WHY MOBILE MATTERS

TO YOUR CHAMBER

Boost Your Mobile Engagement
with Apps, Push Notifications, Responsive Websites, and more!

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Executive Summary

Americans today are spending more time viewing their mobile screens – usually on a smartphone or tablet – than they are watching a television screen.

This cultural shift toward mobile technology continues to gain momentum. If the goal of your chamber is to reach out to, inform and retain members, then it's critical to develop a mobile engagement strategy.

The time is now.

Mobile apps provide a valuable experience for both your members and staff and can be as effective and accessible as a mobile website. A responsive website, integrated with mobile apps, can convert members from passive or casual observers into advocates for your chamber.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing a mobile app. Your staff and members have separate needs and require separate apps created with those needs in mind.

Why Mobile Matters

Mobile technology has transformed the way we view the role of mobile devices in our daily lives, changes that may have seemed improbable even a decade ago.

Smartphones and tablets help us keep track of our appointments, engage in our social networking sites and map our routes so we don't get lost. They also serve as a digital lifeline that connects us to everyone and everything that matters most to us.

If your chamber hasn't yet gone mobile, now is the time to take the plunge.

Why Mobile Should Matter to Your Chamber

Your members are already mobile.

Ninety percent of American adults own a cell phone; of those, 58 percent own a smartphone. Factor in the number of American adults who own an e-reader (32 percent) or a tablet (42 percent)
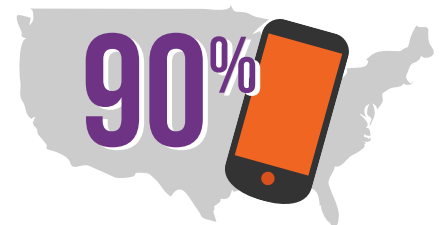
90%

and you'll realize that mobile device ownership is transforming the way we connect to the world. (Pew Research Internet Project, January 2014)

Mobile apps have become the driving force behind the popularity of mobile devices. A mobile app is a downloadable computer program that primarily runs on mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets, but often is used on laptops, computers and gaming systems, too.

As consumers, we love our apps. In 2014, mobile app downloads were expected to reach nearly 180 billion and have been projected to reach 268 billion downloads by 2017, according to Forbes magazine (Oct. 2014). Game apps (20 percent) were the most popular category of apps downloaded from Apple's App Store in 2014.

Mobile apps allow your members to easily stay informed about special events or offers, receive important chamber updates and provide a sense of community with other members. Connectivity and content are critical to attracting and retaining members, and apps allow them to become more engaged with your organization.

Benefits of Mobile Apps

Business owners and their customers love mobile apps.

For businesses, apps:
- Build customer loyalty and relationships
- Increase your visibility – people can easily "find" you
- Reinforce your brand
- Increase sales
- Enhance your social media strategies

For customers, apps:
- Provide easy access to your services and products
- Supply special event information, product launches, and sales events
- Give directions and contact information to your store for customers on the go
- Allow for fast and easy online appointment scheduling
- Offer push notifications for appointment reminders, special events and more

Who Uses Mobile Apps?

WHERE'S THE "MAKE COFFEE" APP?

Everyone.

We're no longer simply browsing websites with our mobile devices. Instead, we're spending most of our time using mobile apps. In 2013, Americans spent 80 percent of the time they were on mobile devices using mobile apps. Mobile app usage jumped to 86 percent in 2014, while our time spent on the web while on a mobile device dropped to 14 percent (Statistica.com).

During the second quarter of 2012, 102 million Facebook users accessed the popular social networking site exclusively through their mobile devices. Two years later that number had grown to 399 million mobile-only Facebook users (Forbes, Oct. 2014).

As consumers, we're spending more time on our apps than ever before. Smartphone users between the ages of 24-44 use the most apps per month (29 apps on average), but 18-24-year-olds spend the most time on their apps (37 hours, six minutes per month). People of all ages are using mobile apps. Mobile app users 55 and older spent more than 21 hours on average accessing 22 different apps per month. (Nielsen, July 2014).

Why Are Apps Better Than Mobile Websites?

Apps make looking up information so much faster. It takes only seconds to launch a mobile app on your smartphone or tablet, but it often takes longer to load a website on a mobile device, especially if you happen to be located in an area with bad reception.

- Mobile apps allow businesses to directly contact customers with push notifications, while mobile websites do not.
- Mobile apps remain visible and easily accessible on your smartphone's home screen, while mobile websites would need to be bookmarked to make them more accessible.
- Mobile apps can function offline, while mobile websites do not.

Most large chain stores began offering mobile apps a few years ago. Since then, smaller businesses and many industries have followed, along with a host of organizations, chambers and chambers. The number continues to grow rapidly each year.

"A mobile app is like having an easy button, if you will," explained Derek Owen, sales consultant at MicroNet, Inc. "People want to view things on their phones."

It's important to note that a website must still remain an integral part of your entire marketing strategy. "You never know where a customer is coming from. In just three clicks, if they can't find what they're looking for, then they are done," said Owen.

