



THE 3 QUESTIONS YOUR MOBILE ONBOARDING NEEDS TO ANSWER



APPTIMIZE

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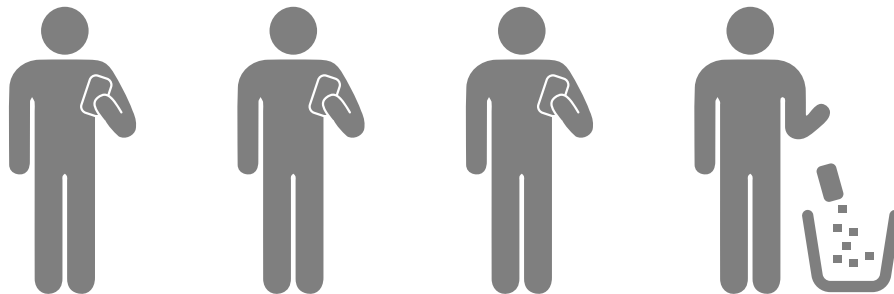
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Why Is Mobile Onboarding Important?

“If you don’t nail onboarding, your developers may as well have been drinking beers instead of building those features that no one saw.”

— Nancy Hua, CEO, Apptimize

Just getting downloads isn’t enough to grow and sustain your mobile product. You have to engage users or they’re going to leave and never come back. According to a 2015 study by Localytics, **25% of users abandon an app after just a single session**. 25%! That means that 1 in 4 downloads that you’ve spent precious time and resources acquiring are leaving your app after just one try and deleting it from their phones.



That’s why we’ve got to step up our mobile onboarding processes to engage new users and help them see the value in our products. In this paper, we’re going to break down everything you need to know about onboarding your first time users. We’ll show you not only some great examples, but we’re really going to drive in and **break down the specifics** as to **why they’re effective** and **tactics to employ** so that you can create the optimal onboarding experience for your app.

What Is Mobile Onboarding?

The goal of mobile onboarding is to introduce the app and demonstrate what it does. Onboarding should be the catalyst that helps turn users from newbies to proficient insiders who regularly engage and gain value from the app. Once users understand what value it provides in their lives, they'll be much more likely to stick around.

😊 + **500%** ↑ When these users are onboarded effectively, their lifetime value increases upwards of 500%.
- Kahuna

What does onboarding look like?

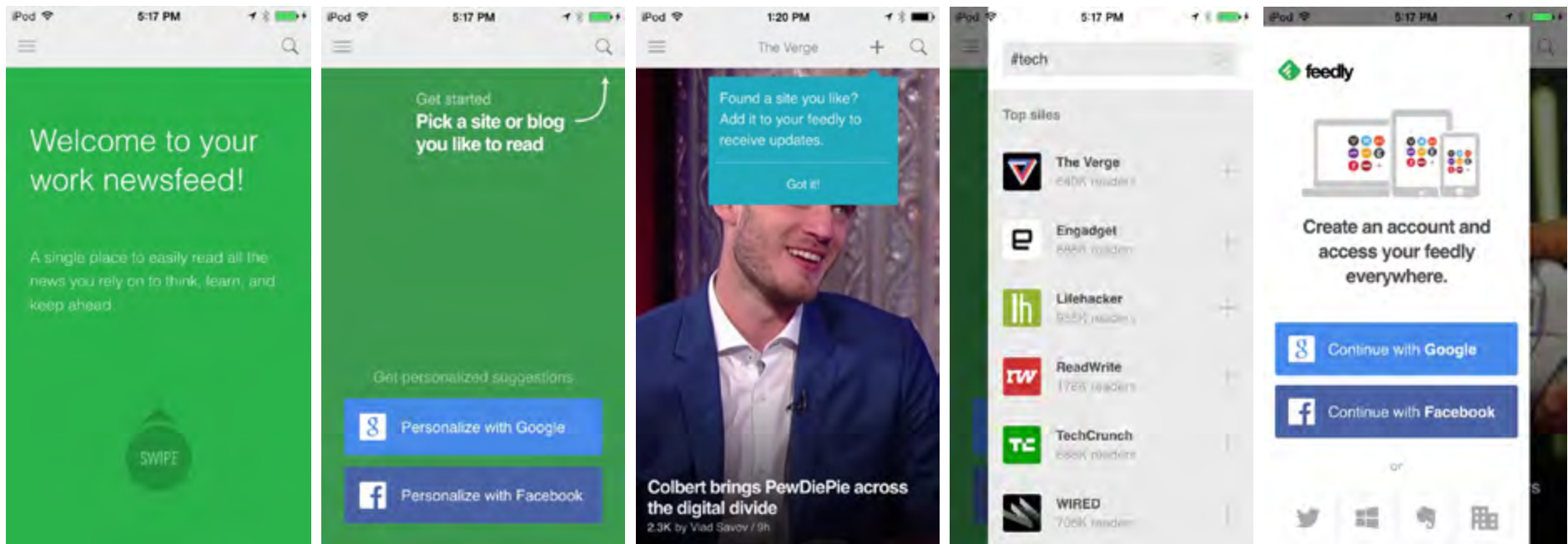
Let's take a look at a few common onboarding processes .

Onboarding Tutorials



Reddit uses the standard practice of mobile onboarding tutorials. When users open the app, they see a series of screens that they can swipe through which explain how the app works. The idea is to help users understand how everything works and what value they'll derive up front. This allows users to immediately see value within the first few seconds of opening an app.

Progressive Onboarding



Feedly uses a progressive onboarding process that requires user interaction and involvement. Instructions and recommendations are slowly introduced so as to not overwhelm users. When a user reaches the dashboard, they see information relevant to that dashboard and are directed toward the next actions to take. When they switch to another screen such as a search result, they're prompted to take other specific actions. This process is much more involved and engaging, helping users better understand functionality through hands-on learning.

Apps utilize these techniques because **good onboarding will help increase engagement**, showing users where and how to get started, as well as pulling them into your world. **Good onboarding also increases retention**, teaching users how the app adds value into their lives, and showing them how to be successful using your product. Onboarding allows you to **control the conversation** and drive users towards the behaviors that will help them get the most out of your app.



