35 TIPS

FOR SUCCESSFULLY MARKETING mCOMMERCE APPS

AN APSALAR GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Apps are rapidly becoming a central part of ecommerce and mcommerce go-to-market plans. And for lots of good reasons. Not only do apps now command more than half of connected consumer time, they also enable brands to deliver uniquely rich experiences tailor-made to the "always-on" lifestyle.

But with all this opportunity comes a tremendous challenge – how to launch a successful app that drives a profitable long-term relationship with a customer. Your app will be competing for attention with a tremendous number of other apps 1.5M on the Android side and 1.4 million on iOS. Even some of the more niche platforms offer consumers more than 100,000 apps:

Number of Available Apps by StoreMay 2015

Store	Number of apps
Google Play	1,500,000
Apple App Store	1,400,000
Amazon Appstore	360,000
Windows Phone Store	340,000
BlackBerry World	130,000
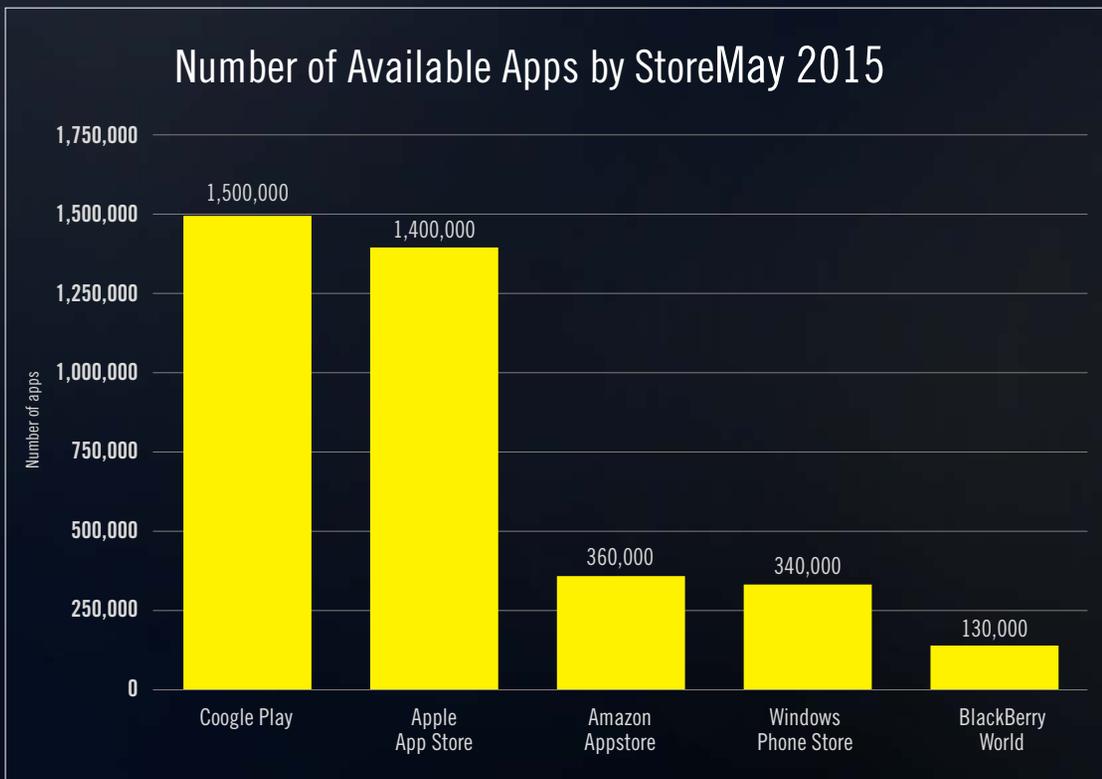
While most of those apps are not focused on transacting and mcommerce, your offering is still competing with a tremendous number of choices. In fact, the average phone has more than 90 apps on it, but less than a quarter of those are used regularly. So how do you ensure that your app is regularly – and profitably - used?

