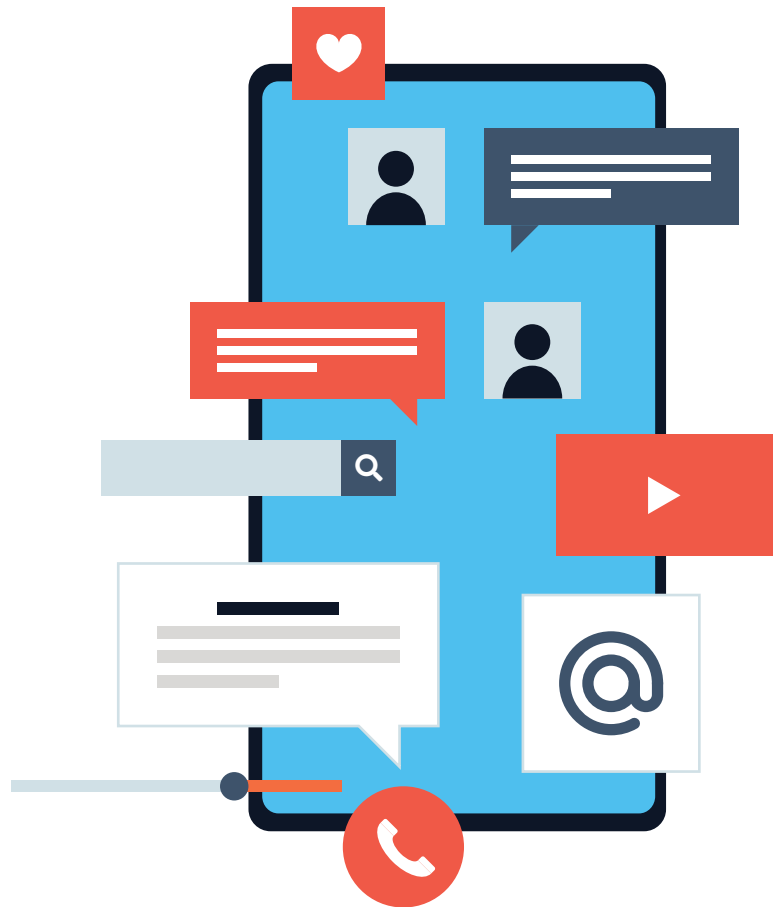




3 Steps To A Successful Association App

- 1 Understand**
The Power Of Mobile Apps
- 2 Identify**
Your Members' Needs
- 3 Create**
A Targeted App Strategy



We often hear the question,
“Should my association build an app?”

Our answer: Yes.

Your association should provide an app that delivers direct member value and, secondarily, acts as an association communication tool.

Building meaningful features for your members first and foremost will result in an app that deepens your member relationships and increases the value you provide to them.

Within this whitepaper, we're going to cover the three steps you should follow to build a successful, member focused app.

1. Understand The Power Of Mobile Apps
2. Identify Your Members' Needs
3. Create A Targeted App Strategy

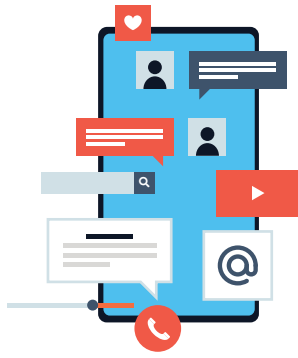
#1

Understand the Power of Mobile Apps

Mobile apps are making a comeback for good reason.

When an organization can connect with consumers through their smartphone, it opens new channels of communication that can fundamentally alter brand relationships and alignment.

Apps have exponential possibilities, and differ significantly from mobile websites. Let's start with why apps are a game changer for your member engagement strategies.



Native Apps > Mobile Websites

When an app is on someone's device,
it's part of their world.

The fight for space on devices is hot right now, because once your icon is established on a user's phone, the likelihood of the consumer engagement increases.

Fast App Facts

- Apps increase the visibility of your association just by being on a user's device
- Apps enable faster access to your association by removing that pesky browser search and login process
- Apps allow smarter, personalized interactions through data access, location awareness and more
- Apps work online or offline
- Apps are designed with the user in mind, making them easier to use

Simply put, mobile apps are better than mobile websites due to the speed of access and quality of the interaction you can have with your members.

Mobile App Usage and Market Growth

Recent studies around mobile app usage and the app market's growth indicate continued expansion as consumer's daily interaction with their mobile devices increases.