Let's break down the specifics of onboarding so that you'll understand **why certain onboarding methods are effective**, and **what specific questions you need to answer** for your users. Once you understand the key components, you can use that and techniques learned in this book to create the optimal onboarding experience for your app.

Four question marks of varying shades of blue are positioned around the top of the slide: a light blue outline on the left, a solid dark blue in the top center, a light blue solid in the top right, and a solid dark blue on the far right.

THE THREE QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ANSWER

When a user opens your app for the first time, they're consciously or unconsciously trying to determine the answers to 3 key questions:

A solid dark blue question mark is located to the left of the first question.

IS THIS APP TRUSTWORTHY?

IS THIS APP USEFUL TO ME?

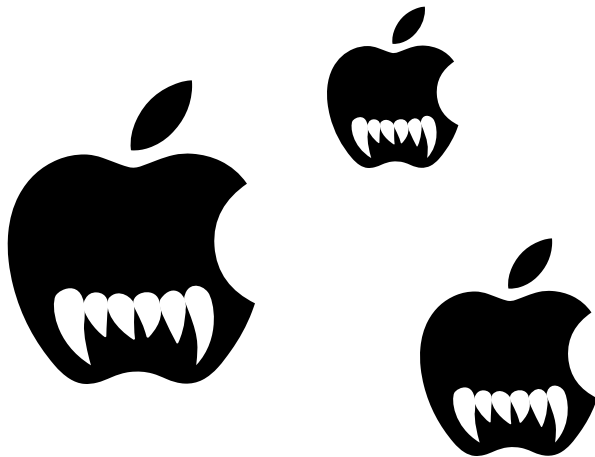
IS THIS APP EASY TO USE?

A light blue solid question mark is located to the right of the three questions.

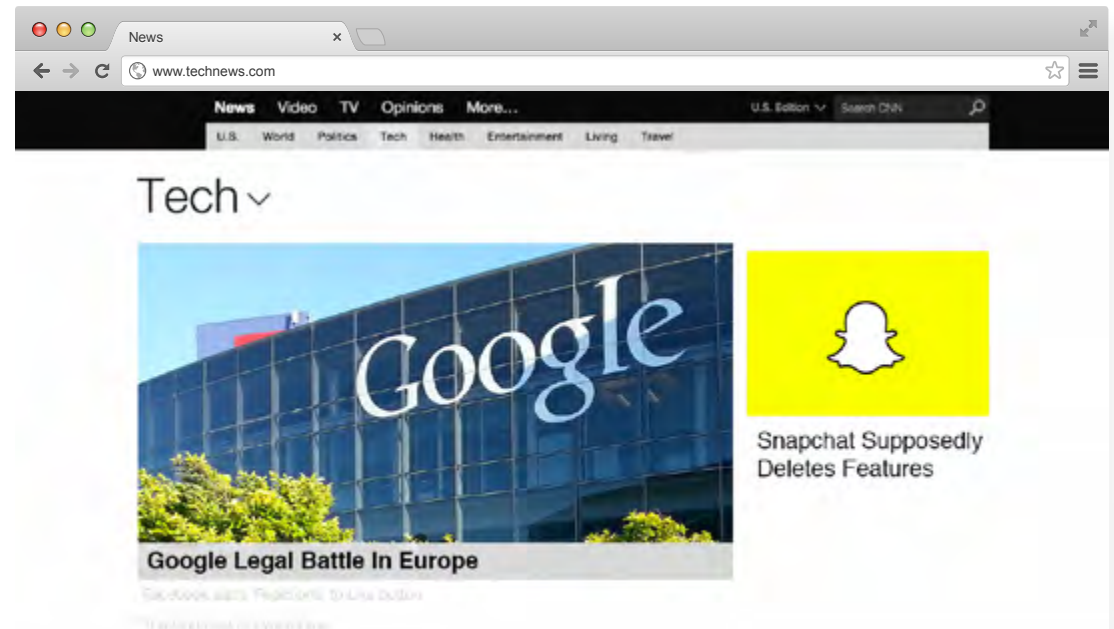
How a user answers these questions determines whether they judge an app positively or negatively. In mobile, that perception often means the difference between continuing on to the next steps or deleting the app.

Is This App Trustworthy?

One of the biggest benefits of mobile apps is the wealth of contextual data teams can harness to better serve their customers' needs. Yet, from the consumer side, mobile security and privacy are more of a concern to users than ever before, with good reason. According to a study by FireEye, the number of iOS vulnerabilities has **increased by 262%** from 2011, finding **over 660 malicious iOS apps** in the U.S. alone. Android users didn't fare any better with **19% of users having encountered a mobile threat at least once during the year.**



In addition, there are ever-increasing privacy concerns about the misuse of customer data by companies. From Google's legal battle over customers' rights to disappear or Snapchat archiving supposedly ethereal pictures, users are more concerned than ever before that they'll have their personal data stolen and used for nefarious purposes.



If users suspect that your app has vulnerabilities or does questionable things with their data, **they'll be quick to uninstall.** To avoid this, we have to make sure we're sending good trust signals from the very beginning. There are 3 key ways to do so during the onboarding process: harness the power of good design, show trust signals, and explain phone permissions.

Harness the Power of Good Design

In 2004, Elizabeth Sillence of Northumbria University conducted a study about the Trust and Mistrust of Online Health Sites, showing us how poorly designed websites can spark distrust. Sillence and her team had users observed user's reactions to a multitude of web searches and found that, "Of all the factors that were mentioned for rejecting or mistrusting a website, **94% were design related**; only 6% were content related."

One of the most significant factors for building or losing trust comes down to the design of your product. Users first impressions are directly affected by design issues and could lead to mistrust. That's why we want to ensure that we provide a great user interface and user experience to put users at ease.