Game apps often focus a great deal of attention hitting the top of the popularity charts in the App Store and Google Play. By "gaming" the charts, these entertainment apps can go a long way toward sealing their fate as a popular application. The challenge, of course, is that most well-funded games are using exactly the same tactics as other games to crank their popularity. That can sometimes create a lot of noise without a lot of result.

mCommerce apps absolutely don't need to crack the Apple and Android top 10 to be successful. Amazon's app, for example, is often rated in the 300s in the download rankings. What matters in mcommerce apps even more than download popularity is staying power and frequency of use. Retailers do compete to be at the top of mcommerce rankings, like Google Play's *Shopping* category, but the download counts are often at least an order of magnitude smaller than for gaming apps. For a mcommerce app to be successful, it needs to get downloaded by a critical mass of customers and then used with a reasonable frequency so it can generate strong revenue per customer.

There are 1,001 online tutorials on how to get a game into the top ten. But the mcommerce app side of the category is far less well-served in terms of tips and advice. That's what this paper is all about. Without further ado, here are 35 tips for more effectively marketing mcommerce apps.

APP MARKETING PLAN
DEVELOPMENT

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1   CODIFY THE BUSINESS OBJECTIVE FOR YOUR APP.

There is a slang term among digital marketers – GMOOT. It's short for "give me one of those," a phrase many have heard when new shiny objects have appeared in the digital space. The most common GMOOOT? When your boss runs into your office with the revelation that a competitor has launched something shiny, and demands that you create the same sort of shiny object immediately. GMOOT makes people pursue actions that are reactive rather than strategic in nature. By codifying a business objective BEFORE you begin working on app marketing plans, you go a long way towards ensuring that GMOOT doesn't result in a lot of wasted, nonstrategic effort.

One example here would be if the purpose of your app is primarily as a companion experience versus a transactional one, such as with an airline passenger app. In such a case, it would be important to remind the team of this BEFORE your organization spent a great deal on acquisition marketing with the idea that those investments would drive ticket sales.

2 SPELL OUT THE REAL VALUE PROPOSITION OF YOUR APP.

You developed your app to be something unique, powerful and different. Before you go any further in crafting your marketing plan for it, make sure you write down exactly what makes your app so special and different. Here are a few questions that may help you get that process focused:

- ■ **If you already have an ecommerce site, catalog, retail outlets or another means of buying from you:** Identify what is different about the buying experience of your app that helps to ensure that it will grow your business. Is it all about new buying occasions, or reaching and connecting with the next generation of customers, or a new way to showcase your offerings? Whatever it is, that's a key part of what makes it a valuable asset to your brand and business.

- ■ **Make an assessment of the advantages (and disadvantages) that your app offers over competing app experiences**. This assessment may help you define what you emphasize in your marketing messages and materials.

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TRANSLATE THE VALUE PROPOSITION INTO A POWERFUL ELEVATOR PITCH.

Think succinct, clear, intriguing and stimulating. Boil your story down to its essence. Spend some time here as this statement will form the backbone of all of your future communications.

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4 CAREFULLY REVIEW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE BEFORE YOU DEFINE YOUR MARKETING PROGRAM.

Even before work began on your app, your team chose (or should have chosen) a target audience for your app. That's because understanding both the value the app offers…and to whom…should have been key drivers in its development. As you plan your marketing efforts, it's important to align all activity to attracting that target audience. It should guide your messaging, app store page content, creative, media programs and more. In addition, carefully communicate your target to all of your media partners so they can plan and optimize quickly and easily.

5 RECOGNIZE THAT MCOMMERCE APP MARKETING IS A MARATHON, NOT A RACE.

When people think of app marketing, their minds usually go to the hype tactics that gaming companies use to get their offerings to the top of the App Store and Play popularity lists. For a mcommerce app to be successful, it needs to get downloaded by a critical mass of customers and used with a reasonable frequency to generate strong revenue per customer. Doing that calls for an entirely different set of strategies and tactics than game or utility app marketing.

For mcommerce, you need to focus first on how many quality users you are attracting, versus focusing solely on raw install numbers. That's because success in mcommerce comes from optimizing toward revenue objectives, not simply maximizing your total installed base.

it's also important to understand how the app rankings work. Recognizing that rank matters less for mcommerce apps than games, learn more about the inputs that drive app ranking so that you focus your effort in the most productive places.

6 TAKE A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO APP MARKETING FROM THE START.
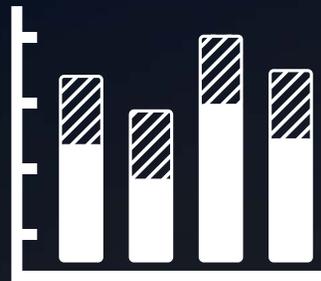
The vast majority of downloads and usage go to the apps in the top few slots of the rankings. We've seen over and over again in our data that one of the big differences between leaders and also-rans is their interest and investment in:

Measurement and Attribution: Make sure you have the data to evaluate your various marketing partners on their ability to drive quality users and engagements.