\$189

Billion in revenue expected
by 2020 from apps

*The average
smartphone
owner uses
30 apps
each month*

90%

Of time on phone is
spent in apps

49%

Of people open an app
11+ times/day. 21% of
millennials open apps
50+ times/day

57%

of all digital media
usage comes from
mobile apps

Source: [BuildFire](#)



Apps Enable Innovation

Apps spur new innovative engagement models that simply aren't possible through non-phone engagements.

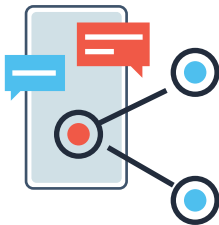
The best-in-class apps reimagine an existing interaction and use the device's capabilities to increase its speed, convenience and benefit.

The most well-known example of apps revolutionizing a relationship with members is found in banking. Once you downloaded a mobile banking app and deposited a check through the image capture, the need for a physical branch dropped dramatically. The app also created an entirely new channel of communication, upsell, and engagement.



Another Example? AARP's app has won the love of its members through two innovative features:

- A member benefits card is now instantly accessible in a digital format within the app. Members don't need to keep tabs on a physical card—it's ready at a moment's notice.
- For members who love to generate reward points by exercising, the app connects to their smart watch and automatically adds points for them! No more logging activity, it's instant gratification for members.



Apps Enable Community

Beyond innovation, native apps foster connection *and* community.

People use technology to increase connections with their chosen communities, whether that be their friends, colleagues, industry peers, or those with common interests. Text messaging, social media apps, Slack and other communications apps leverage the instant accessibility, responsiveness and notifications that mobile apps provide.

Your association app can leverage these same innate user behaviors to create a community for your members. Gone are the days of static forums—members today crave the ability to instantly connect, discuss and share strengths and challenges with those who share their common interests.

So, how can associations support and expand their member's communities through a mobile app?

Removing the Sense of Isolation

Associations can provide support to people in isolated industries or other situations where resources and a like-minded community are scarce. For these members, a mobile app can offer a lifeline, providing the connection they need to be inspired and advance themselves.

Enabling simple reactions to content, creating opportunities for member to member communications and asking for group action, can all increase the feeling of being part of a community with a common goal and purpose.



Apps Enable Re-engagement

Grabbing Attention With Notifications

Push notifications can increase the frequency of member engagement—and only an app has that functionality. From the very beginning of our app design process, we help our clients focus on how to leverage push notifications. With the right strategy, push notifications are instrumental to making your app stick.

Once your app is on a device, you need to defend that space and prevent deletion by showing ongoing value. Push notifications enable your app to get the attention it needs to stay relevant to the member.

Alright, so you believe that mobile apps are powerful tools that promote engagement and drive loyalty. So what's right for your association? It all starts with your members.

#2

Identify Your Members' Needs

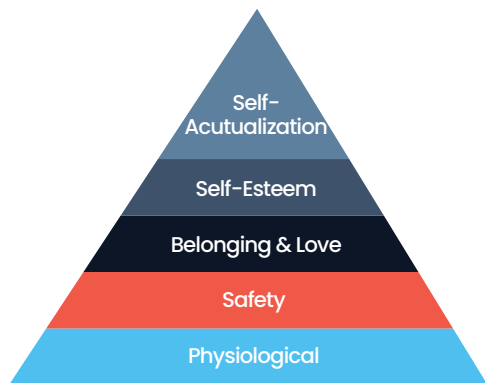
There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer for what makes an app valuable.

It's all about what's going to fulfill a need for your members.

That said, in an app, value is always more than just updating profile information, paying dues, or receiving standard content from the association. These elements should be available on your app—**but not the reason for it.**

Members need a compelling reason to use your app in an ongoing and consistent way.

Consider Maslov's Hierarchy of Needs



One model Accella uses to architect a compelling app is to apply the concept of a Hierarchy of Needs to association members.

Maslov's hierarchy of needs is a five-stage model that can be divided into two categories: deficiency needs and growth needs. The bottom four levels are often referred to as deficiency needs (D-needs), and the top level is known as growth or being needs (B-needs).¹

In order to build your members' hierarchy of needs, ask the following questions:

- What deficiencies do we feel our members face in relation to our association's purpose or vision?
- What benefits are currently fulfilling a deficiency?
- What is the definition of "growth" for our members? What benefits could we provide to meet those growth needs?