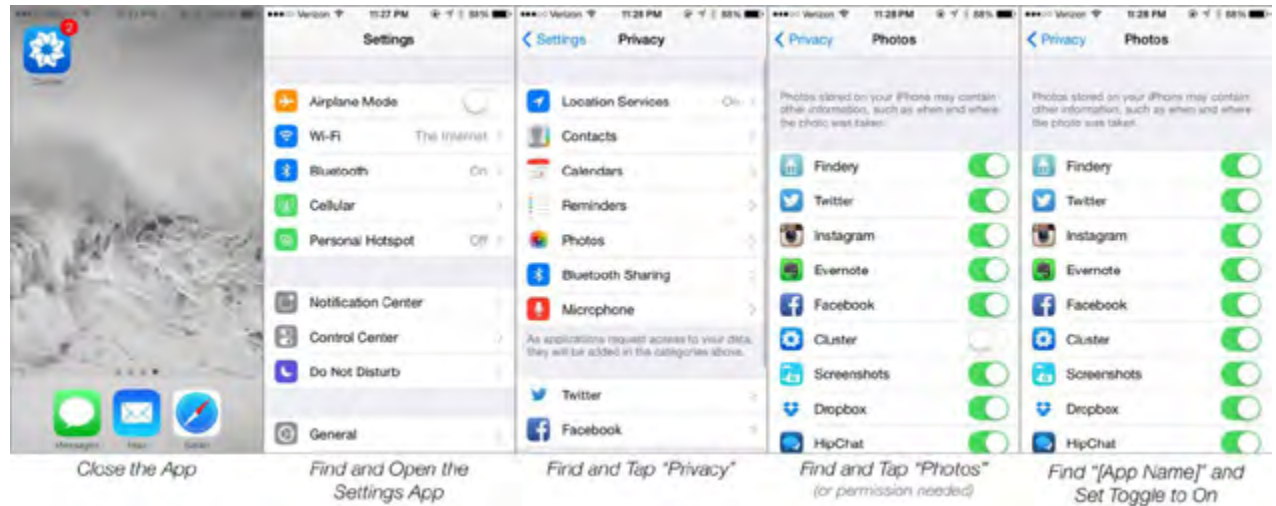
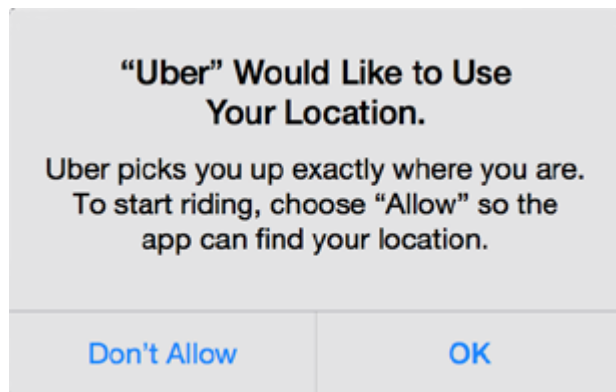
To avoid garnering mistrust at such an early stage, make sure you're following the Android Design Guidelines and/or the iOS Human Interface Guidelines. Following the guidelines will help ensure that you're providing a familiar, comfortable, and trustworthy experience for your users and make them feel comfortable using your app.



Ads are a signal to users that your goal isn't a great user experience.

Get Your Permissions In Order

One of the most unnerving steps when opening up an app for the first time is accepting/denying permissions. While they're often vital for app functionality, the amount of access users grant their apps can be scary for users and a major dropoff point.

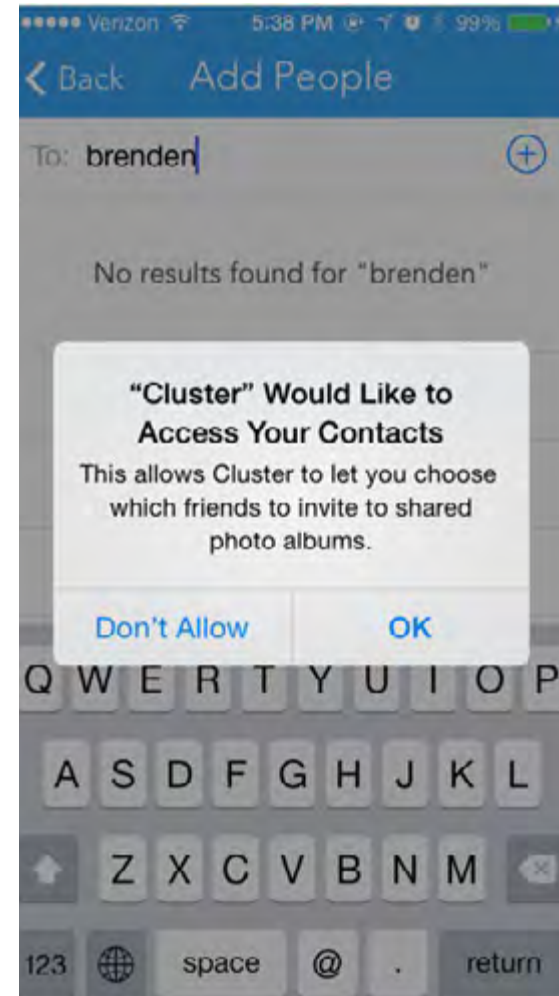


The process of obtaining permissions a second time is tedious for users

For many apps, not getting access can degrade the entire user experience and render it useless. Getting the necessary permissions however, can be challenging when it comes to first time users. Unfortunately, Apple's default permission request only triggers one time, so if a user rejects your request for a permission, it's a long winded process to enable it later. Make sure you're doing everything you can to get permissions the first time around.

