other hand, let's say you run a fitness studio and need a solution to track client progress, schedule appointments, check clients in, and offer other features to keep clients engaged with their fitness goals. You would be better off with a custom software application that serves multiple functions in that scenario.

Is your goal to provide a unique experience for users who might want to engage with your company on their mobile phone? Do you need to use functions that are only on a smartphone - like the camera? Are you trying to find an eCommerce solution to boost mobile sales? If you answered yes to any of these, a mobile app might be the answer.

A note about mobile commerce (mCommerce): mCommerce has been on the rise for some time and is only going to continue to grow. [eMarketer predicted](#) that by the end of 2016, 25% of online retail transactions will take place on mobile. According to eMarketer analyst Monica Peart, "As U.S. consumers become more comfortable with conducting a litany of activities with their smartphones, fewer people are putting down the phone to make a purchase using another device. Consumers are opting to complete their transaction with the same device they began the shopping journey with, and that is increasingly with a smartphone." This trend suggests that if you have product to sell, a **mobile app might be something to look into in order to capture sales on mobile devices.**

### What are your timeframe and budget?

If you are short on time and budget, a custom native app might not be in the cards for you. Custom mobile apps generally take more time to develop than a mobile responsive website would, and they also cost more to develop. Keep in mind that development for a native Android app is different from an iOS app - and if you need your app to perform on both platforms, then that will add to your projected schedule. You also

have to go through app store approval and abide by a number of guidelines if you're hoping to get your app in the Apple App Store or on Google Play.

If an app is what you need but you're looking to save time and money, there are many [white label app solutions](#) out there. These are apps that allow you to take a simple, standard shell of an app and then brand it to your company with little to no coding required. It just depends on how much customization you need.

## What are your analytics telling you?

Numbers don't lie, so take a peek at your Google Analytics. How are people engaging with your website now? Are they accessing your website from mobile devices? If so, which devices are they using? Where are they entering from, and which pages are they looking for the most? Analytics can tell you which operating system(s) you should consider building your app for and shed light on your overall web traffic.

## Are you looking to collect customer data?

Another thing to consider is a mobile app's ability to collect data from its users. Mobile app users have to download the app and (typically) create a profile in order to use it. This means that with a mobile app, you have access to more and usually better data than you would get from a responsive website. Mobile apps also give you the ability to offer a more personalized customer experience (think push notifications, product recommendations, suggested content, etc.).

According to [The Next Web](#), "in-app purchasing drives 76 percent of all app marketplace revenues to date since once it is setup, it's particularly easy for users to make a purchase with pre-entered credit card information."

This means if you're looking for a way to collect more customer data and make mobile purchases easier for your users, a mobile app might be the right solution.

So what's the breakdown when you're comparing what you want to do with possible tech solutions?

What do you want to do?	Mobile App	Custom Application	Responsive Website
Drive business to your website			X
Create a seamless experience across devices			X
Serve many different functions		X	
Solve a process pain point		X	
Serve a single, specific function	X		
Create a unique mobile experience	X		
Increase mobile sales	X		
Collect data from users	X		
Gather data about users or shopping habits	X	X	
Make mobile purchases easier	X		

There is a lot to consider when you're choosing whether or not to invest in a mobile app versus another technology solution to grow your business or improve your processes. You can use this checklist to bring a little more clarity and insight to your decision. If you find yourself stuck, just [drop RTS Labs a line](#). Your initial scoping consultation is free, and there's no obligation. Just a great way to get to know us and even pick our brains a bit.



Is there an app for that?

## About RTS Labs

RTS Labs is a progressive software development firm trusted by leaders of high-growth companies to build their products and automate their processes, enabling them to achieve unprecedented efficiency.

### **We are VERSATILE**

We can support every aspect of the software and product development life cycle — from feasibility analysis, user experience design, and prototyping, to development of scalable, winning solutions. Our data team goes beyond everyday reporting to mine, segment, and deliver game-changing insights for our clients.

### **We are PRACTICAL**

Our approach is to “keep it simple and do what makes sense for our clients.” Even though we enjoy building complex software and web applications, we don’t recommend reinventing the wheel. We are all about helping our clients find, customize, and integrate best-in-class solutions that are readily available and affordable.

### **We are ITERATIVE**

When it’s time to innovate, we like to achieve short-term milestones with your greater vision in mind. This way you can manage your technology investment as we flex to meet your changing needs along the way.

### **We are READY**

Learn more at [www.rtslabs.com](http://www.rtslabs.com) or [GIVE US A CALL](#)

