

OUTSOURCING APPS

How To Outsource Your Own Mobile Apps



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INTRODUCTION

The concept of outsourcing is not new, and today many tasks are being outsourced by both big corporations and small businesses. Outsourcing mobile application projects is more popular, compared to in-house project operations. In fact, the current trend of outsourcing application development is ruling the market. It is often a better option for businesses because outsourcing their development task typically saves a lot of money and time. This has proved to be very beneficial for both the businesses and the application development companies.

There are several benefits of outsourcing your application development work, few are highlighted below:

- You hire an experienced, well-coordinated and dedicated team
- You receive complete data mining and capturing
- You get someone who thorough tests the app
- You save money and time
- You secure quality and professionalism using cutting-edge technology

Even though there are many benefits to outsourcing your mobile app, there are disadvantages as well, so it's important that all aspects of outsourcing be taken into account before making up your mind about moving forward.

In this ebook, we will be exploring:

- Pros and cons of outsourcing your mobile app
- The possible risks of outsourcing and how to avoid them
- Steps of outsourcing your app

- What to expect when you outsource the app
- Tips for successfully outsourcing of your app

There's lots to cover, so let's get started.

PROS AND CONS OF OUTSOURCING YOUR APPS

In the introduction, we touched upon a few of the pros of outsourcing your app and mentioned that there are also some possible disadvantages that we want to make you aware of. Making allowances for these pros and cons will give you the information you need to make the best decision for your business.

Before we dive in, there's an important distinction we need to make about the choice of development companies. There may be dozens of offers in your local market, but what if none of them will meet all your requirements of time and money?

Then it makes sense to look for a team that is outside your local area. You may find that an offshore solution is a great option if you can't find exactly what you want in your area.

Working with an offshore company provides numerous advantages including better price, timing and quality, which can be even higher than local sources. But there may also be some pitfalls for you as the client if you aren't familiar with partnering up with offshore outsourcing companies. But don't worry. Later in this chapter, we will discuss some things to consider before choosing an offshore company to design and develop your mobile app.

Pros of Outsourcing Mobile App Development

First of all, let's define the general tasks and principles of working with outsourcing companies. An outsourcing company is a team of developers and managers whose task is to help a client focus his resources on the actions that are the most important in their business and delegate other functions to a professional partner. In other words, an outsourcing company helps to build a successful business by assuming some of the client's duties. In our particular case, it is mobile app development.

One of the main outsourcing advantages, costs saving, helps you, the client, not only to reduce the development costs, but also to invest this extra capital into new development paths for the company. Now let's look at all the advantages more closely.

Reduced Cost

Outsourcing saves money by making it possible for a company to avoid hiring its own in-house team of developers for one project. And then there's the fact that a business who uses an outsourcing company doesn't need to invest in extremely expensive technology, just to be used for the one app they want to create.

Here are some specific ways this cost reduction comes into play when outsourcing:

- Outsourcing means the client doesn't have to spend time, efforts and money on recruitment and training process. Instead, the company can allocate its resources to other vital projects to grow its market and authority.
- Outsourcing allows clients to get the services of the highest quality at a lower price.
- Outsourcing means no investment in full-time employees, which means there's a huge saving in not paying out for benefits and salaries.
- Outsourcing means less time and resources in the organization of the workplace and infrastructure. This is something the development company has already done.
- Outsourcing, in most cases, means the client pays a fixed price. This can be a huge savings if problems are encountered while developing and testing the app.

Increased Speed and Quality

As long as you take the necessary time and care into hiring the best company for your business, you can feel confident in the quality of work you will receive. Outsourcing mobile development companies specialize in a particular trade, and only that trade—designing apps. Because of this, you can trust that their employees have extensive experience and skill.

On the other hand, hiring a new employee is always a risk. There's always the possibility that the employee will be less competent than they claim. With an outsourced company, all terms of quality and conditions are listed in the contract, so you should be guaranteed quality because the outsource company has already vetted their teams.

Here are some specific ways increased speed and quality come into play when outsourcing:

- Due to years of specialized experience in the field development companies can deliver both high quality and speed.
- The client doesn't waste time searching for, hiring and training their own team of developers, which can take months.
- Development companies work with specialized equipment, knowledge, technologies, and highly-qualified staff to meet the objectives of the client.
- The client and the developer can focus on their core business purposes individually, which brings them to the achievement of their common goal.
- The development company needs to maintain their reputation, and therefore is highly interested in carrying out the work quickly, efficiently and on time.