Explain Necessary Permissions, Axe the Others

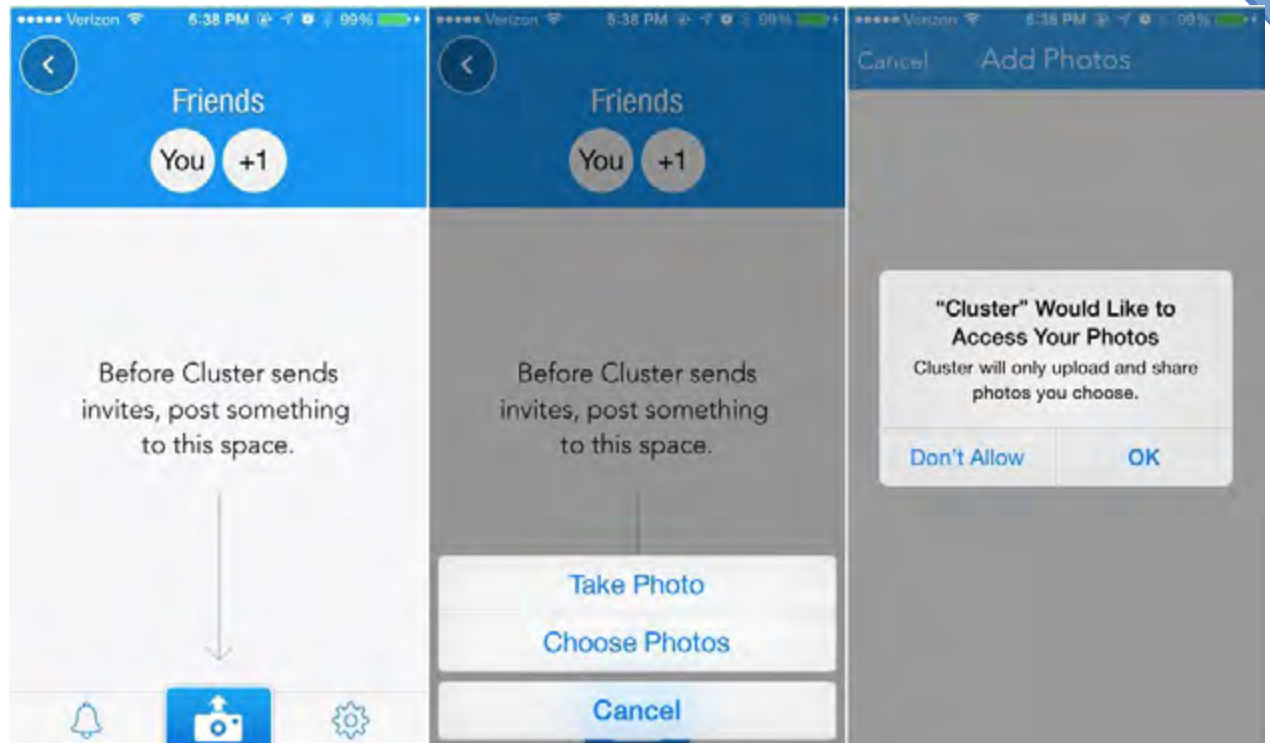
If you don't need certain types of data, don't ask for them. Doing so will only increase the likelihood that users will reject your request or disengage. If you do need them, make sure users see the value in giving you permission. Customize and test copy for the permission prompt to explain the benefits they'll receive from allowing access. Better yet, use triggered permission requests.



Cluster does a good job of explaining exactly why they ask for certain permissions

Use Triggered Permission Requests

Another method is to trigger permission requests ad-hoc. Most apps typically ask for permissions as soon as users open their app. Instead, you can try requesting them as a user attempts to use a feature related to the permission. Cluster, a pioneer of the technique, has a great example of this in their app.



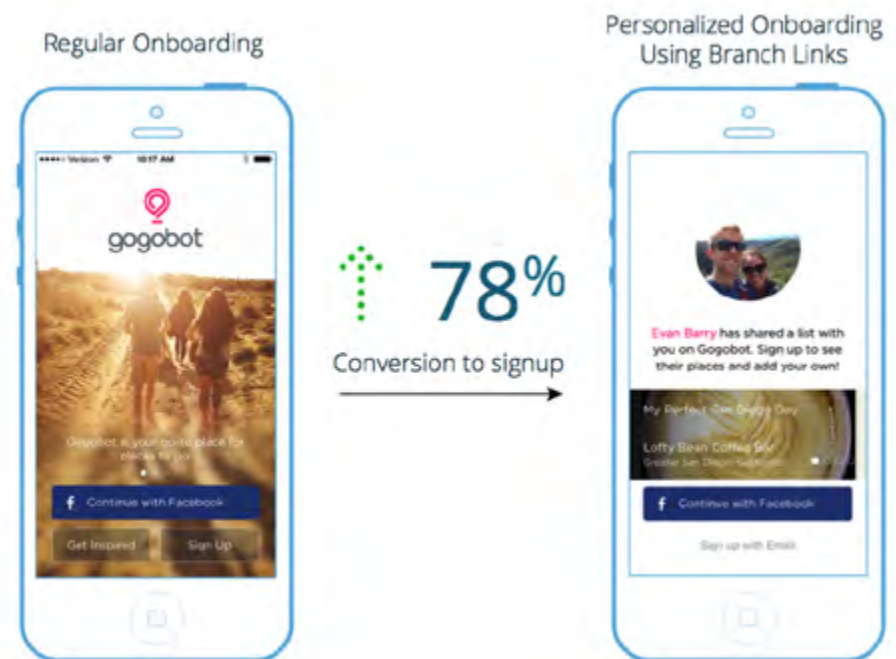
When Cluster requests permissions, they design the prompt to be triggered when a specific action is taken. When users try to create their first album, Cluster prompts them to allow the app to access photos. This way, users will clearly see the correlation between cluster providing a benefit, and the request for permission.

