Strategy worksheet: Your mobile app plan

The American Press Institute developed this worksheet as a guide to getting you started with conceiving and creating niche mobile products that are right for your audience. Before starting, be sure you've read the accompanying Strategy Study: The best strategies for creating specialized mobile apps (http://bit.ly/nicheapps).

Consider sitting down with a few creative collaborators from across your organization to tackle these questions together.

1) What are your community's passions?
Major annual events, hobbies/activities, popular sports teams, major civic problems, major industries, etc. -- What do people show an unusually high interest in?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2) What are your employees' passions and strengths?
Ask around your newsroom, your IT department and elsewhere: Who is passionate and knowledgeable about something specific? Maybe it's unrelated to their formal news beat or day job.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3) Which passions might fit a mobile context?
Do any of these passion areas contain needs that could be solved with on-the-go information or interactive information tools? Think location-based needs, time-sensitive needs, and convenience or personalization-based needs.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4) Which passions might have revenue potential?
Do any of these passion areas contain needs that users might pay to have solved? Or do any connect with audiences and activities that sponsors might also be interested in?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5) Pick the best passions
Looking at all your responses to 1-4, which passion areas seem to have the best combination of community interest, staff expertise, mobile needs and revenue potential? These are the ones ripe for niche app experiments right now.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6) Pick some shepherds
You need a team to oversee this: Who can oversee the technology or vendor aspects of development? Who can lend marketing insight and help design some user-testing sessions? Who will lead a smart, aggressive push for the best monetization strategy? Formalize a group and assign responsibilities, timelines and processes.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7) Design your MVP - minimum viable product
Don't try to swing for the fences all at once. The best technology products start simple and iterate based on feedback. Decide what's the cheapest, simplest way to start this product -- it has to be advanced enough to show clear value to users, but try to do something simple and quick that doesn't have to reinvent existing technology. Think about where your efforts need to focus (quality content, targeting user needs) and where you can outsource (plug-and-play vendors, freemium vendors).

8) Identify metrics for success
How will you know if this new product is achieving success? When and what will you measure? How will you use that to guide revisions or decide to pull the plug later? What will you learn that may inform future experiments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We would appreciate hearing about how you use this process and what comes as a result. If you try this, please send us a note at hello@pressinstitute.org to share your experience.

AMERICAN PRESS
institute