APPTIMIZE

12

Mobile UX Patterns
That Activate and Engage

SO YOU KNOW THE CORE ACTIONS IN YOUR APP THAT LEAD TO RETENTION.

You've used the data-driven method for discovering your Aha! Moment.

You know that users who take this action tend to revert and those that don't drop off.
Now the question is, "how do you drive users to take those actions?"

According to Stanford Psychologist BJ Fogg, there are 2 ways to increase the likelihood that a behavior will occur.

1. Increase Motivation
2. Increase Ability

The main idea is this:

1. A user must have sufficient motivation and ability to complete an action
2. If these are present, then a trigger (cue to take an action) will produce the desired behavior
3. Else a trigger will fail
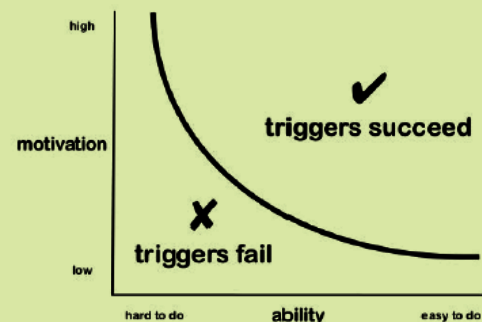
To increase the likelihood of a user taking a specific action, we have to increase motivation and ability.

We're going to go through 12 different methods from top apps and dig into how they increase user motivation.

While not all of these principles will work for every app, these are powerful patterns you can utilize or modify to increase the likelihood that users will complete core retention actions within your app.

Test them, modify them, and bend them at your pleasure.

PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Yeah I know. I know. One of the most over-used buzzwords in tech. But bear with me for a second and let me show you what I mean.

What's really important on mobile is providing value as quickly and with as few actions as possible. Netflix knows that their Aha! Moment is that the user finds something to watch within 60-90 seconds.

To increase the likelihood that a user reaches Aha!, they devised a clever system of "rows" of similar content, then ordered them on their page by similarity to user interests.

These curated rows included:

1. Action-Adventure
2. Watched by Claire Underwood
3. Because You Watched The Killing
4. Trending Now
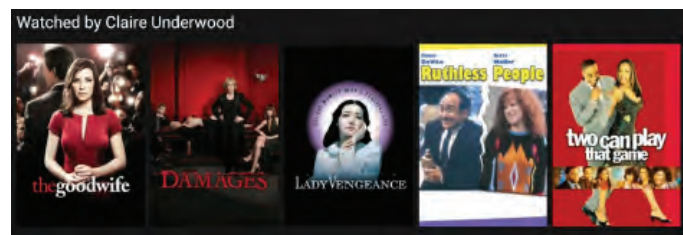5. Because You Added Ip Man To Your List

Image via the Netflix Tech Blog

These rows are then ordered vertically using an algorithm that takes input on what the user has already watched and rated.

Image via the Netflix Tech Blog

As Netflix grew bigger and more technically mature, they evolved their feeds by utilizing A/B testing to see how effectively the rows were driving users to consume video.

Of course on mobile, you've got to first collect information on what they're interested in, which brings us to another use case.

DRIVE USERS STRAIGHT TO THE VALUE

Gametime is an app that let's do just that and buy last minute tickets with just two taps on your phone.

Since contextual user data is lost during a new app download, users had to go through the generic onboarding processes just to get to the tickets promised in Facebook ads.

To combat this poor experience, Gametime utilized a technique called deferred deep linking to pass user data and provide a customized onboarding experience.

Wait...I thought this was an ad for Nets tickets...

Now, users who click on a Facebook add and download are taken into a customized onboarding experience that lands them at the purchase page of the promised tickets.

TAILOR YOUR "ONBOARDING FLOW"
FOR THE SITUATION

Even with deeplinking technology, Gametime (from the above example) still had one burning question on their mind:

"Should we still take deeplinked users through the onboarding flow?"