In-App Engagement: Also ensure that you are tracking all of the critical customer actions ("events") that take place in your apps so you can optimize your customer experience over time and identify customer trends and characteristics that yield better results/ROI.

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING
SPEND

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7   RIGHT-SIZE YOUR ACQUISITION SPEND.

You need to balance investments between acquisition and subsequent KPIs. As recently as a year ago, many of our clients were spending 90-100% of their budgets on acquisition. But that has changed as better measurement and analytics have shown that downloads and installs are only the first steps in a longer customer engagement process. Retargeting and marketing automation efforts have been the biggest beneficiaries of that shift in spend.

8 CONSIDER APPORTIONING YOUR MARKETING BUDGET AGAINST THREE OR FOUR CRITICAL TASKS.

Our data have shown that there are four significant hurdles that brands must clear with each user in order for them to become a high-value customer:

Driving a prospect to:

- Go to the app store and download the app

- Launch and engage with the app

- Make a purchase

- Make subsequent purchases

Not all of your customers will require four distinct efforts to convert and become regular buyers, but it can be useful to think about the challenge of establishing a regular customer in the context of these four tasks.

From a dollars/allocation standpoint, your biggest focus should be on acquisition and closing that first sale. One particularly effective tactic for stages 2, 3, and 4 is to use marketing automation platforms to deliver messages when users take specific threshold actions.

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9   INCLUDE A SITE/ AREA IN YOUR PLANS.
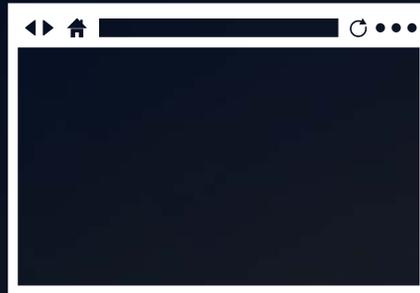
Your app needs a web presence beyond its store pages in order to thrive. If your app is an extension of an online commerce business, create content specifically about your app and develop a destination on your site to feature it. If your business is a standalone app busi-ness, invest in an attractive AND MOBILE-OPTIMIZED WEBSITE to tell your story and attract new users. And festoon those presences with links to your download pages.

APP STORE IDEAS
AND SOCIAL MARKETING

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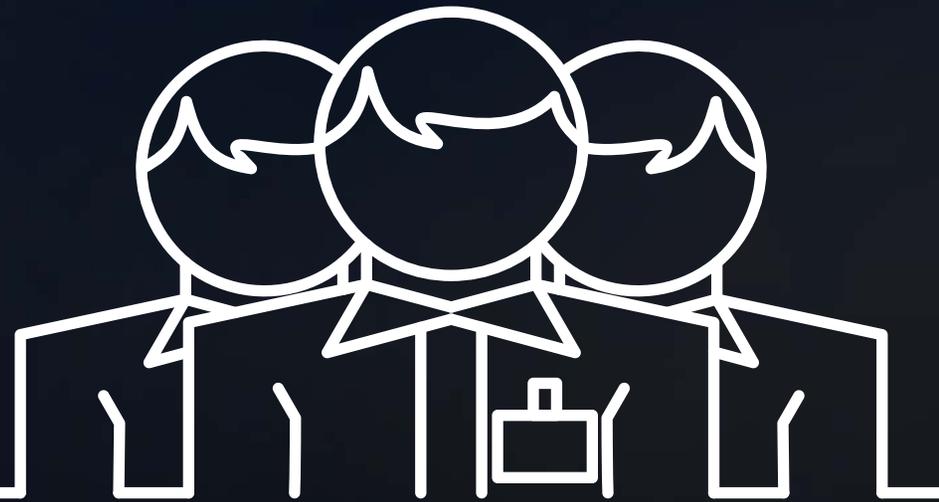
10   TELL YOUR APP'S STORY IN VERY HUMAN TERMS.

"Speak" directly to the prospective downloader and explain why the app can help them/is worth downloading. Avoid "silicon speak" and focus instead on words and claims that will be most relevant to your target audience.

How will the app improve MY daily experience?

