Mobile app development companies report:
Social mobile apps

Article at AppFutura Blog, April 2016

Mobile app development companies report: Social mobile apps

We can find hundreds of social apps in the Google Play Store or Apple's App Store. Social networking has been key for the success of mobile app development companies and the spread of smartphones worldwide. So we've wanted to investigate more about social mobile apps: how are they made? what are their main features? who uses them?

We've interviewed some of our mobile app development companies in our mobile app development directory to know more about the mobile app and the development process behind a social mobile app. Sibers, Hidden Brains, Tango Agency and 648 group have given us their vision as developers about social apps.

There are some social mobile apps that everyone knows: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Skype, Telegram… We see they are focused on images and social life. But technology evolves and mobile app development companies get hired constantly to develop new social apps. Companies and clients have seen a great opportunity in developing a social app to prepare a space where their users can share thoughts, opinions, pictures, videos… Some of these new social mobile apps that can become a success this 2016 are: Peach, Wanelo, Yik Yak or Hyper.

The number of worldwide users of social networking sites is expected to touch 2.5 billion by 2018, that's about a third of the population on Earth. This brings us to think of which social apps are the most used? Mobile app development companies know a lot about this because they are the ones developing social apps for their clients. Also, everyone we know is using a social app daily (if not constantly to keep in touch with the family, friends, meet people or simply looking for ideas).

Sibers, a mobile app development company in Russia:

> The desire to keep in touch with old friends is best-served by messengers, i.e. WhatsApp, which is the best in its class. The second desire: making new friends, is driven by two things: finding similar interests, and seeing a self-presentation of the other person/community/institution through visual content — images and videos. Instagram, with its tags, is great for interest matching, and its filter collection is great for increasing interaction and attraction amongst users. And of course Facebook is another top social app.
>
> The #2 reason why people use social apps is the wish to not just communicate virtually, but to turn virtual-world communication into reality. So we're talking about platforms where people can search for others who share the same desire, and make plans with them — go on a date, play tennis, or have lunch. For this particular market, the most interesting apps in our opinion are two that have only recently appeared but are already gaining significant popularity: Hinge (for dating), and Down to Launch (for hanging out with friends who are free at the same time you are).

As it has been for several years now, Twitter and Facebook continue to stand apart from other social apps in that they serve as a kind of "user-generated mass media", which naturally is born of our information-oriented society.

We must also mention the growing popularity of live video-streaming in social media. Only a year ago this was the domain of a small minority who shared similar interests — for example, Twitch for e-sports streams. Today we see platforms like Periscope and Facebook Live bringing live video-streaming to a wide audience, and getting an overwhelmingly positive response. There's little doubt that this platform will continue flourishing.

One more important criteria for a successful social app is its availability on several platforms and its ability to achieve complete user-experience synchronization over multiple devices. We hope this approach continues improving.

— Every mobile app is different because of the needs of the user, the industry or the demographics. So, what makes social mobile apps different from any other mobile app? Our mobile app development companies point out differences like affordability, UX design and speed. Think about all the applications you use during a day, how are they different?

From elementary school students to their grandmothers — that's the age range of social mobile app users. Equally diverse is the user's social background, especially since today's smart devices are so affordable. And unlike domain-specific apps, i.e. health or finance, a user exploits social apps several times a day, every day. Actually, it's more like a dozen times.

For all of these reasons, social apps must be extremely obvious and fast. "Obvious" meaning that "new event" notifications are delivered in a friendly, convenient manner, and a straightforward UI that leaves no room for doubt as to how the user should complete a task. "Fast" as in easily accessible, time-saving interactions resulting from a well thought-out architecture and highly optimized code.

As for the social apps development process itself, the most important thing is to design the architecture so that it can withstand high loads (thousands or even millions of simultaneous queries from hundreds of thousands of users) and store/process large data amounts (not only text data, but also photo and video content). A social app's user experience design also requires a huge amount of work. Since these apps are used for fun and not for completion of a particular task (i.e. a banking app), only a very engaging social app has a chance to become popular with users.

— And what about the expectations of the users? Mobile app development companies must have in mind what users are looking for when they purchase or download

a social mobile app. It is very important that clients and companies realize which are the needs of the future users of that mobile app in order to clarify the features of the app.