Reduced Risks

Outsourcing spares the client's nerves. There is no need to continuously monitor the project or fret about mistakes causing delays, which means more money going out as well. Working with an outsourcing company practically guarantees that the project will be fully completed on budget, and typically on time.

Here are some specific ways reduced risk comes into play when outsourcing:

- All project risks pass to the mobile development company. For example, if there are mistakes made that are expensive to fix, the outsourcer eats that expense.
- Outsourced companies have teams of employees who are qualified to handle different aspects of app development, so there's no downtime during the holidays or if an employee is ill. If necessary, the outsourcer will pay for employees to work 24/7 to meet the contract details.
- When outsourcing, it makes no difference to the client how many employees are involved in the project or how long each of them stays on the project.
- The client pays for the end result, not the work time of a particular person or department.

Enhanced Data Mining and Capturing

The use of mobile apps has one big advantage—the availability of consumer related data. This data can help the enterprise make future informed decisions. However, if your mobile app is not capable of capturing and mining the necessary data, then it will be of very little use to you in terms of making data-driven decisions down the road.

Outsourcing your mobile app project to an experience development company can help you overcome this concern since they possess all of the

required expertise and skill of developing integrated applications that capture huge amounts of information that you can use in later marketing and product developments.

Thorough Testing

Your mobile app should be such that it runs without glitches on the different types of mobile devices and tablets available on the market. Failure in this can cause damage to your business reputation, and you may end up losing a lot of loyal customers. But, when outsourcing your mobile app, it will be thoroughly tested on all the mobile platforms which will minimize your risk of placing an unimpressive app in front of your customers.

Cons Of Outsourcing App Development

There are two main possible disadvantages of outsourcing your app. They boil down to:

- A possible weakness in the security system
- A lack of the quality control

How to solve these problems?

The first problem is solved by clearly specifying security in the contract. The contract should define what access permissions each party has. By using due diligence in choosing the right outsourcing company, you can be assured that your confidential information won't be affected, and that they won't abuse your trust.

As for the problem of quality control of the work, as mentioned above, it is the outsourced company who is required to ensure the proper quality so they can withstand the ever-increasing competition in the IT outsourcing market. The right company is committed to high standards of

work and always stays in close touch with clients. The use of modern project management software for effective interaction minimizes most of the negative consequences of the developers being absent from your physical location.

If you look carefully at all the benefits of outsourcing your app against the possible disadvantages, you'll notice that the disadvantages can be practically reduced to nothing—as long as you hire a reliable app development company.

Risks of Outsourcing and How to Watch Out for Them

While there are potential risks involved in hiring an outsource development company, there are surefire ways to minimize these dangers. We want to outline a few such scenarios and give you some tips on how you can be proactive, so you never have to deal with them.

Differences in time zone

The Internet has turned our world into one global marketplace and made much of the outsourcing process possible. There are still hurdles to overcome, though. Imagine if you have an urgent question about the project, for example, but all of the development team is currently offline. Since they are all in bed while you are all at work, the issue can only be solved the next day. Such delays can influence the project deadlines dramatically. This is one of the important things to consider if you hire an offshore company.

However, it is possible to overcome and benefit from this situation by using the “follow the sun” working model. In this model, the client asks questions and requests updates during their work time, which is when the outsourcers are sleeping. Then, the development team responds to the client's questions and tasks when it's night on the customer's side. This allows the client to have the answers as soon as they come in the next morning. This model helps to speed up the process and reduce response time.

Poor technical documentation

The importance of technical documentation is hard to overstate. Basically, this crucial stage determinates the further course of the project, helping to avoid mistakes and extra costs.

For your outsourcing team, technical documentation becomes a roadmap for the project. The more detailed and thoughtful it is, the more closely the result will be to your expectations. Mandate that technical documentation is written in your language by a fluent speaker and don't hesitate to ask clarifying questions. The right outsource company will pay careful attention to this stage and will bring to it not only a good technical writer, but also a business analyst.