11   INVEST THE TIME NECESSARY TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE AND APPEALING APP STORE PAGES

Your app store page is like a shop window – a key driver for purchase/download. Make sure you spend enough time making it as strong as you possibly can. Use Google AdWords tools (set to Mobile) to identify the most popular search terms in your category. Include exciting and appealing screen shots. And con-sider video–more and more app developers are creating and including video content in their pages to bring the features and benefits to life.

12   OPTIMIZE YOUR APP STORE PAGES OVER TIME.
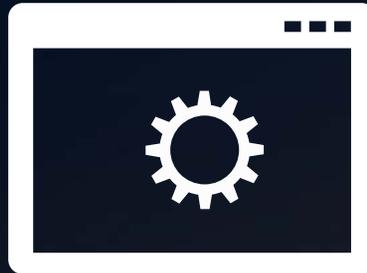
As you learn more about customers, what they like, how they use your app, etc., make changes to your download pages to clarify communication and enhance appeal. Make sure, for example, that if you give the app a facelift, that you update your screenshots with the most appealing images possible.

13 | CLAIM AND ESTABLISH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES.

With the amount of time people spend in environments like Twitter, Facebook and G+, it would be crazy not to create and leverage social accounts specifically for your app. It may make sense to establish these pages long before your launch to begin to build buzz for your offering.

14 TAP YOUR TEAM'S NETWORKS.
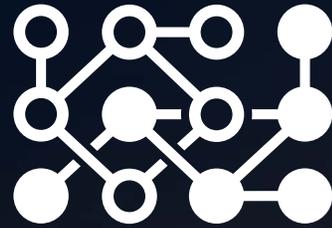
You'd be amazed at how many people can be reached in social media if everyone on your team gets behind publicizing an app. Ask your team to promote the app on their personal brand presences on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more!

15   CONSIDER FEATURING YOUR APP IN SPECIALTY APP STORES.

While Google Play and the Apple App Store are the largest libraries of available apps, it may also make sense to feature the Android version of your app in other specialty app stores if there are ones that are appropriate to your offering.

While all iPhone apps must be installed from the App Store, Android allows apps to be downloaded from other locations online. Do some searches for specialty stores that attract your target audience or are relevant to your category.

16 ENCOURAGE USER REVIEWS.

Use your in-app and CRM experiences to request reviews from users. More and more positive reviews can significantly improve your download rate.

In particular, target notifications to your most loyal users at moments when they are likely to be excited about the app and anxious to evangelize.

17 MONITOR USER FEEDBACK.

Customer comments and reviews provide an amazing set of in-market information that can help you refine your message and improve your offering. Make sure you monitor the stores, social media presences and leverage social listening tools to keep abreast of what your users are saying about your app.

LEVERAGING THE PRESS

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NEWS

18 CRAFT A GREAT PRESS KIT AND PITCH.
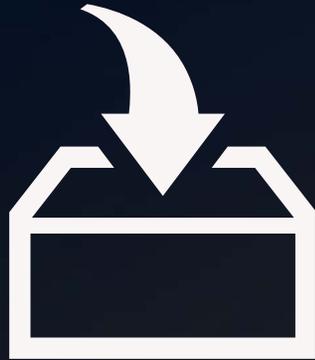
Online, print and even television outlets can be very helpful to promoting your app, if you have a good story to tell. Start by thinking about the kinds of media that are popular with your target. Include both traditional media and popular blogs in this evaluation. Create a press kit containing the core information about your app, and include some great high resolution screen shots. Provide promo codes so journalists can install and use the app easily. Personalize your pitch to each leading media outlet based upon the kinds of stories that they cover. Where possible, present your app as an extension of a recent story idea or topic that the journalist has covered. Above all, make it easy for them to try and then write about your app.

19   SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE PRESS YOU GET.

When you succeed in driving coverage of your app, use your web presences/social media/etc. to publicize a link to the coverage. Journalists and bloggers live and die by the traffic their stories attract. Make it worth the person's while to have covered you.

20 REACH OUT TO APP REVIEW SITES FOR COVERAGE.

The more people that have been exposed to your app and message, the greater your potential audience. The effectiveness of this strategy will ultimately relate to the strength and innovativeness of your app. Many sites are focused primarily on games, though you can find quite a few that cover interesting mcommerce apps, especially those with unique buying experiences.