Skipping it would decrease friction and take users straight to the value. Yet, the tutorials explained the unique value adds of the app

OR
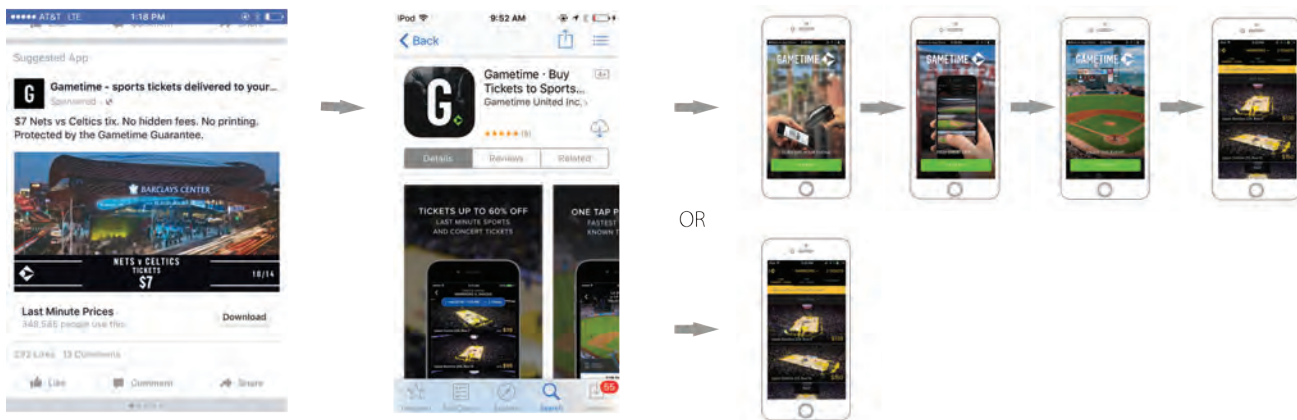
Each option had its own benefits, so they decided to run an A/B test to determine which best lined up with their overarching strategy.

They found that removing the onboarding flow actually increased purchases by 15%, a huge win.

In this case, the benefits of showing off features such as the digital tickets were outweighed by the increase in purchases.

But do these learnings apply to every situation?

ELIMINATE EXTRANEOUS STEPS

For Vevo, a key metric for retention is whether or not a user registers for their app. Their app followed fairly standard practices:

1. Onboard users with 4 tutorial screens (each with a powerful value add)
2. Prompt users with a signup screen
3. Drop into the home screen

The team had an inkling that the ubiquitous trend might not be advantageous for their specific market.
Like Gametime, they formulated an A/B test to determine if a flow with or without the tutorial screens would increase the number of registrations.

Control Flow

vs.

Variant Flow

Removing Tutorial Screens Resulted In:

An Increase in logins by 9.69%	An increase in completed signups by 5.85%

In addition, Vevo saw that the change didn't affect other core metrics such as:

1. # of User Registrations
2. # of Videos Watched
3. D1 and D7 Retention

With unnoticable effects on the rest of their core metrics, Vevo was able to confidently deploy the new flow and eliminate one of their early assumptions.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TYPE OF HOMESCREEN UI

Company X is a large marketplace for buying & selling homes.

While their original app had a list view for search results in an area, they wanted to test out if it would increase engagement if users were provided a map view by default instead.

Both views have their advantages/disadvantages. List views allow for pictures of the property and basic information. Still. Everyone knows it's about location, location, location. Displaying content in a map view is vital for those looking for certain neighborhoods.
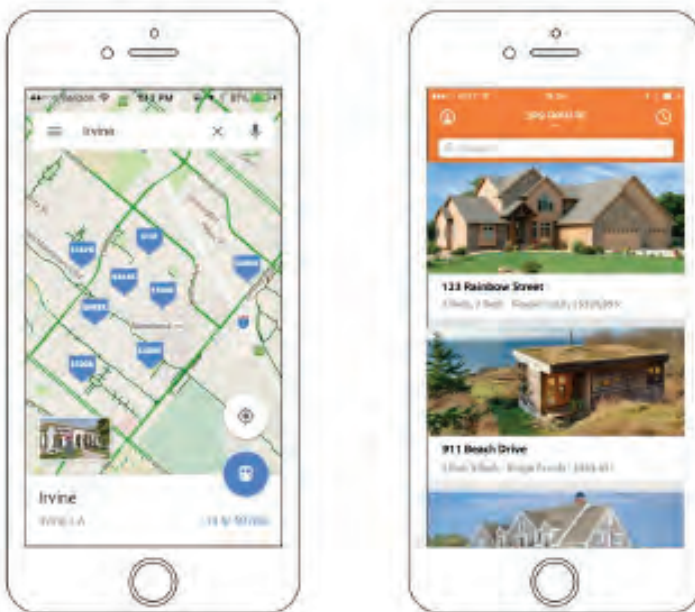
Company X tested out the options and found that a listview performed 15% better than the map view. More users were requesting further information and generating leads.