Insufficient business analysis

The business analyst should be involved in the earliest stages of the process. In fact, the sooner the better. He will help save time and other resources on further development stages as he foresees threats, risks and potential conflicts between planned functionality and the business interests of the client.

Besides his responsibilities for gathering requirements, the business analyst deals with:

- In the early stage of the project, the business analyst may be the person that scopes out the entire project and instigates communication between all the parties.
- The business analyst helps to interpret the client's business requirements into appropriate tasks for the developers. He also translates the future development work into a language that the client can understand so adjustments can be made if needed.
- Together with the other parties, the business analyst conducts tests and validates the project.

The business analyst plays an important role in the overall efficiency and success of the project, and so, should be brought in as early as possible.

Unprotected ideas or code source

Even if your app idea is not innovative or *unique*, you should still protect it. Don` t assume that all outsourcing app development companies do this by default. Some countries do not have such laws at all, so pay particular attention to this if partnering up with an offshore company.

When creating the Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) agreement, consider splitting up the source code into independent sections, limiting access to databases and controlling the sharing of confidential information. Of course, this is not a universal solution. Every situation requires a different approach. Once again, this goes back to doing your due diligence in hiring a reputable development team. Trustworthy companies will adhere to the laws for intellectual property protection at all stages of development.

Outsourcing your mobile app development does not bear more risks than any other type of mobile app development. And by being aware of these possible issues before you even start searching for the best development company for your app, you are sure to mitigate the threats greatly.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU OUTSOURCE YOUR APP

Before we get to the details of how to go about the entire app development process, it's imperative we discuss what you should expect from your outsourced mobile app development company.

It can be a bit nerve-wracking when you're ready to outsource an important development project to an external team, but the right team will make you feel comfortable in trusting them with your work.

To that end, you should have a set of criteria that your development team must meet as a minimum. Look for a strong portfolio and for recommendations from past clients. Anyone can say they have a certain development skill, but the proof is ultimately in their past performance.

Here are some of the points we recommend to use for criteria:

Strong portfolio

You don't just want a "developer," you want one who speaks the specific language needed to build your app. The best gauge of this is to see a strong portfolio of similar work which they have completed previously.

Preferably, they should have recommendations from past clients, and you should be encouraged to check those references. Any good developer prides themselves on having a strong list of satisfied former clients.

Good communication

It's a must of outsourced work that there should be strong communication between parties. First of all, you want a developer who is responsive to your initial query and replies in a timely fashion. Secondly, the

developers should have a clear system of communication for throughout the project.

Part of this is about setting expectations. How often will you want to be updated? When can you expect to hear back on your questions or any issues you need to address? What form will this communication take? Will you use a project management system you are both familiar with or email? Maybe you'll choose to use an app for Instant Messaging for quick updates or questions. All of these expectations should be discussed from the very beginning, so you aren't frustrated later.

Quality assurance testing

Quality is a major concern for any app development work. Analysis has found that almost three-quarters of apps ship with between one and ten bugs, a figure that should not be so high if appropriate quality testing is carried out.

Ask the developer early on about Quality Assurance (QA) testing, and their approach to it. You're looking for proficiency and that they use a range of different tests.

Right sized team

There are development teams large and small, and one thing to consider is whether the team is the right size for your project. Small teams may not have the bandwidth to take on larger projects, while at the same time, very large enterprise focused teams may not be interested in smaller projects or may not give sufficient attention to them.

This again might be a call based on experience. Has the development team successfully completed projects the size of yours previously?

More about communication

Clear communication is a huge factor in the overall success of your outsourced project, so we wanted to expand on that point a bit further.

Besides skill and experience, communication is one of the first things to look out for when outsourcing your app development.

Here are the expectations you should have:

They are timely communicators

It's not that someone on the team should respond to an email within five minutes (hopefully they're busy working on your project), but they should have been clear about how and when communication will occur. This includes regular status updates for the project, as well as letting you know how to communicate with them when needed.

They get to know your business

Your project needs to be built to complement your business and its values. No other business is exactly the same as yours, so you should expect a solution that is customized to suit.

This means that the development team should take the time to get to know your business. They need to understand what makes you unique so that they can translate that into a quality app.