> It's absolutely vital that every social app has a clean, crisp user interface; that it's secure and ensures encryption of private information; that it offers new-event visibility and the ability to customize new-event notifications; and that it provides full accessibility to data, even in offline mode. This data could be anything — an important address, a phone number, meeting coordinates sent to the user, or a tennis lesson he wants to watch while traveling somewhere that lacks WiFi.

— There are some subcategories when we talk about social apps: meetings, sharing knowledge, social networks… Which are they?

> Based on our experience, sports, dating, and knowledge-sharing are the three main trends for social apps. Sports apps like Cody are popular for a few reasons: they provide access to world-class coaches, they offer enriching video lessons, and they create a community which supports the user and encourages him to succeed.
>
> Dating apps reflect the societal tendency to meet new people virtually first and then bring the friendship into the real world.
>
> User-generated content and knowledge-sharing are so reflexive and natural now that we don't even question its value and advantages.
>
> The top Sibers-developed apps in each category are: ProAngler for passionate fishing fans; Double for dating; and Livday, a user-generated guide to all things San Francisco.
>
> Cody is a truly inspiring, richly-featured social sports and fitness application. Tinder is believed to be the best social dating app, and both Swarm and Foursquare bring unique, helpful content about the user's location direct to his phone.

— Messaging apps are thriving and big social networks are gobbling up these apps to increase their demographics (for example, Facebook buying WhatsApp). At this point, our mobile app developers consider that messaging apps are part of social apps.

> What are messaging apps if not social apps? After all, the ability to "message" is what makes an app social — providing the opportunity to reach out and communicate with other people, publicly or privately. Every popular social app has messaging functionality in some form — though of course, messaging-specific applications have very defined characteristics architecture and UI.
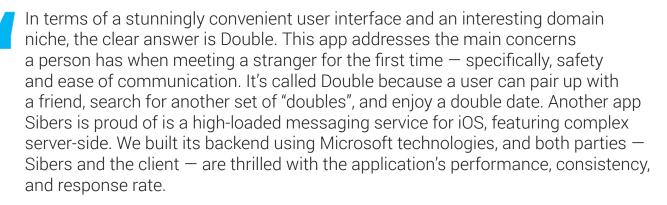
Sibers

The merging of social networks and messaging apps is a natural evolution. We spend so much time online using all kinds of social networks that switching between them gets annoying. It's way too time-consuming to find and follow a new friend on Facebook, and then find/follow him on Instagram, and then text him on WhatsApp, and so on. We want everything in one place and to do anything with one click.

This path was successfully pursued by WeChat, an extremely popular social app in China. Due to Facebook and other popular networks being blocked there, WeChat rapidly monopolized the Asian market. Users can message each other, share photos, play co-op games together, challenge each other to exercise more, and look for a date via location-based search – and that's just a partial list of features.

WeChat is a dozen top-rated mobile apps squeezed into one, and their success makes us wonder if this is what western market social media giants like Facebook aspire to be. Looking specifically at the instant messaging space, this market is occupied by giants. Any new player will not only meet obstacles related to positioning and earning new users, but to pass this market's entry threshold you need to meet challenging (to say the least) requirements regarding development of a high-loaded backend in order to provide seamless interaction between millions of users. Trying to achieve the required performance level demands a significant amount of time and some seriously advanced technical expertise.

— With all the information that our mobile app development companies have shared with us, we can say that the market is full of social mobile apps because that's what users want. We want to stay connected every day, any time. We want to communicate with everyone we know and we even want to meet new people via a social app. What was once called Virtual Life seems to exist now as a regular life. It also helps to keep in touch with people all around the world. Social apps helps us to know people and places that without the mobile app development we would have never known. Let's know more about our developers latest mobile apps:

" In terms of a stunningly convenient user interface and an interesting domain niche, the clear answer is Double. This app addresses the main concerns a person has when meeting a stranger for the first time — specifically, safety and ease of communication. It's called Double because a user can pair up with a friend, search for another set of "doubles", and enjoy a double date. Another app Sibers is proud of is a high-loaded messaging service for iOS, featuring complex server-side. We built its backend using Microsoft technologies, and both parties — Sibers and the client — are thrilled with the application's performance, consistency, and response rate.

You can get more information about Sibers visiting their AppFutura company profile.