



Your Brand
REALLY Needs an App

The single-most common mobile strategy question we hear is, “Does my brand really need an app to succeed today?”

The safest answer is always “It depends ...” but that’s not how we approach things, so let’s instead investigate why your business will benefit from an app. And we’ll start that discussion with a similar question: “Does your brand really need a website?”

Sure, it sounds funny and obvious *now*. How could any brand survive without a web presence? But remember that today’s norms were all once just innovative ideas—yes, even the most perfunctory tools, like websites. And things like shopping carts, live chat modules, and even SEO were “nice-to-have” functionalities, far from common, and even further from mass consumption.

All you have to do is think back to the early 2000s (yes, it really was that long ago). While brands didn’t depend on the internet like they do today, those that saw the potential and started building a web presence early benefited most when consumers finally shifted their behavior to digital.

And, this is exactly where we stand today with mobile apps.

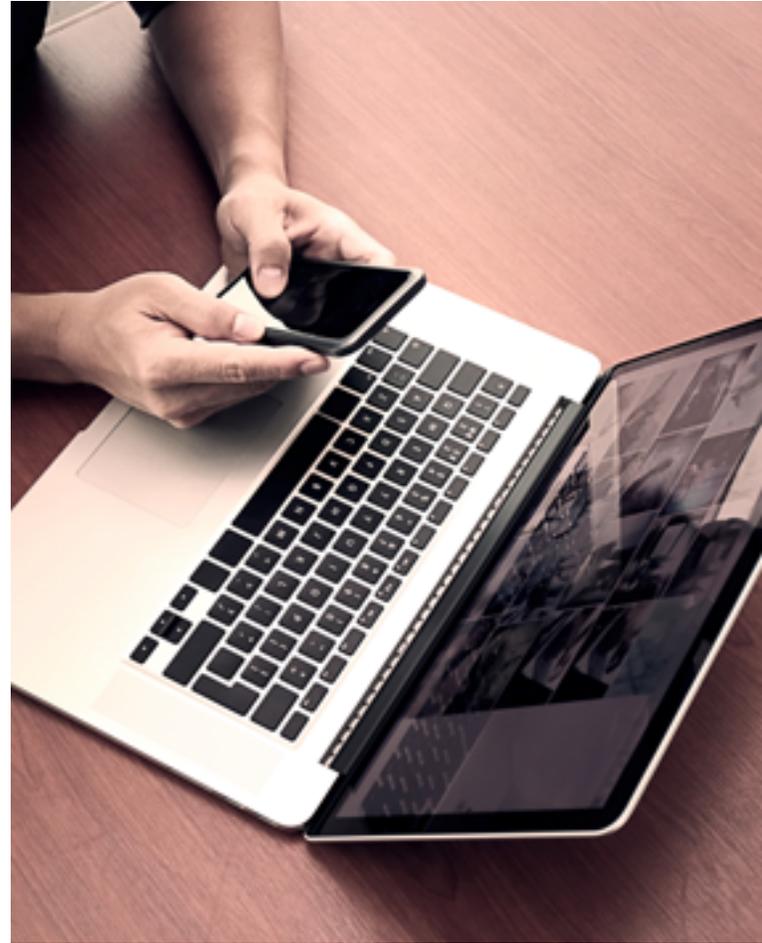
But, what are they...really?

The short answer is, apps are brand-driven, interactive experiences, optimized for the specific platform customers use, including:

- Smartphones
- Tablets
- Wearable devices (FitBit, Apple Watch)
- Desktop computers
- Proprietary tech (GPS, satellite radios)

Apps were, at first, largely a novelty for those who made the jump to smartphones. But marketers—as they are known to do—quickly realized the brand-building potential behind those tiny icons, helping apps to outgrow the novelty phase and become as important to the smartphone experience as email or web browsing.

Today, everyone has an app. In fact, [52% of worldwide mobile device owners](#) say brand, product, or store apps increase their interest in buying.



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More notably, [the average U.S. consumer](#) spends 86% of their mobile use time in apps. From your favorite TV networks showing exclusive footage, to major multinational corporations expanding their core functions, it's difficult to find a known brand without one.

Heck, your local pizza place likely conducts its business through an app (and you've probably used it already).

Modern apps offer a wealth of unique, and even proprietary, functionalities that extend a company's brand more personally than a standard web experience. Here are some of the more established features:

- **Geolocation**

Sure, today's PCs can tell a website where you're located. But how many can update that location in real-time? If you have an app running in the background on your smartphone, tablet, or wearable, it knows when you're near a potential sales point.

Coupons, exclusive offers, and conveniently timed push messages don't arrive via coincidence—that app wants you (and in turn, your own customers) to take action whenever appropriate.

- **Biometrics**

Modern mobile devices are outfitted with some seriously advanced technology, and apps are being designed around these tools. Thanks to fingerprint-scanning, retina identification, and motion sensors, devices are now able to confirm your identity, allow you to make purchases without cash or card, and even track fitness activity.

Apps built around these functions allow users to further personalize their experiences, while keeping their encrypted information safely in hand, well beyond the reach of a web browser, cloud storage, or other "wide open" option.

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- **Camera Functionalities**

Apps built around comparative shopping or product research make good use of your device's camera. As a prime example, just a few years ago, those quirky but innovative QR codes scanned by phone cameras drove people to mobile websites, and were pretty handy in helping them make a smart purchase.