The team did a debrief and believes that the listview injected more value more quickly, given the small screen sizes. While map views were hugely beneficial on web, a crowded mobile screen made properties difficult to distinguish.

In the end, they decided to create a toggle so that users could switch between views to best suit their needs.

HARNESS THE POWER OF SOCIAL PROOF

77% of mobile users say they've downloaded an app that they heard about through word of mouth. - Ofcom BGR Report.

84% of consumers say that they either completely or somewhat trust recommendations from family colleagues, and friends about products.
 **- Nielsen (Consumer Trust in Advertising)**

Social proof is undoubtedly one of the biggest influencers in our decision making. That's why a few clever apps are already taking full advantage of its properties to increase user motivation and drive core actions.

Venmo has a rather unique challenge for onboarding users. I.e. users oftentimes are wary of an app that links to their bank accounts and has direct access to their funds. To help ease the transition, Venmo utilizes the power of social proof.

By showing friends that are on the platform already, as well as common use cases such as paying rent, splitting the check at dinner, etc. first time users are much more likely to sign up for an account.

TWEAKING YOUR CTA

Glassdoor's mobile app allows users to search for and apply to jobs, save interesting job listings to view or apply to later, and helps users research companies, salaries or interview information at any time.
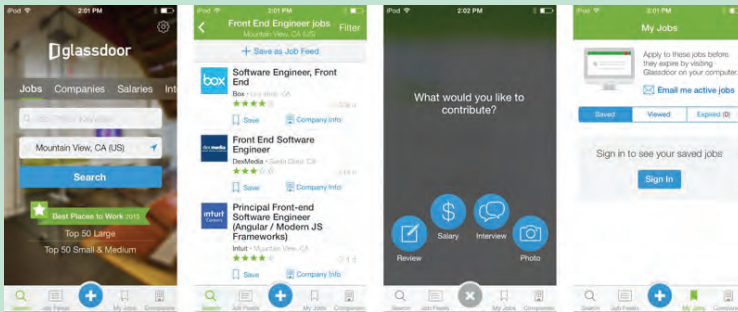

The product team at Glassdoor wanted to make sure that they were getting as many individuals to sign in and contribute as possible. To help reach these goals, the team hypothesized that tweaking the call to action at the gate could be a key change. The original popup looked like this:
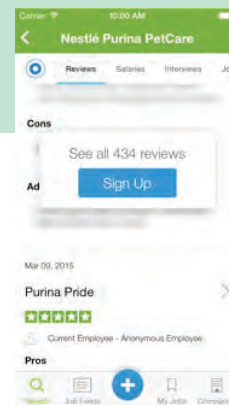

The team wanted to test out a few different variations of copy, as well as a new format for the pop up. They hypothesized that either the new pop-up layout or the more value-packed CTAs would help entice more users into signing in or contributing content.

Glassdoor decided to test what copy/setup would work best with its signup strategy, and crafted a few different variants to see which would perform best.
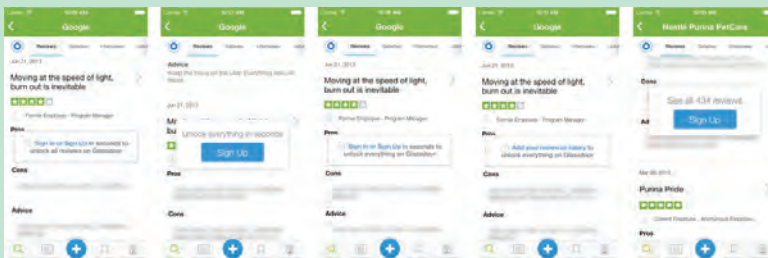

Variant C (shown to the right) changed the formatting and modified the copy, increasing their conversions by 8%. It emphasized both the speed and ease of creating an account, whilst also providing a the largest value proposition by saying that they'd be able to unlock "everything" which was the most specific in terms of benefit to the user.