CHOOSING MEDIA PROGRAMS
AND PARTNERS

21 REMEMBER THAT ALL DOWNLOADS/ INSTALLS ARE NOT THE SAME.

If you think that most people who install an app do so because they actually wanted the app, you may have another think coming. A large portion of app installs are paid for on a CPI (cost per install) basis, meaning that media vendors are in-centivized to get as many people to download the offering as they can, regardless of the actual level of interest in the app itself. CPI tends to have a very poor correlation with average revenue per user, but strong media vendors can attract great users with that model. It just depends, and that's why hav-ing an attribution platform from the outset of your app launch is so important. By ensuring you have the attribution data from the outset, you can compare your vendors based upon their ability to generate revenue and long-term engagement.

In addition, you can work with your winning vendors to improve CPI campaign metrics based upon downstream customer ac-tivity.

22   UNLOCK THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING.

Social media consistently proves itself to be highly effective at driving quality customers for mcommerce businesses. Test a variety of paid advertising approaches across the leading social platforms to determine which work well for your brand.

23 OPTIMIZE TO THE METRICS THAT MATTER TO YOU MOST.

Getting downloads and installs is great, but what's most important to an e-commerce app is attracting paying customers. While individuals need to download your app in order to transact on it, download counts alone may not be the best way to compare the results delivered by different media vendors. Instead, focus on their ability to deliver people who transact, or who take actions like putting items into their carts that demonstrate a likelihood to transact in the future.

This is so important that we actually developed a feature in our platform called engagement indexing to speed this process.

24   BE AWARE OF INCENTIVIZED DOWNLOADS.

Incentivized downloads refer to situations where people are rewarded to download an app they may or may not have interest in. Often, the person is given some sort of virtual good, like gold in a game, in exchange for downloading. As you can imagine, the percentage of people who actually use an app that they downloaded as a result of an incentive tends to be rather low, though it varies considerably. Reputable vendors can deliver great potential customers this way, but this segment of the media business also contains some bottom feeders. Again, the key to using CPI vendors effectively is having data that enables you to understand the value of the installs they bring you.

In short, there are no hard and fast rules about CPI and user quality, only correlations.

25 INSIST ON THIRD-PARTY DOWNLOAD AND REENGAGEMENT REPORTING.

Independent third-party reporting for downloads and reen- gagements helps ensure a level playing field for all media vendors and apples-to-apples performance comparisons. Third-party reporting also reduces or eliminates the likelihood of double-counting of marketing results, thereby saving you time and money. Third-party reporting creates peace of mind among all parties.

There are at least two other benefits here as well.

1. Third parties usually have extensive sets of existing partner- ships with media vendors, so there won't be a need to install an APK every time you test a new vendor.

2. The best measurement companies also provide enhanced, en- terprise-grade security for your data.

DOWNLOAD, INSTALL AND BUYING
EXPERIENCE

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26 MAKE REGISTRATION EASY.

EASY

Most mcommerce apps have a registration process, either when you first install or when the user transacts. Mobile retail tends to lose more people during this process than PC-based retail because data entry is more difficult on a phone. Take proactive steps to make registration and transacting as easy as possible. Consider registration via Facebook, Twitter and/or LinkedIn. Then, be sure and offer to remember the person's details for subsequent transactions. That will reduce friction for future purchases.

27   CREATE AN EMAIL CRM PROGRAM FOR YOUR APP USERS.

Don't overlook any opportunity to communicate with people who download your app. An opt-in email program helps you deliver targeted communications to your install base–messages that can drive them to launch and transact.

28   REQUEST PERMISSION TO DELIVER PUSH NOTIFICATIONS.

Being able to deliver push communications to apps helps remind the user of why they downloaded the app in the first place, and keeps it more top of mind. It also offers the opportunity to deliver important product news to those who might not opt-in for emails.

Custom or personalized push notices can also be a powerful tool to drive individuals to take specific actions. A marketing automation platform can make a tremendous level of personalization possible here.

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LEVERAGING VIRAL DISTRIBUTION AND WORD OF MOUTH

29 BAKE VIRALITY INTO YOUR APP EXPERIENCE.

Your customer base can be an outstanding means through which to spread the word about your app on social. Baking in social media features in the experience can dramatically increase the potential audience of your app.

Other features like the ability to create and share wishlists and message other users can be incredibly helpful here.