Responsive Websites vs. Mobile Websites

Both responsive and mobile websites will optimize your website for navigation on various digital platforms. However, there are key differences between a responsive web design and mobile website.

Responsive websites:

- Offer a flexible web page design, allowing the website to adjust automatically to a mobile device's screen size and orientation.
- Allow you to keep your domain. Your website address remains the same, providing you with better search engine optimization results.
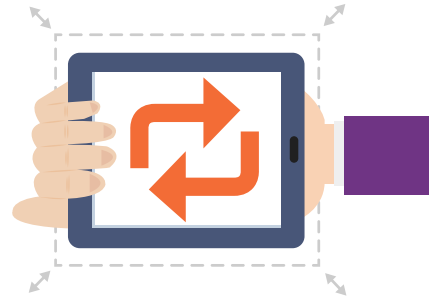
Mobile websites:

- Are a scaled down version of your existing website featuring smaller, optimized pages for viewing on mobile devices.
- Require a separate mobile site with a different domain name. Most companies opt to use a similar website, adding an "m" before the domain.

More chambers are abandoning their mobile websites and choosing responsive websites, rather than maintaining two websites. A mobile website can require additional maintenance and expenses in the future in order to remain current with the next generation of mobile devices and browsers.

It is critical that your existing website is mobile-friendly, whether it be a mobile or responsive site. If mobile users find your site difficult to navigate, they will leave and not return.

Mobile Must-Haves for Your Staff

As consumers ditch desktop computers and laptops for smartphones and tablets, chambers are also reevaluating how to make a mobile transition.

Native Mobile Apps

A native app runs a computer program on your mobile device, providing you with an easy-to-navigate user interface and features that were designed into the software.

A native mobile app companion to a web-based database allows your staff to perform meaningful and substantive work on-the-fly. Why carry around a bulky laptop when you have the world at your fingertips on your smartphone and tablet? Most staff members prefer the ease of using their smartphones and can easily download the app to access your network.

There are two primary app stores, the Apple App Store (iOS for iPhones and iPads) and Google's storefront for the Android market.

Once an app is natively downloaded, it does not always require a wireless internet connection because it operates via your mobile data service. An app also reduces the possibility of buffering video and audio problems or slow connections that can disrupt the mobile experience.

An effective native mobile app should allow your staff to perform complex administrative tasks from their own devices, including:

- Quickly search for members, prospective members and other key players important to the chamber in the database utilizing a color-coded directory listing
- Allow staff to view member profiles, web stats and event activity
- View and edit special events
- Add registrants to an attendee list, checking-in guests on-site and viewing their payment status
- Create or view a task list, so staff members understand their roles at an event or activity
- Create and send email to members or event attendees

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- Develop detailed notes and follow-up reminders
- Provide real-time information, whether staff members are in or out of the office

Web-Based Member Management Systems

When shopping for a member management system for your chamber, consider how your staff, your members, and your community members will benefit from native mobile apps. Be aware that the same app typically can't be configured for both staff and members; you need mobile apps that are tailored to meet each of their unique needs.

If a mobile app has limited capabilities, is outdated or doesn't fit the needs of your staff, they simply won't use it. If staff members aren't using your mobile app, it makes it more difficult for your members and the community to buy-in to the benefits of a mobile app, too.

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Mobile Must-Haves for Your Members

Offering a mobile app to your members increases the value of your membership and can have a huge impact on retaining and engaging your members, especially those who already are active mobile users.

While people of all ages use mobile apps, a mobile member app will often engage and attract younger members. However, even older members appreciate the ease of using a mobile app on their smartphones or tablets.

The benefits of a mobile app for your members:

- Mobile apps help members feel more connected to the news and information about their chamber. As a result, it can lead to a more active member and greater membership retention.
- Members feel they have a role within the organization by participating in an online community, accessible through mobile devices.
- Offering a mobile app positions your chamber as a technology leader for your members and the community.

A mobile app designed for your members should be easy-to-use and readily available on major platforms, and it should feel intuitive when members are using it.

Other must-have features of a mobile member app include:
- Push notifications from your chamber to members
- The ability for members to update their own profiles and contact information
- Access to your Member Information Center
- Opportunity to connect with other members
- Ability to register, pay and check-in for events and other activities
- Easy access to post and view jobs, hot deals, and member-to-member specials
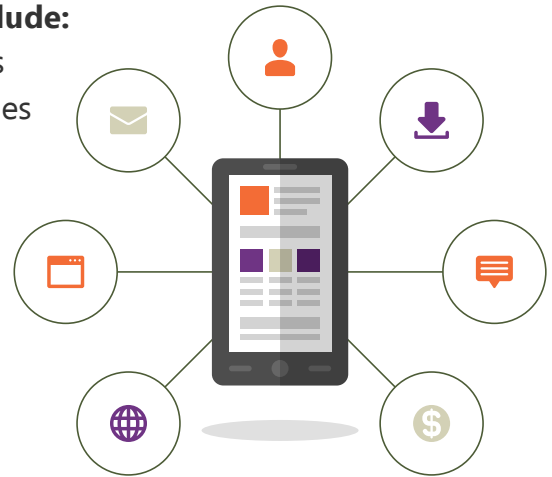
Push Notifications vs. Text Messaging

Push notifications and text messaging are similar mobile messaging options, but there are differences in how they are used to reach your members or community.