1. Source: Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

It's a given that your apps meet your members D-needs, such as payment information and profiles, but it's fulfilling those B-needs that is your differentiator.

Use Empathy Mapping

Put yourself in your members' shoes through an empathy mapping exercise.

Empathy mapping challenges you to look at situations your members face and dive deep to uncover their driving emotions and desires. Based on your member's hierarchy of needs, select a few critical needs and fill out the empathy map below.

Empathy Map Canvas

The Empathy Map Canvas is a diagram shaped like a large envelope, with a central face. The face is divided into sections for gathering user insights. The sections are numbered 1 through 7, with 1 and 2 at the top, 3, 4, and 5 on the right, 6 on the left, and 7 in the center of the face.

1 WHO are we empathizing with?
Who is the person we want to understand?
What is the situation they are in?
What is their role in the situation?

2 What do they need to DO?
What do they need to do differently?
What job(s) do they want or need to get done?
What decision(s) do they need to make?
How will we know they were successful?

3 What do they SEE?
What do they see in the marketplace?
What do they see in their immediate environment?
What do they see others saying and doing?
What are they watching and reading?

4 What do they SAY?
What have we heard them say?
What can we imagine them saying?

5 What do they DO?
What do they do today?
What behavior have we observed?
What can we imagine them doing?

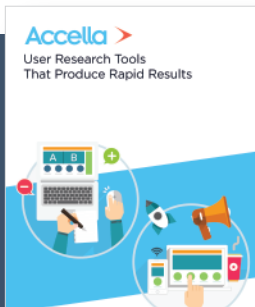
6 What do they HEAR?
What are they hearing other say?
What are they hearing from friends?
What are they hearing from colleagues?
What are they hearing second-hand?

7 What do they THINK and FEEL?
PAINS
What are their fears, frustration, and anxieties?
GAINS
What are their wants, needs, hopes and dreams?
What other thoughts and feelings might motivate their behavior?

Use Data to Uncover What's Valuable

It's great to build your members' hierarchy of needs through an internal meeting, but sometimes you need to go right to the source. It's extremely helpful to gather information directly from your members to zero in on what's valuable. You might consider ...

- User research, such as conducting member and non-member interviews, to provide qualitative insights that contribute to your empathy map.
- Social listening and conversation scanning both in your channels and anonymous channels (such as Reddit) to unveil how your members communicate about their needs
- Reviewing your association's website data and member surveys - what existing high-engagement areas can you lean into and innovate?



Want the ins and outs of conducting effective user research?

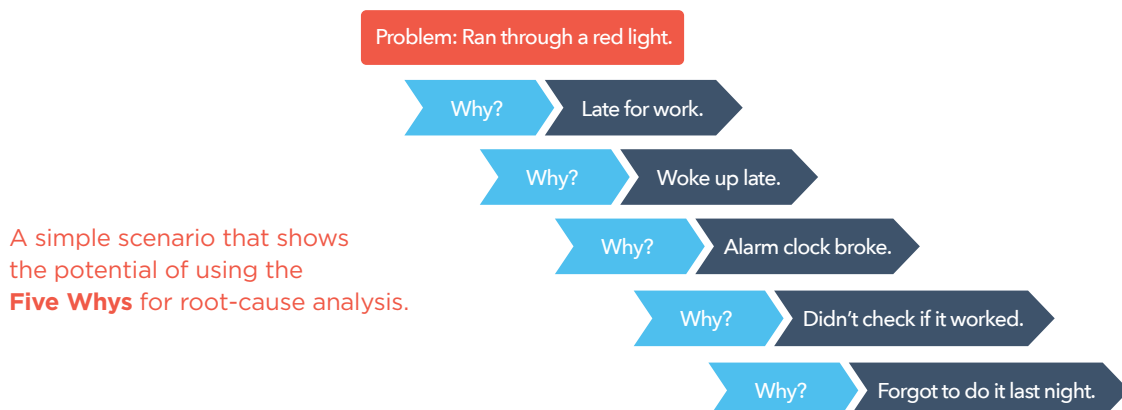
Our white paper, *User Research Tools That Produce Rapid Results*, highlights the tools you should use and how to start the process. [Download Now](#)

Uncover the Root Cause

You've gathered the data and uncovered your member's needs. The last step is to ensure you get the ultimate root cause. A simple exercise can help uncover it.