30 BRICK AND MORTAR STORES: UNLOCK THE POWER OF YOUR REAL-WORLD TOUCH POINTS.

Brick and mortar stores have tremendous potential awareness and marketing advantages when it comes to publicizing apps. Consider adding references to your app on receipts, signage, roto circulars, catalogs, website, estore, bags and anywhere else that offers a little real estate for a "download the app" message. In some organizations it can be a challenge to unleash all of these touch points because of logistical issues. But remember how free email platforms Yahoo and Hotmail brought themselves to preeminence? By appending little "get an account" messages to all the emails emanating from their platforms. Using receipts and the like for driving your app business relies on the exact same principle.

Remember also that apps can enhance retail experiences, so the benefits can and should go both ways. By incorporating features like store maps, product scanning and an easy way to collect and use coupons, the retail experience can be enhanced.

31 CROSS-PROMOTE YOUR APP.

If your business already has an app, look at the user base as a natural set of people to attract with your new app. Cross-promotion is free and very powerful.

32 CREATE A REFERRAL PROGRAM.

Friends and family of mcommerce app users are more likely than the average person to appreciate the same app. By creating a referral program, you can leverage those networks while rewarding loyalists for evangelism. Just make sure you reward behavior related specifically to a core KPI. For instance, rewarding users for recruiting people who make a purchase versus a referral program that rewards an install is far more likely to drive meaningful revenue growth.

33 LEVERAGE RETARGETING TO CLOSE SALES AND DRIVE INCREMENTAL VISITS/PURCHASES.

As we discussed in the budgeting section, your job is far from over when a customer installs an app. To create long-term customer relationships, you need to constantly think of ways to engage app users and bring them back to your app. Retargeting advertising can be extremely effective here.

It's also great for incenting lapsed users or converting those with demonstrated product interests.

34 ANALYZE YOUR HIGH VALUE CUSTOMERS TO DEFINE AND DELIVER PRECISION PERSONALIZED MARKETING PROGRAMS.

We all know that more personal messages tend to drive better results than mass blasts. That's why it's so important for you to collect rich customer purchase information – so that you can deliver precise personalized messages at the perfect moment to drive maximum sales. To get this kind of customer insight, you will need to leverage both a robust mobile app measurement solution and a mobile-first data management platform to collect, manage, enhance, segment and export customer audiences and data. Get more information on these topics in the Apsalar website resources section: www.apsalar.com/resources

35 | USE APP CUSTOMER DATA AS THE FOUNDATION FOR CROSS-DEVICE MARKETING.

Apps represent the majority of connected consumer time, but they are by no means the only places people spend their time. By collecting in-app customer data and using it as the foundation for customer profiles in a mobile-first DMP, you can define and export audiences. Your audiences can also provide critical insights for lookalike targeting, which can help you acquire more high quality customers to your app.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim has 20+ years experience in over 80 different categories, including developing successful positioning and go-to-market plans for more than 40 adtech and martech companies. He joins Apsalar after several years as VP of Marketing for Conversant, where he led various efforts in the successful rebrand of the company from ValueClick, Inc. The rebrand and associated industry attention for the company contributed to the $2.3B sale of Conversant to Alliance Data in December, 2014. He is a prolific writer for digital trades on brand marketing, mobile, video, data, and customer profiling. Publications include iMedia Connection, Inside Radio, VentureBeat, ad:tech, ShellyPalmer.com, Jack Myers, and many consumer publications. He holds a B.A. in U.S. History from the University of Pennsylvania and an MBA in Marketing from the University of Chicago.

ABOUT APSALAR

Apsalar, the leader in mobile data management, helps direct marketing brands get better marketing effectiveness by providing a mobile data management platform that delivers a true understanding of customer behavior in apps and across other marketing channels. The Apsalar Mobile DMP enables brands to measure marketing effectiveness, enhance, manage, enrich and segment profiles to build audiences, and easily and safely connect to other marketing partners so brands can confidently share their data and audiences.

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MOBILE DMP

APSALAR ATTRIBUTION

Collect and measure in-app consumer behavior and marketing performance. Measure every in-app action relevent to your buinesss

APSALAR AUDIENCES

Unite your first party data from all sources, enrich it with third party data, and build high performance marketing audiences

APSALAR DATASYNC

Easily and safely share customer audiences and data with your digital marketing platforms, including analytics, marketing automation, media companies and legacy DMPs