

There's an App for that!

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No, really, there's an app for that!

What's an app? In this case, app is short for application, a computer program. This computer program is downloaded onto smart phones, tablets, and other handy digital devices. It is represented by an icon, or in layman's terms an image that represents the app (eg - a slice of pizza for a restaurant, a flower for the floral shop, etc...). When you tap the icon, it opens a new browser window taking you to the specific website of the app you clicked on (eg - you tap on the icon that looks like a slice of pizza, it opens to the restaurants' website, and/ or perhaps their menu, hours, or contact information).



As a small business owner, you might wonder **why should I invest in an app?** For your benefit! To bring in more customers! The great thing about having an app is that you can do what you want with it. If you own the restaurant, and have the app with the pizza icon, you point the customer in the direction you want them to go. You're in-tune with generation y, and increase profit from the pizzas your restaurant makes for pick-up. The first thing your customers see when they click on your app is a place for them to enter ordering options (crust, toppings, etc...) followed by what time they want to pick up their pizza. Once they enter all the necessary information, it can be sent to your employees who can start working on the order, streamlining the process even further. It is that simple for many businesses already!



Another neat concept with apps is their ability to function with GPS (or built-in Global Positioning Systems). When the customer comes in to pick-up their pizza, they can click on the app and 'check-in'. Through this action, you can allow your customers to earn rewards, such as discounts, coupons, and more. What does this do for you? This keeps them coming back, building loyalty. You might set up the reward to where they have to 'check in' 5 times, and then receive a free appetizer. Customers not only see this as free food, they see it as a challenge, and therefore will increase the number of times they frequent your business because they want to receive their "earned" reward.



What are customers looking for when they click on your app? Ease of use! The easier your app is to use, the more likely they are to use it. If the website that opens has twenty different hyperlinks within the screen, they are not likely to use it. Why not? They will try clicking on one link, and end up on a different one and get irritated with the app and stop using it. You want the design to be simple and sleek, give them what they want by making it easy to use and navigate.

Think about your own habits and how you compare to your customer. What is going to keep customers coming back? What do you want the customer to do? How frequently do you want them to do this? Answering these questions will help you determine what is appropriate in an app designed for your business.



How to find an app that works for you and your business? Well, if you want to have your own app developed, be ready to open up the old pocketbook and pay some extraordinary expenses let alone dealing with a lot of headaches trying to determine what you want and need in an app. There are several ways of going about this though. You might speak to neighboring business owners, search online, or just take a gander at recently posted apps. One I located recently for example is called “Let’s Buy Local”, or LBL for short. Using it, I’ve been able to reserve some sweet deals while also earning free coffees from the local coffee shop. I’m also about to reserve a hot deal at a local restaurant, which will be perfect for a night out on the town!

So, whatever your business might be, there's an app for that!