They are proactive

Good developers aren't just order takers, they listen, observe, ask questions and suggest ideas you may not have thought of. The creation of your app should be a collaborative experience, so that the best possible final result is turned out.

They're willing to educate

If app development is not your field of expertise, you may not know why one thing is a better idea than another. A good development team should be willing to explain why something matters and how it will be of benefit specifically to your business. The development process should operate

like a partnership, and the developer should take the time to explain “what” and “why” in a way that you will understand.

Don't rush into anything as you just want the project to be completed. Take time to know the purpose of your mobile app, choose the right candidate and set appropriate milestones to complete the project efficiently.

STEPS OF OUTSOURCING YOUR APP

You are likely either a startup co-founder or you work on a large company's new project, and it's your responsibility to figure out the best possible way to build a new Android or iOS mobile app in the most efficient way possible. You don't have in-house resources to allocate. Or perhaps you've decided it would take too much time, effort, and money to hire new in-house developers. After all, you don't even know if a new mobile app will be accepted by the market, so why hire in-house developers if there is a chance of having to let them all go in six months? Or, if you are planning on only creating one app and that's it, there's no point in going to the effort and expense of hiring your own in-house team.

A good solution in this situation is outsourcing your mobile app to an expert development team. Now, if you've tried this before and the results were less than stellar, it may simply have been the fact that you didn't know what to expect. You may have made some common mistakes that boiled down to an unsuccessful project.

But in this resource, you are learning how to go about hiring and working with a team of developers in a way that will make everyone happy with the result. These days virtually all growing companies use software outsourcing in one way or another to save on execution costs and to attract the best possible talent to build and support their products. More and more companies are using software outsourcing and remote developers to build a product and support it, so now is the perfect time to outsource the development of your company's app.

To decide what model would best work for your company, answer these questions:

Do you have an in-house team?

If your company creates highly technical solutions for a specific product niche, such as new API, digital security protocol, etc., you probably

already have a brilliant team of developers who can do the job. However, if your business sells products to travel agencies or serves healthcare customers, then it makes sense to attract the best possible development team out there with relevant experience in your market and let them do the job.

Are you building a new product or further developing an existing one?

If you are building a new mobile-first product, then be sure to contemplate your answer to the question above carefully. However, if you have a website, for example, and you need to build a mobile app for it, then outsourcing is a good choice. Likewise, if you have an iPhone app, and you need to build an Android version, it's easier, faster and cheaper to outsource it.

Now that you've decided that outsourcing your app to a development company is the best solution for your company let's look at the various steps you'll go through to get the app of your dreams.

Step 1: Find the Right Development Team

This step is the foundation of the app's successful development, so don't rush this part of the process. All of the risks of outsourcing an app can be avoided by doing this step the right way.

Here is a checklist of things to take into account so you can choose wisely:

Reconsider hiring a freelancer

Most app development app horror stories begin with a freelancer. Why? Because it's so much easier for them to take your money and disappear. They have more anonymity than an established company does, which makes them riskier. Instead, we recommend you hire a professional development team. The price may be a bit higher, but the overall cost of the service you will get and the lower risks involved are well worth it. The price point is the last thing you should use to choose your partner.

The company you choose should have their own brand

That means having a decent website, a blog, social media accounts, and an SSL certificate on their website. If all those things in place, they have something to lose if they do a sub-par job on your app. This is a safeguard for you. If they have a brand they've spent time building, they will want to do their best to deliver great results for you.

Check their reviews on professional review websites like Clutch

It's always a good idea to get recommendations from other business owners when looking for a app developer. However, don't overlook checking out all of their reviews, so you learn as much as you can about the team before even talking to them.

Ensure relevant experience in the market or field

Each market has different needs and expectations, so it's safest to outsource to a company who understands your market well. For example, if you are building a reach content-social mobile application for healthcare, the development team should have experience building similar solutions, at least in different markets, if not specifically in the healthcare field.

Confirm technical expertise

Of course, they should have general technical expertise, but make sure they have the specific type you are looking for too. There are different types of skills needed to produce different types of apps. Also, there are differences in developing an Android app vs. an iOS app.

Ask about security issues

Ask the questions necessary to ensure your code is secure with them. For example, who owns the code? Where will the code be located during the development process? Will you be able to access the code during the development process or not? By the way, a great development team will definitely provide you with the access. Security is a vital component to the app development process.

