

Top seven lessons to help you maximise the African opportunity

 By [Lynette Hundermark](#)

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We love mobile and have been fortunate enough to work on the initial versions of many of South Africa's leading apps over the last seven years. In some cases, we have continued working with these brands throughout the course of their app journeys and these are some of the fundamental (as well as subtler) learnings anyone looking to make a dent in the space can take from this experience...



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Lesson 1: Your app target audience is never everyone

It may seem like common sense, but even today we still get approached by potential clients wanting to create an app for 'everyone' with no real understanding of who their app target audience is.

The only time we have ever been approached to create an app for 'everyone' was when we worked on the initial SterKinekor apps and we still use the term 'everyone' somewhat loosely.

Even if you have a defined audience in mind for your app, you need to understand their personas and what the core goals of these users are likely to be.

Lesson 2: Establish what value your app is going to offer to its target audience

Why will your target audience need an app? With over two million apps available in both the Google Play and App store (Statistica 2017, March), there is literally an app available for almost anything and everything. This makes for a tough competitive landscape, so when launching your app, be aware of how you're going position your app in order to set it apart and what value your app will bring to the table.

The only core differentiator is going to be the unique value you are offering.

Lesson 3: User experience is key in app success

Developing an app is easy and there are many development companies out there who could easily put together an app in no time, however, apps are consumer-facing (be it a B2B or B2C) and since customers are spoilt for choice, there are high expectations in place for an outstanding user experience.

What does this mean? Simply put, it means having an app that makes efficient use of small screen real estate, one that considers phone functionality and most importantly, from a South African context, considers data costs (which is very important for lower LSM clients).

Lesson 4: Your app is not a once-off cost

Having an app presence alone is simply not good enough; phones change, operating systems change and it's up to you as a brand to stay abreast of these changes and also stay on top of the current trends in order to predict possible future changes.

Performance is everything, so you need to be in a process of constant iteration. A number of the brands we have worked with since 2011 have already released over 1300 app iterations.

Lesson 5: Understand how personal the mobile device actually is

Effective mobile design and experience begin with understanding how fiercely personal the mobile device is. It has become more of an appendage rather than a device. With that as starting point, we can then easily understand that mobile is connecting us to our digital worlds but increasingly it is also about our activity in the real world and real connections.

It acts as a bridge between the physical and digital worlds and that is exciting for marketers because it provides an opportunity for the brand's messaging to start on mobile and then extend to the real world, with real results to match.

Lesson 6: Continue surprising and delighting your customer

So, you've released an app, now what? Chances are good that in this cut-throat, competitive and break-neck speed world we live in, your competitor will soon release an app with the bare minimum functionality that yours has. Chances are also good that people will become bored since attention is a hard-won commodity these days and customers want to be intrigued, engaged and entertained with the latest and greatest everything.

With this in mind, in order to retain your app customers, you do need to continuously release features that will add value to them.

Lesson 7: Push notifications are not a silver bullet

They can, however, be used effectively if not treated as spam. Effective ways of using push messages include:

- **Personalisation** – since you are already collecting data from your users, you should have access to insights about their online behaviour, location, preferred usage time etc. This gives you a unique opportunity to be able to fine-tune and target your messaging. Make it personal. Ask your users what they'd like to receive or see more of and in return, you can give them the valuable information they'd like, based on their needs. That's a value-add.
- **Carefully consider in-app messages:** Keep in mind that every push does not deserve a shove. Some messaging may be better served inside the app itself rather than running the risk of annoying your users by sending an unwarranted home screen notification. Never lose sight of the fact that it is all about your customer and push messaging can come across as invasive, as it takes someone out of what they are doing and distracts them.
- **Make it worth their while:** This is the day and age of instant gratification. When users click on a notification, make sure that the messages linked to it provide them with real value and relevance. Strive to deliver value through the message itself, versus always teasing users for app opens which can be counter-productive.
- **Adopt rich, interactive formats:** Whether these be from new notification priorities in Android Oreo and iOS11, to

including media and buttons within messages themselves, app marketing teams have more tools at their disposal than ever before to spark user intrigue and gain a better understanding of what users care about directly from the message itself. Make use of these.

“ *A little creativity can go a long way.* ”

Some of these lessons may come across as ‘obvious’ at first glance, but you might be surprised how, more often than not, the fundamentals get overlooked.

It’s only the school of hard learning (experience) that teaches us what works versus what doesn’t and that takes us back to the basics that are part of the setup for success.

Here’s to yours, maximising the African app-ortunity.

ABOUT LYNETTE HUNDERMARK

With over 15 years of experience in the tech, digital marketing and mobile solutions space, Hundermark co-founded specialist mobile solutions consultancy Useful & Beautiful. With a passion for developing mobile products that are aligned to business goals, Hundermark’s appetite for keeping abreast of the latest industry trends is fast establishing her as an expert tech commentator and opinion leader in South Africa. Follow @lynetteanthony on Twitter.

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