BUILD VS. BUY

The 2019 Mobile Marketing Buyer's Guide

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FOREWORD

KNOW TODAY'S LANDSCAPE

The mobile market is core to today's experience economy. App Annie reports that $101bn was spent in the worldwide app store in 2018, up 75% from 2016. Time spent in apps grew 50% from 2016 to 2018, with the average consumer spending 3 hours a day spent on mobile. In addition, companies with a core focus in mobile had a 360% higher average IPO valuation (USD) in 2018. The reasons to build and execute a comprehensive mobile marketing strategy are clear, but how you do it is just as important as getting it done.

DEFINING MOBILE MARKETING

Ultimately, marketing is about talking to people. For brands, that means talking generally to their customers, and anticipating their needs live and in the moment as they occur to make a true impact. It means responding at the right time, in real time, with messaging that's relevant to them.

In the same way, mobile marketing is the set of techniques and tactics that engage mobile users, provide value, and elevate their experience through hyper relevant messages delivered at optimal moments of engagement, all to keep them interested, retained and, most importantly, profitable.

In concrete terms, that means push notifications, all forms of in-app conversations and interactions, and the optimization (and deep personalization) of each individual user experience. This also includes the analytics and reporting that support these activities, and the ability to dynamically manage and influence individual customer journeys in real time.

MAXIMIZING YOUR MOBILE MARKETING EFFORTS

The best laid plan to build or buy a mobile marketing solution doesn't end with mobile. After observing campaigns for over a decade, our experts have all come to the same conclusion: mobile campaigns supported by efforts across email, web push, and OTT have resulted in the highest overall engagement and revenue. This brings another dynamic to the fold: whatever route you choose, it's imperative that your mobile marketing solution be able to be flexible enough to fit an entire multichannel strategy.

For these reasons and more, every ambitious marketer needs to do their due diligence in weighing all pros and cons associated with building and/or buying a mobile marketing solution. And this guide is intended to help them to do just that.

SHOULD YOU BUILD?

It may be tempting to build your own mobile marketing platform. The advantages, after all, are obvious: you will have total control over what functionality is included, and it will be tailored to suit your app perfectly.

On the other hand, there are important questions you need to ask yourself before choosing this approach:

- **Are you sure about what to build?** Mobile marketing is a complex space. While it might be easy to build a basic analytics and push notification package, that won't be enough.

- **Who is building it?** One thing is for sure: just because it's in-house doesn't mean it's free. Are you better off meeting half a dozen developer salaries for a year (and beyond), or picking up a ready-made solution?

- **Will it scale?** We talk about scalability later in this guide, but here's the simple truth: building the basic functionality is relatively easy—achieving enterprise-grade scale is difficult. If you're serious about building a powerful mobile presence and delivering real-time relevance, you need to be ready because your customers are moving at the speed of now across channels.

- **Is your team committed to keeping the product current?** The mobile space evolves quickly. Make sure the team you choose is prepared to support a rigorous product roadmap. Are you ready to handle and support integration with third party products and other non-mobile channels? Half the challenge in marketing automation is working alongside existing infrastructure, sharing both data and campaigns in a multichannel ecosystem.

- **Are you building for marketers?** With the best will in the world, delivering product that marketers can use effectively requires more than engineering. There is a world of design and UX development that will need to be in place.

- **Are you committed to supporting emerging channels?** It's not just about mobile, and it's certainly not just about the mobile app. The right vendor will ensure that the key channels, both now and in the future, are supported in an integrated fashion.

- **Who decides what to build?** And who decides on future product direction? The decision to build internally means addressing a whole range of challenges in terms of the relationship between the internal client (marketing) and the ultimate developer of the platform. Is your organization prepared to handle that process?

Whatever decision you come to, ensure you do so with open eyes. Don't end up with an in-house system that you discover after the fact does not (and possibly will never) meet your actual requirements for success. You'll be back to square one a year later, and unfortunately, we talk to people in that situation every day.