But these experiences were/are highly disjointed affairs, largely hindered by the restrictions of the web and widespread adoptability. Even the seemingly minor act of moving out the the app experience into a browser could disconnect the buyer from the process. And as you know, if the buyer becomes frustrated, s/he will likely move along.

Today, apps are designed for this sole purpose, include built-in camera tools, and let you build a comparative shopping list without ever opening another tab on your phone.

- **Augmented Reality**

Combining the real-time connection of geolocation with some creative use of your device's camera (and several standout applications), augmented reality is turning every physical step a buyer takes into another marketing opportunity. Simply opening an app enabled with augmented reality keys buyers into every buying opportunity within view of the camera lens.

In other words, if you're in Times Square using an augmented reality app focused on restaurants, be prepared for a veritable flood of names, street addresses, discounts, and offers overlaying your real life experience.



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Doesn't my mobile website already do this?

Undoubtedly, there are benefits to having both apps and responsive websites. And we don't think it's an "either/or" situation—mobile-optimized websites are key to any company's success. Both entities are extensions of your brand, and should be given similar care and attention. They just shouldn't be similar experiences.

Through proper responsive design, your website can double as a mobile experience, but it is (once again) hindered by the limitations of the mobile browser. Bandwidth, browser latency, and the like, can all slow your site to a crawl, potentially harming your brand credibility.

(Not to mention your traffic! Did you know [40% of site visitors](#) will abandon a website that takes more than three seconds to load? Time is money!)

It should be noted that bandwidth and latency will affect an app almost as much as a mobile site if you're doing anything with real-time data. But the major difference between an app and a mobile site is that an app can use the full power of a phone's hardware to

provide smooth animations, better performance, more intuitive UI gestures, and more.

That said, if your current website ISN'T responsively designed for mobile, you may need to undergo an entire site redesign before that can happen, which is likely costlier and more resource-intensive than building an app.

In order to target mobile users, apps are written and maintained for different platforms (iOS, Android, Windows Mobile, etc.). This allows each experience to be optimized according to user preference, and to the device for which it's intended.

In short, maybe your mobile website conveys everything you want and need it to. If so, congratulations—you're well ahead of most of your peers. But is the site delivering everything your brand represents? Is it delivering everything your brand could potentially be?

If you're even the *slightest* bit unsure, keep reading.

Do I really NEED an app?

Do my customers NEED an app?

After going through all these points, the answer is pretty clear: Yes, you need an app. And to back it up, there's this little tidbit: [64% of app users](#) say they view brands with mobile apps more favorably.

Sure, modern smartphones all come with web browsers, meaning you can do pretty much anything you can do on a desktop computer in a phone's browser. But before you assume your mobile presence is enough, you should also ask these questions:

- Will your mobile site automatically notify customers your products are nearby via geolocation?
- When was the last time your site told you the name of that customer?
- Can your site adjust the price of an item based on a customer's social influence?
- When was the last time a customer virtually demo-ed your product on your site?
- Does your website send targeted and timely mobile push notifications?

The above questions are all inherent functions of today's apps, regardless of niche or vertical. Some of these functions may be possible via your mobile site, but it's doubtful they'll ever be as seamlessly integrated as they could be through an app—and if your customer is experiencing a disconnected



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experience, the likelihood of losing them rises. In turn, using a mobile website can slow things down.

Even simple tasks like entering a web address and managing bookmarks on a mobile phone are a pretty awkward, cumbersome experience. In a world increasingly focused on speed and immediacy, do you really want to leave your customer experience in the hands of a slow browser connection?

Additionally, by not building an app, you're also fighting against growing user expectations, because [40% of people](#) will choose another site result if it is not mobile-friendly.

The reason most brands are looking to create an app is to keep their customers connected to their unique offering and vice versa. The key word is "connected"—if there is any lag, latency, or problematic browser issues, your brand could take a hit.

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Where do I go from here?

You may be thinking, "Well, if some killer new technology comes to apps down the line, I'll wait until then to build one. Why waste my time and energy today when it'll basically do the same thing as my website?"

We get it. Apps aren't cheap—nor should they be. But which is easier? Getting 100,000 new people to find, download, and sign up for your app? Or getting 100,000 people who already have your app to simply update it?

Even if you do nothing more than deliver a native reading experience for the content on your existing website, you can at least start building your app's install base today. And with that install base will come ratings, comments, feedback, and usage metrics that build trust and credibility with the platforms in the same way that aged links do with older websites.

On board? Good. Then all that remains is to find an agency that can help define the key parameters for

building an experience to make your brand stand out. ([We know just the people for the job.](#)) A trained, qualified app development team will help you determine:

- **What the app can (and will) do.** Look at your app's purpose, for both your brand, and your customers. What will benefit your customers and prospects? What can you provide them within that realm? What will keep them coming back to your app instead of a website?
- **How to expand past a traditional web experience.** Let the team assess your needs and build an app that enhances your brand, rather than replicating the same experience you already offer.
- **Which platform is right.** The team should be able to give you proven, expert insights, and guide you through selecting the platform that best delivers your desired user experience.

Conclusion

Even if you don't see an immediate need for your company to have an app, your customers likely do. You need to stay ahead of the app (r)evolution, and you need a solution for building, running, managing, and optimizing apps using leading technology and expertise.

Our job is to identify what will provide each brand's customers with value, which then identifies the best way(s) for us to deliver it. If you have any questions about app development, or how Lucid Fusion can build an app that makes your brand shine, [contact us](#) today.