Push notifications are short messages sent by your mobile apps that alert mobile users of any updates, offers or reminders. These can be sent even if the person isn't actively using the app, but the app needs to be downloaded in order to receive them.

Text messages are also short messages, but they are sent from one smartphone to another smartphone using the mobile user's phone number.

Text messaging can offer a wider membership reach than push notifications. A mobile app requires that the mobile user download your app, then accept the invitation to receive push notifications. Those members who don't own a smartphone or haven't downloaded your app won't see your messages.

Text messages allow anyone with a mobile phone to receive your message, regardless of the type of phone or cell service they might have. They don't have to opt-in or download anything; they simply let your chamber know they would like to receive promotional or informational texts. Mobile messaging can build engagement and interest in your chamber, but it's important the

messages are relevant. Less is more. If you send out too many messages too often, you run the risk of pestering people who then unsubscribe to your messages or uninstall your app. One or two text messages per week are often plenty, experts say. Don't overdo it.

The best member mobile apps will allow your staff to send push notifications to certain members who opt-in to these notifications, whether to receive hot deals or new member updates.

Mobile-Friendly Email

Nearly two-thirds of all email (65 percent) are opened on a mobile device (US Consumer Device Preference Report Q4 2013, Movable Ink). Usually, these messages don't garner more than a few seconds of attention, although the report found that smartphone users tended to spend 15 seconds or more on each message.

Mobile-friendly email notifications should feature:

- An increased font size. Recommended body copy is 14 px with 22 px headlines.
- Single column content. Keep it short and sweet. One line of email text equals three lines on a mobile phone.
- Larger (44x44px) easy-to-tap icons instead of text links.
- A clear call to action.
- High contrast in text color.

Remember, all members are not alike. We all have different preferences on how to receive information and other forms of communication from your organization. Some may prefer an email notification, while others prefer a text or a push notification. The right Member Management System will allow you to offer these communication options to your members.

Mobile Must-Haves for Your Community

Your mobile app options should include an app that connects your chamber to your community and your members. A branded mobile community app should be free, customized and available by easily searching the app stores.

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A community app allows people living in or visiting your community to:

- Search your member business directory
- View member profiles and contact information
- View and register for events
- Share their activity within the app on social networking apps like Facebook and Twitter

A community app is an easy way to:

- Attract new members
- Generate non-dues revenues
- Promote member businesses, special events and hot deals
- Advertise your organization's events

When your organization is viewed as a community resource, it adds value to your membership.

What's the Next Step?

Start by getting your staff on board.

Encourage your staff to use mobile tools to maximize efficiencies when they are both in and out of the office. They should be comfortable using mobile technology, including your staff app, so they can better serve your members when you launch your mobile tools for members.

About ChamberMaster

ChamberMaster Member Management Software is powerful, easy-to-use, and designed to manage all of the day-to-day operations of member-based organizations. Thousands of people trust ChamberMaster to manage their most important information, succeed with non-dues revenue generation and help promote and grow the communities they serve. See for yourself how the feature-rich ChamberMaster member management system can benefit your chamber.

Contact us today for a personalized product demo »

Download a free copy of our Member Management Software Buyer's Guide »

It's got **everything** you need to make an informed decision, including what criteria to look for and all the questions you need to ask.
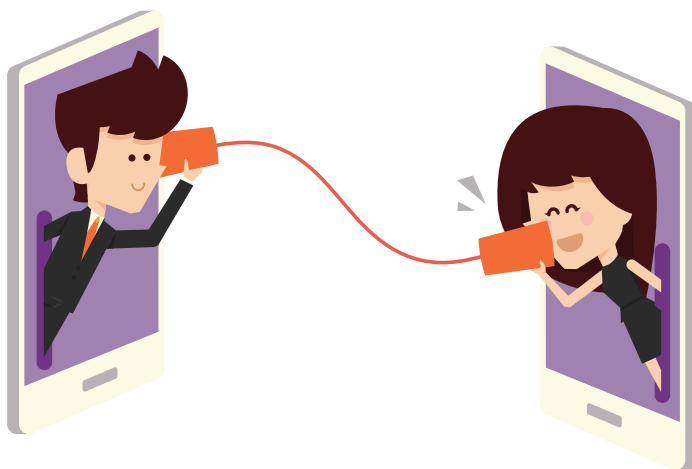
Communicate with your members.
Start promoting your mobile apps so members will download and use them. Demonstrate the value of mobile communications, like text messages and push notifications.

Seek feedback from staff and members.
Are the mobile tools working well or are there improvements or updates that should be made?

By creating a mobile strategy that includes mobile-friendly emails, apps and a responsive website, your members and community will potentially become more engaged and active within your chamber, strengthening your role as a valued resource.

To see the entire set of powerful mobile apps from ChamberMaster, including apps for your staff, members and community, **click here**.

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