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GENERAL EXPERIENCE QUESTIONS

Purchasing any form of software can be overwhelming. It can be hard to know what really matters and what is not so important for your success. These questions should help organize your thoughts. In our opinion, there are certain features and approaches that are non-negotiable: if you're not getting satisfactory answers to these questions, you won't achieve the real-time relevance that you need to make an impact for your brand.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Does the product support interaction with users via all relevant native mobile channels?	Don't compromise when it comes to the marketing campaigns you build. Sometimes you'll want to use push notifications. Elsewhere in-app conversations will be appropriate. You'll also want to be able to test and experiment with native app experiences. If a solution can't support all three of these marketing techniques, you're probably wasting your time.
Are non-mobile emerging channels supported?	Today's consumer interacts with the brand across a range of devices, from desktop to smart TVs to mobile and laptops. Your marketing campaigns need to support them all with an integrated experience. If your vendor can't do that, look elsewhere.
Is it an integrated platform?	It's not just integration across devices that matters. You'll also want a platform that integrates experiences for the team deploying campaigns. To give two examples: the data collected by an analytics engine should be able to support the targeting of your campaigns, and your definition of a segment should be re-usable across the platform.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Just how sophisticated are the segmentation and profiling capabilities?	Targeted marketing is effective marketing. It should be possible to create target groups or segments based on a highly granular view of user behavior. That means being able to target not just on users who "watched a show" but on users who watched a specific episode, within a specific season, of a specific show. There's a world of difference between the two. Our advice? Before you talk to anyone imagine the segments you'd like to create. Then ask them to do it.
Does it operate in real time?	It is critically important to know what is happening right now, in real time, rather than what happened some hours (or even minutes) ago. Because being relevant to people today is much more dynamic than just personalization—it's about anticipating customer needs, as they occur live and in the moment. And when only 20% of users have a single session in a mobile app, it is essential to optimize their experience and deliver campaigns based on a real-time understanding who your mobile users are, what they want, and the best course of action to meet their needs. Waiting for the next app session just isn't good enough; it may never happen.
Does the solution support accurate geo-targeting?	Customer behaviors are one way to create meaningful segments and relevant campaigns. But you'll also want to be able to fold in (within the same segments) contextual data on user location for even greater targeting precision; you'll increase engagement and inspire larger conversions as a result.
Is everything testable?	If you can't test your campaigns, you're marketing in the dark. You'll need to be certain you can run A/B tests against every aspect of the mobile marketing mix (push, in-app, native content changes).

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Is it easy to use?	You should be looking for rapid time to relevance: the ability to work easily and quickly across campaigns, and the seamless ability to integrate with major marketing and business platforms. This ease-of-use will help you maximize the potential of existing data and act on new data exactly when it matters most. Slow, difficult-to-maneuver platforms will severely compromise your productivity and impact.
Does it scale?	This is one of the most important questions you can ask. Tech solutions are a dime a dozen; those that don't crumble when the going gets tough are harder to find. If your vendor can't point you to live deployments handling millions of daily active users (at the very least), run.
Are true analytics supported?	Mobile marketing builds on a detailed understanding of individual users. That means a huge amount of data is collected, or should be. For this reason, many solutions will also support all the common analytics requirements of many app businesses. That can be handy (for one thing, you can get rid of your existing analytics provider). Even better, look for solutions that go even further and support open querying/searching of data, enabling you to find answers to any question relating to your mobile business.

GET TECHNICAL

You want to invest in a service that grows with your business, does not limit your marketing activity, and gives you results you can trust. In order to make that happen, you'll need to look a little more closely at each aspect of the platform's technical functionality and make sure it's going to meet your expectations.

Below, under broad functional headings, are a few key questions to ask during a demo or an in-depth discussion about the inner workings of potential mobile marketing vendor.

