



MentorMate

Mobile Application Development Guidebook



Introduction

“Business needs first from a User Perspective.”

Individuals and organizations are rapidly moving from antiquated, inefficient *stationary* information systems and processes to user-friendly, cost-effective, real time Mobile Applications (MAs). Since 2001, MentorMate has been leading the way in developing and delivering sophisticated, intuitive Mobile applications that put information within reach, within seconds... *ultimately increasing productivity, improving processing efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing the user (customer) experience.*

While making the transition from antiquated systems and processes to real time mobile application solutions is, in most cases, the prudent decision, it takes time, resources and a champion to make it happen. In many cases, it also requires partnering with technical resources that can help you achieve your vision. That stated, implementing technology changes *and* changes in the way you process information can sometimes result in major paradigm shifts for individuals and organizations.

We're here to help!

MentorMate continues to assist change agents that want to implement change to improve the customer experience - ultimately increasing productivity, efficiency and profits. Over the years we have assisted companies with **Storyboarding** ideas, ferreting out **Requirements**, developing **Project Timelines**, and calculating **Cost Benefit Analyses (CBAs)** and **Return on Investment (ROI)** to help individuals and organizations successfully initiate and implement their MA ideas and IT change strategies.

Our goal is to help you implement the right solution, for the right business application, at the right time, to drive positive change that solves a problem, improves a process, or enhances the user (customer) experience.

With 200+ engagements under our belt, successfully implementing change with both large and small organizations is a marquee of MentorMate. We have witnessed successful (and not so successful) start-ups launch new technologies and large organizations successfully implement enterprise IT change strategies. The result of our learning is a Mobile Application Guidebook that provides a blueprint to help you successfully navigate an MA project and select a MA development partner to ensure your MA achieves commercial success.

The Mobile Application Guidebook is our way of helping you achieve your vision and lead successful change. Good Luck!



About the MA Guidebook

The purpose of this document is to provide relevant information for any individual or organization who is evaluating developing a Mobile Application (MA) and its execution. It identifies the specific requirements unique to MAs and what you may want to consider when determining your strategy - including potential partners to help you execute your MA strategy for the long term.

There are many firms that provide Mobile Application (MA) software development programming, ideas, services, products, frameworks, technologies, etc. The number of vendors and programmers that claim to provide MAs are endless. To further compound this issue, there is not a single standard definition of MA software development or a “best way”.

MAs mean different things to different people based on their role within their organization and the problems that need to be solved. The hype around MA, the lack of a formalized definition, and the limitless options in terms of technologies, vendors, and products makes it difficult for individuals and organizations to find qualified assistance and feel confident they are taking the right steps to effective and efficient MA development.

There is no MA silver bullet. MA development is complex, requires commitment, sound planning and management, definition of standards, new processes, technology, and most importantly flexibility and adaptability to mobile devices’ constantly changing technology. It should be driven by experienced resources with proven track records that have the backing of both the business and IT. It can be a multi-year journey that has the potential to deliver great benefits or if done wrong, end in disaster. It requires dedication, the right skills and experiences, access to resources and in most cases a shift in the mindset of individuals and organizations.

MAs are becoming the lifeblood of a business and this shift can be like a lifestyle change. Like all lifestyle changes it cannot be realized by technologies’ latest fad diet or drinking some vendor Kool-aid. A sustainable MA strategy requires skills, experiences and a serious commitment and adoption of change.

Partners have to be carefully selected and caution needs to be applied when vendors suggest they can deliver immediate results or do not openly communicate risks. Look for resources and partners that understand the critical nature of a MA strategy and development to the business, the complexity these programs and strategies have on IT, and can bring the appropriate level of experience and skill to ensure your MA strategy and development programs are successful.

Here’s what MA is, what it isn’t, and some dos and don’ts that you may want to consider when executing an MA project and evaluating potential MA strategic partners that will help you successfully integrate your MA. These lessons are based on 200+ IT engagements involving mobile application development since 2001 for clients ranging from venture-capital backed start-ups to Fortune 100 clients.