Leverage Social Proof

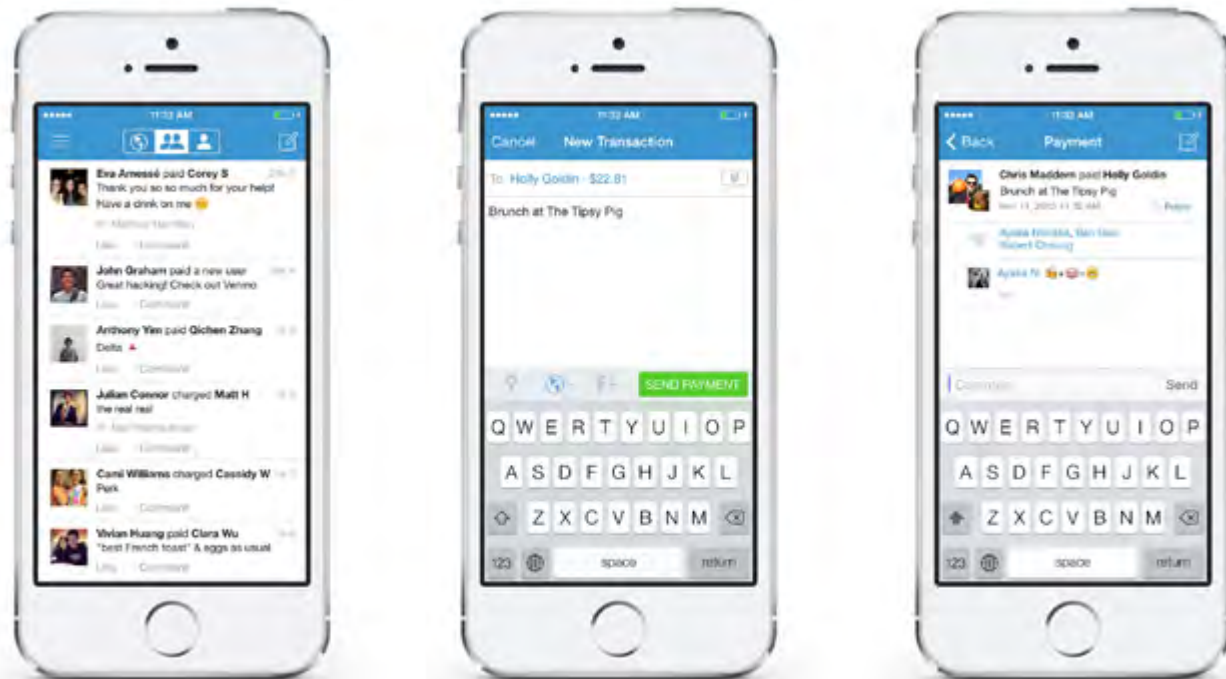
According to an Ofcom Report, 77% of users say they've downloaded an app that they heard about through word of mouth, while less than 20% of users said they have downloaded an app because they saw it advertised or read about it in the media. We're much more likely to **trust the recommendation of someone we know rather than an unfamiliar entity**. That's why connections are so important and are something apps can leverage to help build trust with users.

One way to do this is to create customized onboarding processes that refer users who referred them. Since 77% of users download an app they heard about through friends or acquaintances, having a healthy reminder as to who recommended them during the onboarding process can be a powerful way to put users at ease.

In the example below, Branch Metrics helped Gogobot create an onboarding process that reminds users who recommended them and leverage social proof to nudge them through the early steps. Utilizing this custom onboarding process actually **increased signups for Gogobot by 78%**.

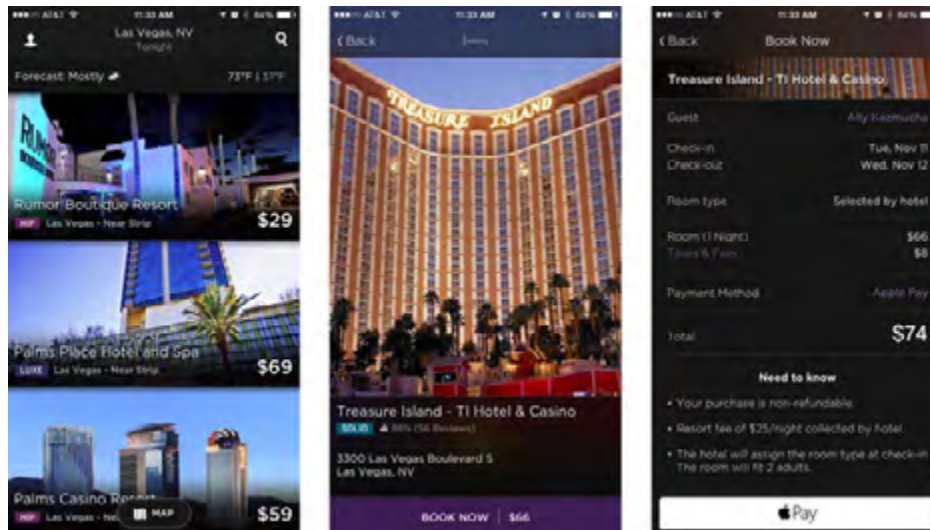


Another technique is to use data to show which of a user's friends are also using the app. Venmo does a great job of this by showing you how your friends are actually using it. This helps build rapport before users are prompted to hand over more sensitive information, such as banking data.



By showing which of his/her friends are also using the app on a day to day basis, as well as specific use cases, Venmo takes full advantage of its large user base to convince first time users that it's trustworthy.

HotelTonight took a slightly different approach for their checkout process. When they originally A/B tested native payments, they already had a great checkout flow. Even so, the team wanted to further hone their competitive edge and they tested how Apple Pay stacked up against their own system. The result? Apple Pay gave them a huge boost in bookings, increasing it by 26%.



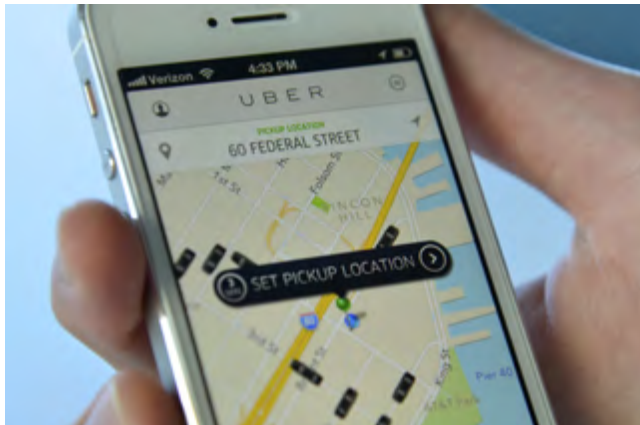
Why? The HotelTonight team believes that the familiarity and trust of Apple Pay helps alleviate most concerns about security. Built-in payment systems often already have users' credit card information from other purchases, and the companies are much more likely to have users' trust. In the same way, we can utilize trust signals such as Apple Pay or other recognized names to project confidence to users.



Web companies commonly do this, strategically placing badges during checkout to help reassure users that proper precautions are being taken. Even better, they take up only a small portion of a phone's limited screen space yet get the same message across to users without long blocks of text.

Is This App Useful To Me?

In addition to showing trust signals, we also need to show users the value of our app in their lives. If there is no value benefit, they'll be quick to free up memory or de-clutter their home screens by deleting your app. So let's convince users that we're going to make their lives better.