QUESTIONS ABOUT MOBILE SUPPORT

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Is full, customizable rich push supported?	Make sure any solution allows images and video to be added to push messages, and supports fully customisable interactions (like push action buttons) that encourage customer engagement.
Do I have total control over message types?	You'll find a few off-the-shelf solutions out there that enable you to send generic messages to a set design. But just as you wouldn't use Word templates for print advertising, when it comes to enterprise class messaging that simply won't do. You're looking for full control of the look and feel of all messages.
Is video messaging supported?	Nothing captures the attention like video, and modern consumers expect it. Check if prospective solutions allow you to send embedded video within push and in-app messages.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can I send a lot of push notifications - quickly?	For many businesses, it's vital to deliver large numbers of notifications fast. It's not good enough to take a half hour or more—make sure your platform can send millions of hyper relevant, real-time notifications in minutes.
Are a range of interactive campaign types (including surveys) supported?	Mobile marketing isn't just about broadcasting to the world. You'll often want to hear back from your users, namely for product, operational, or support reasons. Can you?
Can I test every aspect of in-app and push campaigns?	As above, if you can't test the content of these campaigns (and their overall effectiveness), you'll never know what's truly working and, more importantly, what isn't.
Are all device types supported?	Especially on Android, there are an almost infinite variety of screen shapes and sizes. It's important your platform handles these elegantly and natively; otherwise you'll have a lot of work on your hands.
Are common campaigns already templated in the platform?	It can save a huge amount of time and money to have effective campaigns such as onboarding, purchasing, or asking for opt-ins saved as templates in your customer engagement solution. Ask your vendor to show you a full variety of campaign templates for full awareness of what's available.

QUESTIONS ABOUT MULTI-CHANNEL SUPPORT

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Is the vendor committed to supporting emerging channels as they come online?	Things change fast when you consider the role devices play on customer behavior. You need confidence the solution you choose will continue to develop and adapt to meet all kinds of environments, or you'll be putting the future of your engagement in jeopardy.
Is native email supported?	It's still out there, and it still works. Email has a role to play as part of a multichannel marketing strategy and will do for some time. Make sure you have all the email functionality you need within the platform you choose.
Is web push supported?	Web push gives brands the ability to send notifications direct to desktops and laptops. It's a powerful new way to communicate with users and for multichannel businesses should certainly be in the marketing mix.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can I deliver campaigns across smart TVs and other OTT streaming devices?	The TV is now part of the digital marketing ecosystem and, for many businesses, the primary screen. Can you deliver interactive campaigns right within the native smart TV experience?
Can I integrate with existing marketing platforms?	Although it's nice to have everything in one platform, you may well have existing investments you want to integrate with. If that's the case, make sure your vendor of choice can make that happen.
Can campaigns be coordinated across multiple channels?	You don't want to send single campaigns within single channels. It's important to be able to stitch together multiple channels into single campaigns that provide a seamless customer experience across devices.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TARGETING & TRIGGERING SUPPORT

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can campaigns be delivered to any target group I choose?	It should be possible to ensure that campaigns are not simply limited to "users who have not been in the app for x days" or similar. You should have the freedom and flexibility to target based on any combination of customer profile and user behavior.
Can I segment based on any data from any system?	It should be possible to ensure that campaigns are not simply limited to "users who have not been in the app for x days" or similar. Limited segmentation capabilities will keep you from creating dynamic, value-driven customer journeys. Instead make sure your campaigns can be delivered to the most complex behavioral segments you can imagine. Look for the ability to target recency and frequency of both events ('booked a flight') and relevant business values, or payloads, ('booked a flight from JFK"). This is the type of precision that results in real-time relevance across channels.
Can I build dynamic, responsive multi-step campaigns that respond to user behavior in real-time?	Look for a solution that can anticipate and respond to user actions with the right campaign live and in the exact moment of customer need. This will ensure a personalized experience that will be based on the interests, preferences, and goals for each individual user in real time.
Can I send push notifications at the right time for each individual user?	The single best time to send a push campaign is when a mobile user would normally be in the app. Look for a solution that automatically buckets users by typical app open time and then delivers push notifications on that basis.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can I deliver in-app messages at any point in the app experience?	Only delivering messages on session start (for example) is limiting. You're looking for a solution that lets you intervene at just the right time: whether that's when a user opens the store, makes a purchase, or indeed any event of your choosing.
Can I deliver unique app experiences on first open, dependent on acquisition source?	For those advertising app downloads on Facebook (for example), there can be a huge drop-off after ad click and even when the app opens with a generic experience. Look for a solution that can show initial screens tailored to the specific offer the user clicked on.
Can I throttle message frequency?	It's important to be able to manage how often messages are displayed, both at the campaign level and the user level, so that even if a user exists in multiple campaigns, they will only receive messages that are relevant to them. Failure to support message frequency and relevance will result in confusion, irritation, and, ultimately, churn.