Eight Key Considerations When Implementing a Mobile App

Key Consideration	Your mobile app implementation should incorporate:
1. Business Needs Driven	✓ Mobile apps are fun, cool, etc, but the starting point should always be the true business need rather than vanity or other less relevant reasons. Always start by validating/refining/clarifying the business need first. This includes, in the planning stage, the considerations unique to your business for the app (and system) to work within your internal policies, guidelines and corporate culture. Moreover, regulations such as OSHA, HIPAA, FDA, PCI and many others are pervasive hence a regulatory impact review should always be included as part of the business needs analysis so that any constraints due to regulations are known upfront.
2. User Perspective	✓ Once you know the destination (for the business), proceed to the user perspective. MA can be a significant investment and is wasted if the audience is not defined and involved throughout the development process. Utilize an Agile SCRUM approach which includes the user perspective from story boarding to user testing to intention-guided user action gap-analysis on prototypes always seeking user input early and often.
3. App Distribution	✓ Depending on the specific provisioning scenario and the platforms chosen, there are different ways and options to bring applications to users. In particular, different OS providers have different criteria for what is considered acceptable or not. Make sure you have relevant experience in navigating this approval process and so you can quickly recover from any rejection or setback.
4. Security Considerations	✓ Security is paramount. Pay attention to this every step of the way starting with the application itself and extending to the hardware platforms chosen, system integration, user behavior, lost/stolen devices, policies, etc. In architecting the solution, spend ample time analyzing how to minimize or remove information which is not needed to thwart any decryption attempts. This can be a salient feature of MA projects that include sensitive private health care data. (e.g. government and healthcare organizations). Partner with leading international mobile VPN partners that provide U.S. military-grade security (FIPS 140-2 from NIST).
5. Carrier Considerations	✓ If the app's functioning is reliant on carriers, this needs to be managed as its own process due to the carriers' often cumbersome restrictions and process. As much as possible, without compromising the functionality of the application, try to avoid interaction with carriers, except when absolutely necessary.
6. Architectural Strategy and Platform Choice	✓ MAs present a landscape of architectural choices which vary according to platform and time. The primary application architectures include: native, web-based, and off-line web (cached HTML5). Each offer distinct pros and cons including, but not limited to, response times, look and feel, security, ability to use built-in hardware, cost, etc. Hybrid variants add further complexity. Selecting the right architectural path will have a long-term impact. Pay attention to thought leaders in this area via the media and educational institutions.
7. Technology Advancement	✓ Mobile technology is evolving rapidly. Staying on top of mobile trends to ensure you implement the best strategies to achieve your business goals is imperative to staying ahead.
8. Knowledge Transfer	✓ Seek partners that will teach you how to fish (become independent) rather than simply giving you fish. Make sure your partner is committed to knowledge transfer ensuring your autonomy.




Top Ten Characteristics to Evaluate When Considering a MA Strategic Partner


Key Characteristic	Your mobile app development partner should offer these characteristics:
1. Agility & Attention	✓ Look for “right-sized” partners to help you develop your MA meaning big enough to provide depth and stability, but small enough to deliver customized services with proven experience.
2. Relevant Reputable Validation	✓ Make sure the MA partner you choose has worked with credible organizations like: AST, IBM, PLATO Learning, Palm Inc., the University of St .Thomas and Experian. Look for affiliations that represent specific MA validation of mobile development expertise.
3. Skilled Resources; Technology Agnostic	✓ Make sure your MA partner has a minimum of 10 years experience developing MA solutions in all coding languages and platforms. Complete an in-depth technical interview of the technical talent and ask for independent technical references.
4. Technology Strategy Consulting Capabilities	✓ Increasingly, technology relies on getting the business side of the equation figured out right first. Make sure you incorporate the “Business Needs first” approach to ensure you focus on what will make your business work as opposed to just coding.
5. Proven MA Track Record	✓ Look for MA partners that have refined their ideas and approach countless times on all major mobile platforms. You don’t want to be experimented on. Look for a proven track record of firsts with battle-tested process and planning methodologies. Look for proven results!
6. Global & Offshore Mastery	✓ Make sure your partner is global with proven competitive offshore resources that have been battle tested numerous times on multiple engagements.
7. History & Financial Stability	✓ IT and software companies come and go... Make sure your partner has been around for at least 10 years and will be around for the next 10 years. Make sure they are financially stable with an ability to weather the ups and downs of the new global economy.
8. Thought Leadership	✓ Is your partner leading or following? Look for industry achievements and recognitions such as U.S. patents, Governor awards, strategic partnerships with industry leaders, national event placements, radio shows, curriculum development, and more.
9. Competitively Priced	✓ In many cases, it often comes down to price. Make sure your partner offers both local and global resources so they can provide competitive pricing. But don’t always choose the least expensive, but the best value for the dollars spent. As the saying goes, “you get what you pay for.”
10. Satisfied Clients	✓ Make sure your partner provides you with a long list of satisfied clients to contact to validate client satisfaction. Determine if your MA partner is committed to 100% total client satisfaction, doing whatever it takes to get you’re your project over the finish line in any way possible. In other words, “they won’t let you fail.”



Compare Chart – Does your Partner have these Considerations?

Top Consideration	 MentorMate		
1. Business needs driven	✓		
2. User perspective	✓		
3. App Distribution	✓		
4. Security Considerations	✓		
5. Carrier considerations	✓		
6. Architectural strategy and platform choice	✓		
7. Technology Advancement	✓		
8. Knowledge transfer	✓		

Considerations When Considering a MA Strategic Partner

Top Consideration	 MentorMate		
1. Agility & Attention	✓		
2. Relevant reputable validation	✓		
3. Skilled resources; technology agnostic	✓		
4. Technology strategy consulting capabilities	✓		
5. Proven MA Track Record	✓		
6. Global & Offshore Mastery	✓		
7. History & Financial stability	✓		
8. Thought Leadership	✓		
9. Competitively Priced	✓		
10. Satisfied Clients	✓		