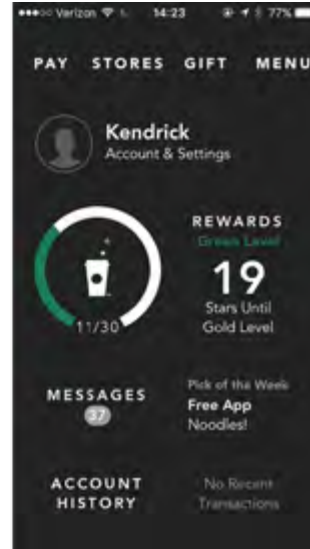
Uber focuses on a single key benefit and drives users toward it.

Determine the Key User Benefits

One major principle mobile teams need to keep in mind is to not bloat their apps by adding too many features. This is something that has been especially prevalent with web teams moving into the mobile space. Mobile users are much more task oriented than their web counterparts, so they're not looking for all the features available on a website. They just want to complete a task quickly.

If you look among the top apps in the app store, you'll note that they all do a great job of satisfying 1 or 2 core user values. These features are prominently displayed in an easily accessible area of an app, without users having to go looking for them in a menu or sidebar. By optimizing their apps to help users accomplish their tasks quickly, they delight users with their ease of use.

Let's take a look at a company that's been very successful with both their web and mobile strategies: Starbucks.



On their website, Starbucks encourages users to explore their brand as much as possible. Users can read about their coffee, the menu, social causes, join the loyalty program, and make purchases online. Their goal is to educate users and provide a wide range of actions that a user can take.

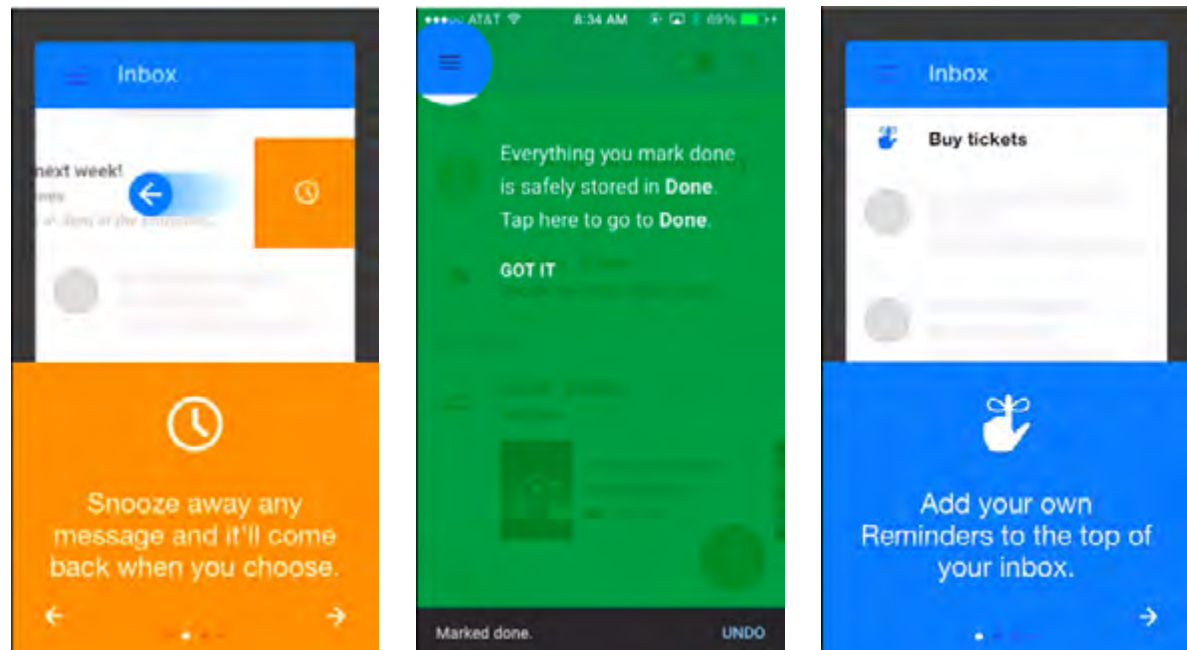
On mobile, **the Starbucks app is all about speed and efficiency**. The entire focus is to allow users to easily purchase drinks from a store. There are only a few key options for users available on the app: pay and manage gift cards, locate a nearby store, and see the menu.

Instead of stuffing all their web features into a mobile app, the team focused on gathering data from their users and harnessing it to create an app that serves their customers' needs perfectly.

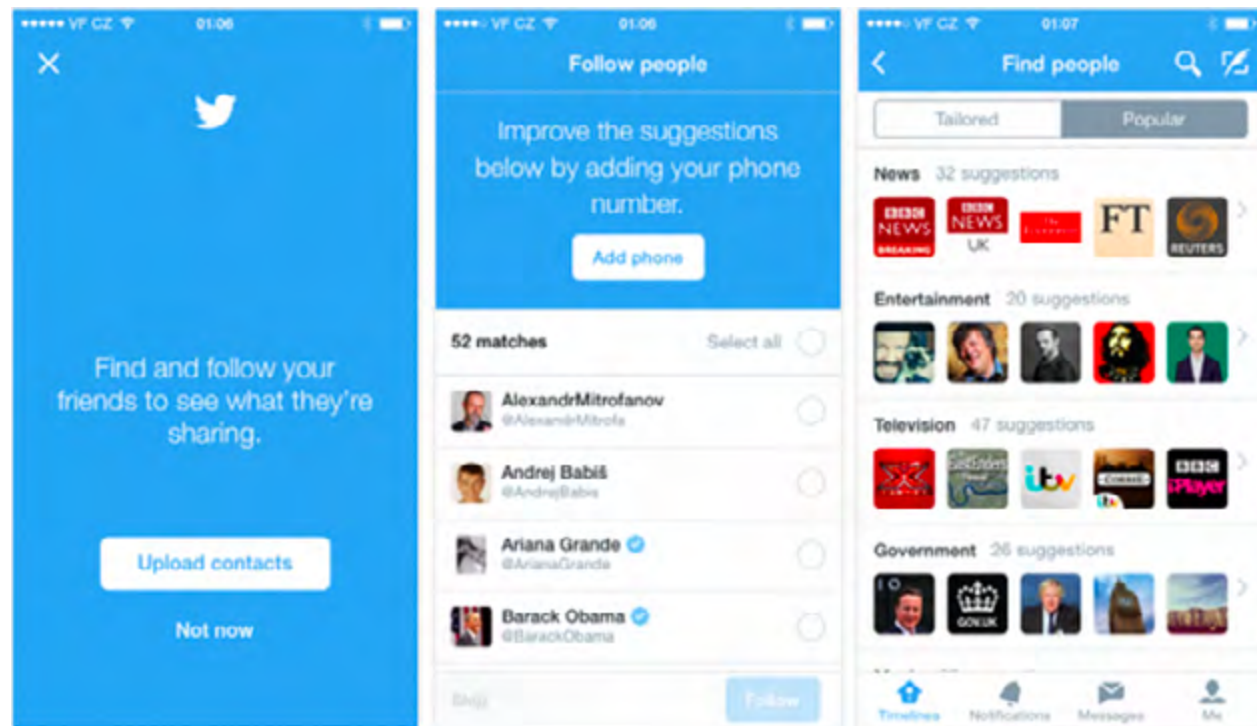
Direct User Attention Towards Key Benefits