Verify they are good communicators

A great development team will offer you daily updates, roadblock tracking, a locally-based account manager, a project manager and stand up calls if necessary. Find out the company's standard communication practices before entering into a contract. If they expect you to turn everything over to them and then hand over the app without consistent communication in between, you'll want to look elsewhere.

Ok, now that you know what to look for, you need to know where to hunt.

Step 2: Create the App Specifications

Choosing the right dev team isn't the end of the process. Once you find your ideal development team, it's time to work on the specifications for the app. Here's a list of details that should be included in those specifications:

Project description

Simply describe your mobile application in a few sentences.

List of screens and features

A mind map helps provide clarity on the overall mobile app structure.

User path or user flow

A block scheme explains how users start using your mobile app and how they navigate through the screens.

Design materials and wireframes

If you don't have the design ready, don't worry. Simply ask your team if they can do the design for you. If yes, the only materials they will need for that are the wire frames. Or, if you want to do the design, you can make it using special tools like InVision, Proto.io, Marvelapp, Pixate, or Fluid UI. Your development team should offer you either a custom design

or use appropriate templates. A custom design is best, though this can add more to the total project cost.

When you have the specifications completed and handed over to your outsourcer, it's time to move to the next step—what you should do during the mobile app dev process.

Step 3: Oversee, Don't Micro-Manage

Okay, you've signed a contract, and everyone is excited to start. Now what? You need to oversee, but not to micro manage the process.

Some people want to talk or video chat with their developers every single day, but you should resist this urge because you simply distract them. Instead, to keep in consistent contact and keep them on schedule with deadlines, ask them to provide you with daily written updates. This can include what has been done during that day, the overall project progress as a percentage, and what kind of roadblocks they've encountered, if any. This way, you don't need to worry that you've missed something. Just read the updates, occasionally check the code repository, answer questions as they arise and react to roadblocks.

On the other hand, you don't want to forget about the project and just assume all is well. Keep in mind that most delays happen when the development team needs something and the client forgets to provide the necessary information in a timely manner. As a result, you have a one-day delay this week, two days next week, etc. At the end of the project, your deadlines have been missed. To avoid that, make sure you react to roadblocks and questions within a few hours, so your development team doesn't have to interrupt the work process.

Step 4: Mobile App Release

Once everything is done, make sure the app is tested in every which way before the app store release. If you don't know how to release your

mobile app in Google Play or the App Store, ask your dev team to help you with that. Experienced mobile developers have done it many times and will do it for you too.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFULLY OUTSOURCING YOUR APP

So you've decided to outsource your mobile application development. Outsourcing the coding, sound and music or art and graphics of your mobile app is a great way to cut down on cost and save on time. But as with anything, there can be pitfalls. Here are some important tips to use when outsourcing your app.

Clearly Define The Scope And Schedule For Your Project

This might seem obvious, but any successful outsourced project always starts with a clear statement of what you are hoping to accomplish. Define your project requirements up front. Outsourcers need accurate, complete information to present you with realistic proposals and to quote you a reasonable price. Be specific about the deliverables you expect the outsourcer to provide.

Give them as much information as you can about what you need delivered and the way in which you need the work done. Also, be clear and realistic about your schedule requirements—project schedules can have a huge impact on project costs.

Make Your Specifications Very Clear

When you outsource your mobile app ideas, remember to also give very clear specifications. Your mobile app developer will develop exactly what you have asked for. So, provide the developer with details like:

- What is your app supposed to do?
- What is your app is supposed to look like?
- Who is the target audience?

Understand that your app developer needs all of these details to be able to get inside the mind of your target app user and comprehend why they want to use the app. Right from the beginning of the outsourcing relationship, make sure you give very clear details. This way, you won't

need to spend more on extra variation costs or receive a mobile app that does not match your expectations.

Evaluate the App Team Like You'd Hire A Full-Time Employee

When you're evaluating proposals from potential development companies, don't be afraid to ask questions. Just like hiring a full-time employee, selecting a vendor is a very subjective experience. Check their references and ask for feedback from other clients who have used their services. Engage in a dialog—if you have any concerns about their specific capabilities, voice your concerns. Don't just stew about it and hope for the best.