The "Five Whys" Exercise

It's just as it sounds: A discussion of an opportunity or challenge that follows one train of thought to gain a deeper understanding by asking "Why?" five times to get to the root.



User Experience Benefits

For UX practices, **The Five Whys** is a fantastic method to use to get to the core of a person's beliefs and motivations. Uncovering these intrinsic motivators is key to a successful user experience design. The language, flow, and features of an app must all fundamentally align with a member's needs. Providing this information to your app developer will ensure the app is designed with your specific members in mind.

Insights to Strategy

Using the insights uncovered through the exercises above, you're ready to finalize your mobile app strategy.

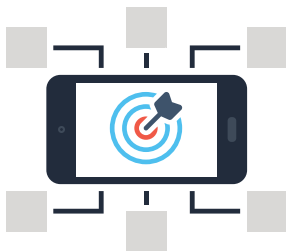
#3

Create A Targeted App Strategy

Targeted strategies focus on ensuring achievement of the most critical member objective over partially achieving many.

Once you understand what your members truly want and how you can fulfil a deep need that will align them closer to your organization, it's time to create your strategy.

We focus on three steps:



DEFINE THE PURPOSE

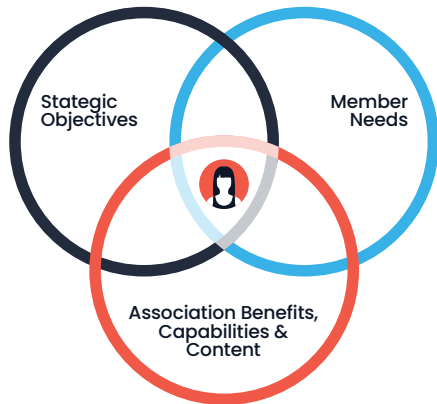


FIND THE SPARK



MAKE IT STICK

Step 1: Define The Purpose



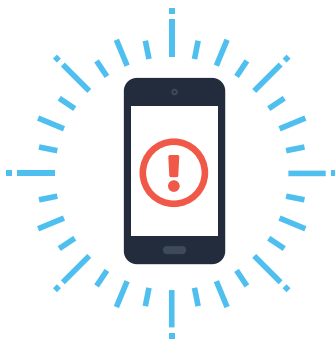
Your goal is to find the sweet spot.

This is where your association's strategic objectives, your members' needs and your services overlap.

- Do you want to bring in new members?
- Do you want to offer services that support your current members?
- Do you want to add value to your industry?

Your answer might be "all of the above" – and that works over the lifetime of the app too! The great thing about apps is that they can support a variety of objectives. But your app has to be tightly aligned to your highest and most-valued strategic goals in order to move the needle for your business.

Step 2: Find the Spark



Successful apps offer a compelling initial reason for download – what we refer to as the “spark.”

The very first app released to the market, sometimes known as the Minimal Viable Product (MVP), must be designed with a feature that sparks members instant interest.

Put your advertising hat on and write an ad.

Consider this traditional advertising exercise: What consumer need are you trying to meet? What's the advertising headline that will catch your member's attention?

Not every feature translates into an impactful headline for promoting your app. A headline writing exercise will help you hone the headline that will matter to your audience and narrow down which feature is critical for that initial release.

From Spark to a Sparkler

Over time, you'll need to promote the app on a monthly or, at a minimum, quarterly basis. This requires having a whole sparkler full of incentivizing features! Every major app enhancement should provide a different "spark" that compels new and existing members to download the app.



Step 3: Make it Stick

The reason you download an app often differs from the reason you stay engaged.

As you build your app strategy, consider how to build in features that:

- Create time-based reasons to return – Daily check-ins, events, and other date-based interactions can compel re-engagement.
- Create a reason to send push notifications – Design the app with push notifications at the forefront of your strategy.
- Create ways to interact within the app – These should be repeated over time, instead of a one-time action.

Similar to the spark, at least one sticky feature should be included in the app at launch to ensure your app stays on users' phones and continues to drive engagement.

The more engagement you receive, the more value your member will perceive from your association.

The Value of an App for Your Association

Apps can be extremely effective for your association – when designed and deployed with your members' true needs in mind.

Use these three steps to ensure your app strategy is effective and drives member engagement and loyalty.

If you're considering an app for your association but don't know where to start, we can help. Let's chat. Email us at shoptalk@acella.net to get started.