Just having that value isn't enough,
you need to package it well for users.
Direct user attention specifically towards
the actions and benefits that will
deliver value.

Inbox does a great job of directing user attention to one new feature
at a time. Since it's a whole different animal from Gmail or most mail
clients that users are familiar with, they have to walk users through the
differences. After the initial sign in, Inbox takes great care to explain a
single step at a time:



Twitter understands that for first time users, following users is a key indicator of whether a user will continue using the app or not. Because of this, their onboarding process requires users to follow at least 10 users before continuing. As a result, a new user's Twitter feed won't start off empty and they'll be able to gain some value from the very beginning.



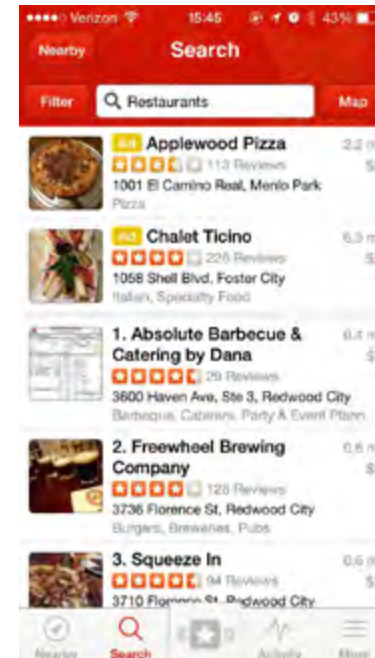
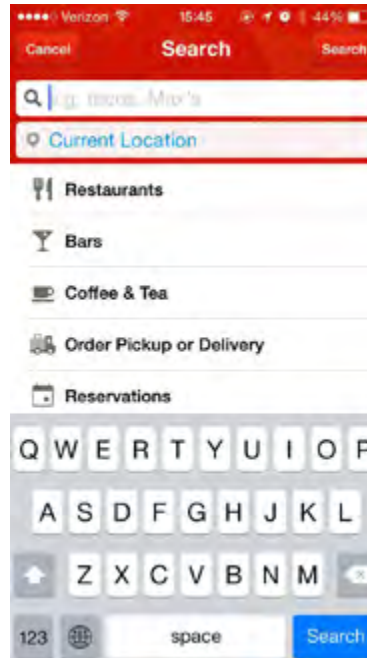
Is It Easy To Achieve My Goal?

Like we mentioned earlier, it's very easy for mobile users to be disengaged. Whether it be an outside distraction such as an interrupting co-worker or a process that simply takes too long, users often drop off even with the slightest bumps.

That's why we want to be relentless when it comes to efficiency. If mobile users are more likely than not to drop off, we want to make the process so fast and so smooth that they don't have a chance to do so.

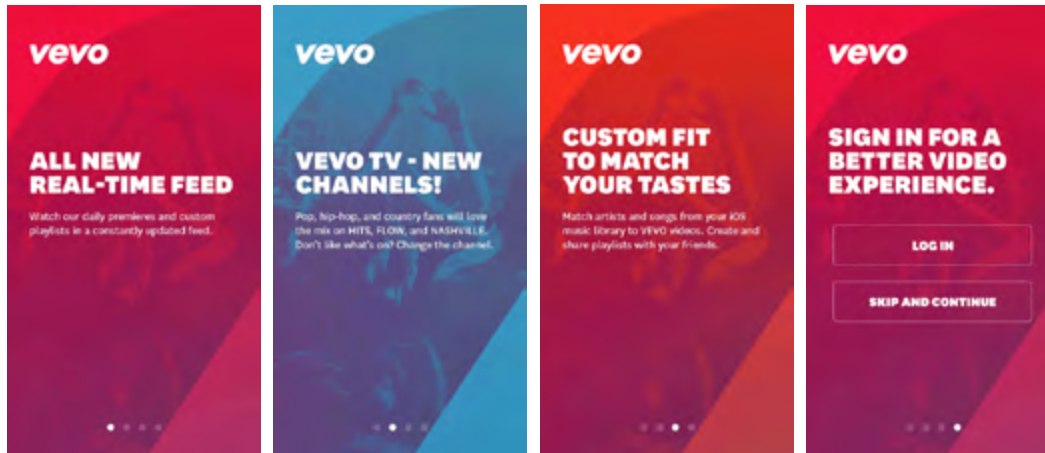
Give Them Quick Wins

A great way for apps to prove their worth is to help users attain quick wins for them as soon as possible. Yelp does an amazing job at this, dropping users directly into the service after their tutorial. Once users get to the home screen, they're only 1 click away from discovering nearby restaurants and ratings.