Look For Specific Experience Fit

Ideally, the team you select will have specific experience with the type of project that you're undertaking. You don't want to be somebody's guinea pig. This is especially crucial when outsourcing complex technical projects such as software development.

Don't Choose a Team Based Solely On Price

Though it might be tempting, never select a vendor based solely on price. Experienced buyers who have outsourced many projects and evaluated hundreds of proposals almost always recommend discarding the highest priced and lowest-priced bid. Buyers report that their most successful projects are the ones where they felt the outsourced company offered a balance of good value and quality results.

Review Portfolios and Samples

Examine their previous work and make sure that it meets your standards for quality and style. If you've evaluated their portfolio, references, and previous experience and are still unsure of their capabilities, consider asking them to do a quick mock-up or provide a basic outline of a work plan. A service provider who really wants to win your business might be able to give you a rough concept so you can better understand their

approach to solving your problem. But never cross the line between asking for a mock-up and insisting that they provide you with finished work “on spec.” No qualified professional expects to work for free.

Start small

When engaging with a service provider for the first time, start with a project that is relatively small and simple in scope. This will give you a better idea of the provider’s style and capabilities before you entrust a “mission critical” project to them.

Tie Payment to Clearly Defined Project Milestones

Just as you should be clear about project scope, make sure that you define a work plan for your outsourced project with clearly defined milestones. Having scheduled checkpoints where you review the status of the project as it works toward completion is an easy way to ensure that you meet your final deadline and that the final product meets your standards. Tie the development team’s payments to these milestones.

A good guideline for IT and software development projects is to pay no more than 20% to 30% of the total project price up front, with the rest of the payments awarded based on the completion of three or four milestones.

Negotiate Ownership Of Work Up Front

For any type of outsourced project, make sure that you are clear about who owns the resulting product and any important components of that product. Make sure the development company understands how you intend to use the deliverables that they are agreeing to provide. For example, the development of a custom software application for your personal use would be substantially different from the development of an application that you intend to package and re-sell.

Collaborative Effort On All Sides

Even though the developer has more experience, they need to be involved in the thinking process and creative goals of your project. This will ensure they understand why the app was developed and which emotion it needs to trigger in the user.

Your app is eventually going to connect to the audience on an emotional level, so informing the developer as to those feelings involved will give them a better understanding when they are working on the functionality of the app.

Don't Forget About Support After The Project Is Complete

For technology projects, it's a good idea to specify a warranty or support clause so that you are assured of some amount of continuing support from the developer after the project is complete. It's much easier to negotiate a support clause *before* they begin work, rather than after the completion of the project. Even creative or business services can benefit from a support clause. Specifying some amount of free support or negotiating discounted prices for future modifications can save you time, money, and headaches later on.

Get It In Writing

During the course of a service engagement, the scope of the project, deliverables or even the agreed upon price may change. Make sure that you clearly communicate any schedule, scope or payment changes to your service provider and get confirmation from them—in writing—that they understand and agree to the changes. Similarly, keep a record of any agreement changes requested by the developer and whether you accept or reject those modifications. Save copies of any email exchanges that you have.

Sign an NDA With The Development Team

Signing a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with your mobile app developer is a great way to ensure that the development of your app

remains confidential and secure. Ensure that all the app developers working on your project sign on the dotted line.

You can access top-notch expertise any time you need it without the overhead of hiring full-time staff. By staying focused on your core competencies and hiring experts who outsource their talents for your other needs, you can compete with the delivery capabilities of larger organizations while maintaining your independence.

CONCLUSION

In this ebook, we've covered each aspect of mobile app development outsourcing. You are now ready to begin your search for the ideal app development company for your business.

This is it: be smart and be picky. Don't be afraid to ask questions and to demand straight-forward answers. If you deal with a pro, he will be more than happy to answer questions and engage with your requests. Look for someone who may become a long term collaborator and, very importantly, do not be afraid to spend money on them. "Expensive" may be scary, but too cheap almost always leads to poor quality.

Outsourcing to the right mobile development company to do the job is easier said than done. The market is saturated with potential collaborators and separating the wheat from the chaff can be challenging. However, the task will be manageable by keeping in mind the information, tips, and strategies we've discussed here.