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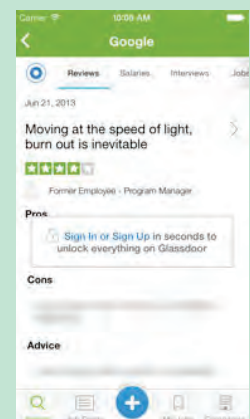
REINFORCE YOUR MESSAGING DURING DEAD TIME

Unlike most apps, Waze actually takes advantage of its splash screen. The typical splash screen simply looks like this:
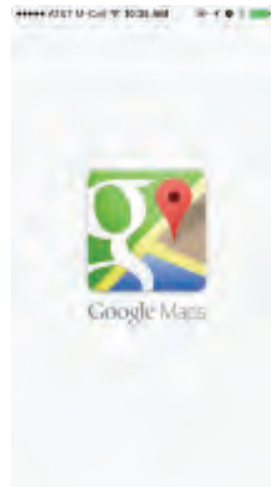
Aside from reinforcing the color scheme and logo, these splash screens really don't do much for the user except look pretty. However, Waze has a slightly different take on it:

Waze uses their splash screen to reinforce their marketing messaging during time the user would otherwise be staring mindlessly at the screen.

Since their tagline is so inspiring and meaningful, it excites users to get started on helping alleviate traffic for everyone.

IMMERSIVE PRODUCT DEMOS

A lot of apps have been using a freemium-like model to get users engaged with the app before they convert. Robinhood has taken this experience to the next level.

The free stock trading app actually offers a fully immersive demo, complete with sample data and simulated transactions.

In doing so, users are able to see the beauty and convenience of its mobile-first UX and smooth UI.

As a result, before new users have to enter information or connect their bank accounts, they know exactly what value they're going to get out of it.

SURPRISE AND DELIGHT USERS

One of our clients, a restaurant reservation app, found that by changing placement of a deal increased their bookings by 28.1%. The team wanted to incorporate special deals for its users, but weren't sure where in the flow it would be best incorporated.

They hypothesized that placing them next to restaurants in the search results would increase clicks to those restaurants, as well as booking rates.

However, A/B testing quickly invalidated that theory.

The team found that the view rates for promoted restaurants increased, but decreased the number of reservations made and the return rate of users.

Highlighting deals was actually turning users away. They concluded that users likely felt that deals hurt the editorial integrity of the app, putting promoted content in a front seat rather than having a fair market.

In a second test, they found that using a surprise and delight tactic increased the booking rate by 28.1%.

They instead informed users that the restaurant was having (the same) promotion after a user was already reading reviews for that restaurant. Their decision to place the deal immediately before users made a booking led to surprised and happy users who were much more likely to convert.

Other examples of delighting users is to ask users to rate or review apps in the marketplaces right after helping them complete their desired task. Capitalizing on that euphoric moment can also make users associate your brand with positive emotions, which will help develop brand champions for your app.

CRAFT INFORMATION-RICH RESULTS PAGES

When displaying search results, you have to make sure your results page is optimized so that users can quickly evaluate different options and make a decision.

With mobile screen sizes you can't include everything, so you've got to make smart, data-driven decisions about what to include.

The Nielsen and Norman group has a fantastic post about just this topic. Here are the key takeaways:

1. Determine whether using an image will help users decide
2. If the images are not meaningful, place it on the right side (where there's less emphasis). Else, let the text take the left side where users focus
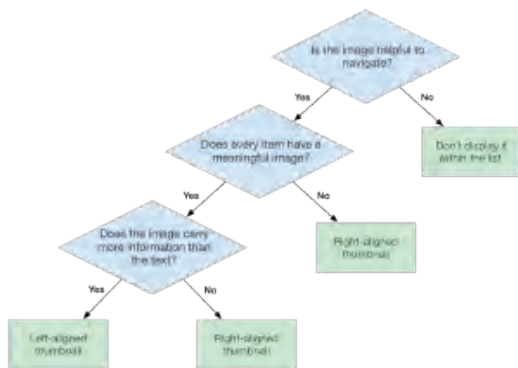
Consider as well what information is most useful to the user and allow them the ability to filter their searches. If you're selling clothes, you may want to include alternative colors or patterns. If you sell hard drives, technical specifications may be the most valuable.

