

App composition is king

In light of the rise of the 'invisible app' and the increasing importance of user experience within an app, there is much that still needs to be learned about mobile app development in terms of designing, building and deploying really great ones, says Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings. He says developers need to grasp how the apps are actually used, and accommodate user behaviour in the design.



Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings.

“The mobile market is growing and changing at warp speeds, putting huge pressure on developers to design, build and deploy apps quickly to meet demand. Alongside this, demand from the business side of the company is putting pressure on developers to deliver many different mobile applications, which will see development teams having to work differently.”

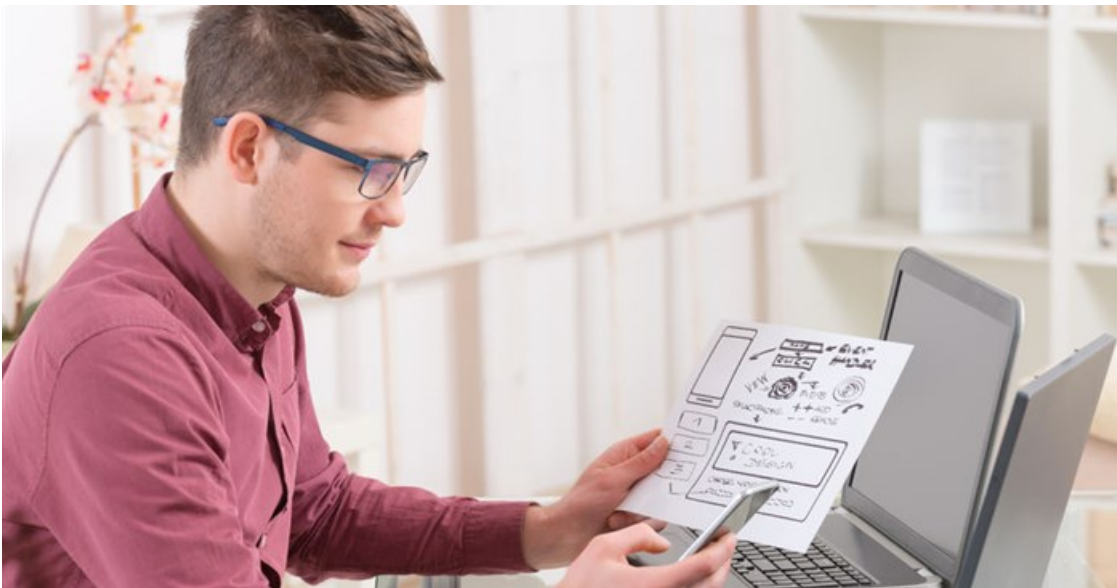
Abandon traditional methods

He adds that application development teams are currently using traditional methods to define and develop applications. Unfortunately, these don't work with mobile app development, as there are very mobile-specific elements to bear in mind.

“Most new mobile apps today are built once and used on many devices. The apps are driven off back-end services provisioned by the traditional legacy programmer. Legacy not meaning old but rather enterprise systems built and used mostly for high volume

transactional processing,” Firth says.

“Taking all these functions and simply placing them into a mobile environment does not work to truly transform one's business. The designer has to always bear in mind that there is no training in the app world for end users. If you need to train to use a complex app then you can kiss your users goodbye.”



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Agile is king

He says this is why it is vital to use agile deployment to be able to quickly improve and alter apps as they develop. “Mobile apps must be treated differently from traditional apps. They must be scrutinised and altered to meet user needs and

expectations. All of this is exacerbated by the number of operating systems, device types, IOT, screen sizes and resolutions, hardware and suchlike, all of which change rapidly.”

This is where agile development practices and app composition come in. Forrester reports that this year is seeing the acceleration of the merger of physical and digital worlds, and as a result, standalone apps will lose their lustre and mobile competition will shift to accessories and ecosystems.

“A well-defined API ecosystem is required for a front-end (mobile or otherwise) experience to be flexible enough to adapt to continuously changing customer demands. That’s because without that flexibility, firms are forced to maintain separate back-end architectures for each front-end channel, which is simply not scalable,” the analysts state.

“We have been talking about app ecosystems for a while now, where multiple apps talk to each other, are integrated, and there is a single sign-on. Forrester is talking about the same concept,” says Firth.

“The majority of complaints about mobile apps centre around a bad user experience, including an unfriendly interface, bad application workflow and sub-standard responsiveness. Developers need to focus on composing apps that represent how users actually work, and are built with the platform limitations in mind.”

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