

Expert opinion

Mobile application development. Never without a strategy!

By Cédric Belmont, Business Solutions manager, Hardis Group

Pointless, unknown or even misleading: how many mobile applications have met with only critical success, very often within the immediate circle of their designers? Conversely, when guided by a clear services strategy, built on a robust IT base and framed within efficient industrial processes, mobile applications have everything they need to succeed.

Mobile applications: three-stage projects

A new land of milk and honey. This is how companies viewed mobile applications for a long time as they opened up new customer relations or sales channels. But alongside some popular or even essential applications, thousands of others become lost in the limbo of mobile stores.

With the hindsight provided by the first years of operation of these apps, it must be concluded that far from the expected new El Dorado, it is simply a new way of interacting with customers. And it should be treated as such, based on a clear and phased strategy.

The first phase, borne by the business and marketing, consists of defining the scope of the service offered by the application. To do this, we first have to ask ourselves the right questions: which service(s), on the company's market, can provide added value for users? Can a reduced scope (a minimum viable product or mvp) be launched rapidly? At this stage, the company should also evaluate its ability to offer the service 24/7, to mass-produce it and to maintain its undertakings with respect to its customers.

The IS department may then be called upon to create the service, i.e. to develop it and release it in stores. Meanwhile creation of the communication strategy by the marketing department can also begin: landing pages, e-mailing, videos, press relations, social networks or even crowd funding to sound out the viability of the mvp. Promoting the application to elicit the wish to acquire it is, in effect, at least as important as the application itself, since competition is tough in-stores.

This organization is three-fold (business unit, IS departments, marketing/communication) and makes it possible to structure the mobile services offer and to not go off on a tangent, while managing the budgets.

Establishing an industrial strategy

However, once the application is published on stores, it is most certainly not the time to be resting on one's laurels. As with any product, an application needs to live, which means develop. The digital sector has after all invented nothing new in this respect. Many sectors work that way. It is the case for example of the motor vehicle industry. As soon as a model comes onto the market, the teams immediately set to work to plan subsequent restyling or even replacement.

In terms of mobile applications, it is essential to have the same discipline, to permanently remain 'one step ahead' of the market. To do this, a mind map from in-house brainstorming sessions can be used to draw up a clear road map, based on the proposed upgrades, in step with the maturity of the market, and the company's release and budget capacities.

Adapting business and IT organization

For the company, a mobile application therefore involves specific organization and resources for this new channel. This is because even if the application is initially managed by marketing and digital, the business unit should get on board rapidly. In numerous cases it is in fact the core business that will have to rally the resources required to operate the planned service.

At the same time, the IS department should also be involved fairly early in the creation chain to be able to deliver the planned service. For even a 'tiny' application can have significant effects on the IS. For example, where the latter uses a mainframe, the IS department should take the necessary steps to ensure the high availability of an application.

In the more long-term, it is also a question of especially 'envisioning the future of the IS', since in order to make it easier to integrate applications designed as services, it is essential to provide for a services-oriented architecture that is able to easily adapt, one way or another, to the company's requirements.

In conclusion, creating a strategy for new digital channels is a good thing. However it is necessary to base it on a clear services strategy that is consistent with the capacities of the operational teams and on a long-term IS strategy.

About Hardis Group

A digital services company and independent software vendor, Hardis Group assists its customers in the transformation of their business model, their supply chain and their information system. The company helps them become more competitive and increase their operational performance, creating and integrating business, technological and digital solutions tailored to their needs and issues.

With its dual positioning, Hardis Group has developed expertise in the areas of banking, insurance and e-health, distribution (CPG and luxury goods), industry and energy, logistics and transport services. This expertise means that it can now provide global responses, as part of an agile approach characterized by co-construction, innovation and continuous improvement.

Since its creation in 1984, the company has built its growth on a pragmatic approach and values of efficiency and firm commitment both to its 2,500 clients and its 730 employees (25% of whom are also shareholders). In 2015, Hardis Group achieved a turnover of €68.8 million. The Group has five offices in France: Grenoble (head office), Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

www.hardis-group.com

Press contacts

Anjuna
Elodie Cassar
elodie.cassar@anjuna.fr
Tel. +33 9 64 15 31 27
GSM: +33 6 80 53 82 94

Hardis Group
Hélène Leclercq
helene.leclercq@hardis.fr
Tel: +33 4 76 70 98 41