QUESTIONS ABOUT A/B TESTING

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can I test every aspect of the user experience?	Too many platforms allow limited testing of only simple graphical elements within an app, or not at all. True optimization relies on being able to test all features, configurations and settings, without engineering dependencies.
Is statistical significance calculated?	A/B testing is meaningless without statistically valid results. Ask how significance is calculated and presented to be sure your team can take action and optimize effectively.
Can I run A/B/C tests?	A/B tests are great—even better is the ability to run multiple variants against each other and save time getting to the best-performing answer. Check how many variants can be included in any given test.
Can I limit tests to a specific segment?	If you are personalizing experiences for differing segments of users, you'll need to be able to test those experiences only against relevant segments. Can you?
Can I measure the results of tests against meaningful metrics?	A test of a push notification campaign (for example) that identifies a winning message based on just click-throughs is entirely meaningless. It's vital that your platform can identify which variants deliver more engagement, revenue, and give you the ability to maximize any metric you care about.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ANALYTICS

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Are analytics organically connected to my active mobile marketing campaigns and tests?	It may sound hard to believe, but some solutions don't necessarily build the analytics and messaging capabilities of their product on the same data. It should be a given that all data collected for analytics can be used to inform active segments.
Can I view all KPIs by any segment of my choosing?	It is important to not just be able to track KPIs, but also to establish which segments (however you define them) are performing well or poorly.
Are the full variety of reports (cohorts, funnels, top selling items, etc.) available?	We don't have space to list every aspect of analytics you should be looking for, but if at the very least you don't have access to cohort and funnel analysis, there will be problems. And not only should you have them, but they should be easy to get to, view, and understand in real time.
Is in-app revenue tracked accurately?	This question is not as trivial as you may think. Piracy is a major concern for app store revenue, and while it won't affect your core numbers, inaccurate revenue reporting will make it impossible to accurately determine ROI on your campaigns. Be sure about this before you make a purchase.
Is ROI reported on my marketing campaigns?	Analytics should keep you informed about the results of campaigns, not just how the app as a whole is performing. On that basis, make sure you can see not just click-through rates, but also the actual impact each campaign has on your business.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Can I build custom reports and/or dashboards and mine my own data?	Your business is unique and so are your metrics and inquiries. Make sure you have the ability to dive in deeper and report on metrics that matter most to you and your executive team.
Are control groups supported?	Make sure you are able to hold back a portion of your audience from all campaigns. That way you'll be able to see the total impact of everything you do.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The questions provided in this guide should help you come to some general conclusions about the direction you'd like to go in. But there are also a few other supplemental details that can help ensure your experience with mobile marketing is a positive one.

One important consideration is quality of support. One of the benefits of working with a third party organization is taking advantage of decades of expertise and knowledge of best practices. Is there a customer success team available to you? Are professional services provided? This can be the difference between struggling with a complex (and often pricey) undertaking and being led to measurable business value by real domain experts.

On that basis, it'd be wise to look for an organization with an experienced success team that will be available when you need them. You should also ask to see relevant analyst reports and talk to customers. If the vendor you are considering isn't covered by the major analysts, you should ask yourself why.

Take all these considerations into account and look for the best answers to all the questions above, and you'll be on the right track.

Best of luck in your search!

Reach out to us for more insight at **www.swrve/demo.** One of our representatives would be happy to answer any questions or provide clarity on anything mentioned in this guide.

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including Emirates, Virgin, Warner Brothers, Ryanair, Netgear and Samsung.
As a highly scalable platform handling billions of events every single day,
they rely on us to deliver outstanding experiences and impactful campaigns
in-the-moment to their customer base.

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