Image via Nielsen/Norman Group
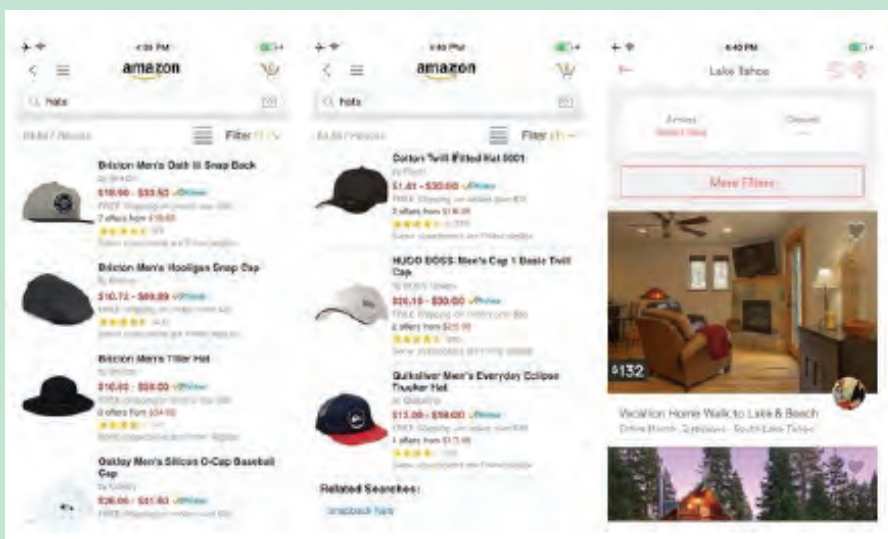
PICK COMPELLING IMAGES

"Through various studies, we found that our members look at the artwork first and then decide whether to look at additional details."
- Gopal Krishnan of Netflix.

Pictures are often processed much more quickly than text, so when a user is deciding what to focus on, they'll oftentimes make the difference between a user clicking for more information or dropping off.
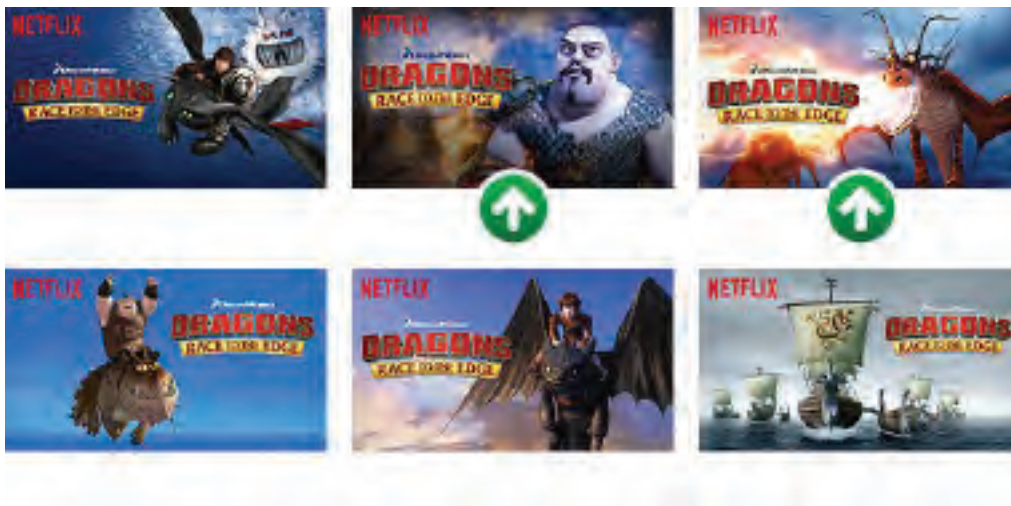
In the case of Netflix, A/B testing different variants of images led to some surprising results and significant upticks in title engagement.

Some learnings from Netflix's tests:

1. Facial emotions can convey complex nuances and compel story engagement
2. Regional differences make a significant impact - what works for some countries may impact others differently
3. Villainous characters tend to perform better due to polarization
4. Less is more - keeping the images simple and focused helps convey a clearer feel for a show than

Testing out these different images revealed a whole host of new learnings which they can use in the future to drive engagement. Make sure you're picking the right images for your own products.

CONCLUSION

By following BJ Fogg's Behavioral Model, we can drive more core actions by increasing users motivations in the app. Using the examples above can help you conceptualize some new and exciting ways to increase that likelihood.

When it comes to motivating users to activate and engage, be sure to make the experience as seamless, valuable, and personalized as possible. In doing so, you'll be well on your way to a better UX and a better app

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