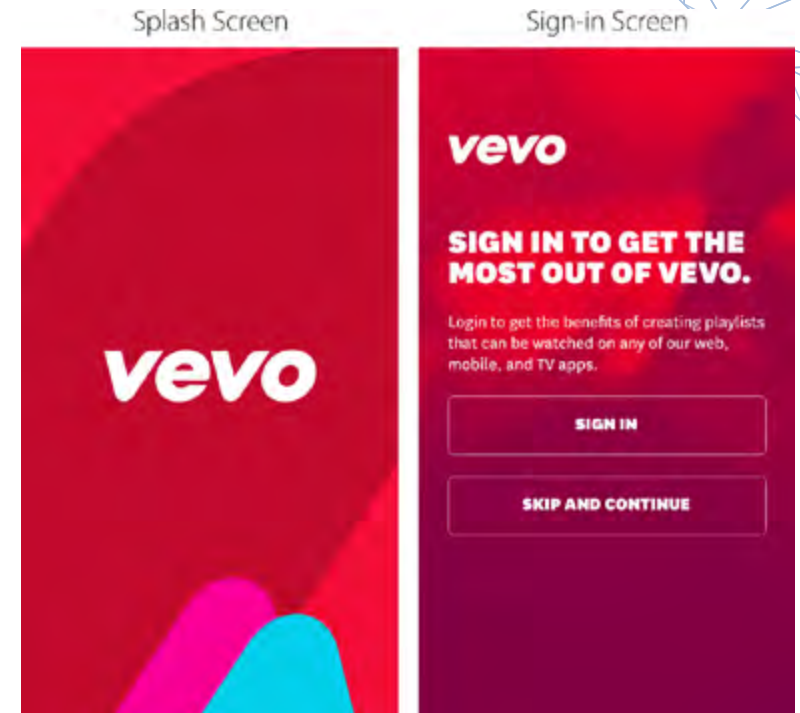


Giving the user that win as soon as possible gets them excited about your app and how easy it is to use. In certain cases, getting that quick win can even trump the need for tutorials.

Vevo tested out their onboarding process and found startling results. Originally, the company had utilized a swipe tutorial that demonstrated the benefits their users would receive. Since it was an industry wide practice, they included it in their onboarding process early on.



The team tested 2 variations: one with the swipe tutorial (the original), and one that opened directly into the sign-in screen. They discovered that the version without a swipe tutorial had a greater number of completed logins +9.69% and the number of completed signups increased by 5.85%.



For Vevo, this was huge. Instead of following the industry trend of using tutorials, they used A/B testing and found out that getting their users that quick win was far more important than the benefits they were getting through the tutorial.

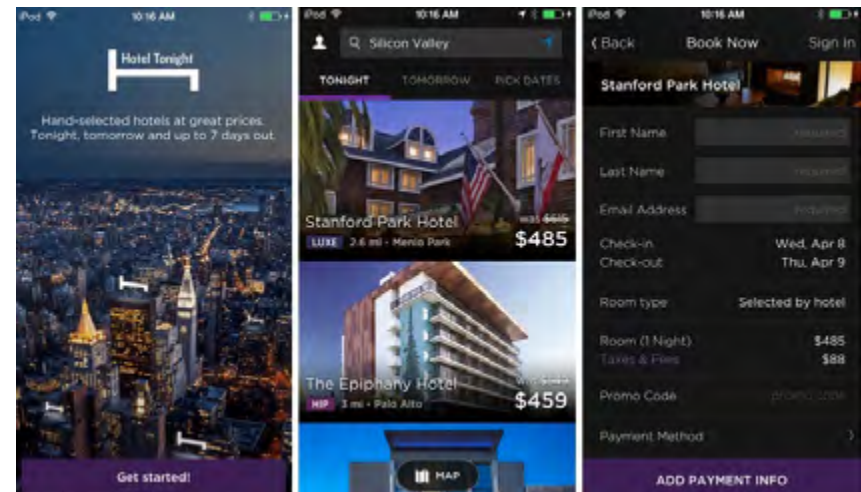
Be Relentless with Efficiency

Along with quick wins, we want to ensure that any task or function within our app can be easily completed in as few steps or with as few friction points as possible.

Get Your Logins in Order

49% of users have stopped using an app/mobile service because the login process was too time consuming according to a study by Foolproof UX. One of the biggest barriers to users getting value of the app is due to the fact that it's difficult to type on a mobile keyboard. Trying to be precise without the assistance of auto correction methods can be both frustrating and tedious.

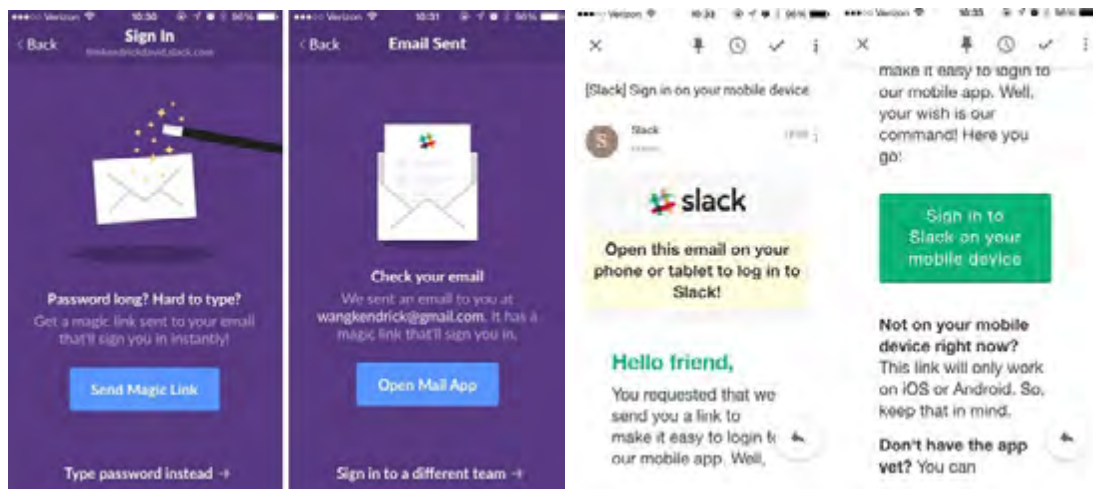
Many different apps have tried strategies across the board, ranging from displaying passwords in plain view, using fingerprint authentication, or even removing logins. Depending on how critical logins are to your business model, you may want to consider following in the footsteps of HotelTonight who found through testing that they had an 18% increase in bookings when they removed the requirement for mobile logins.



HotelTonight skips the account creation/login process and goes directly to payments.

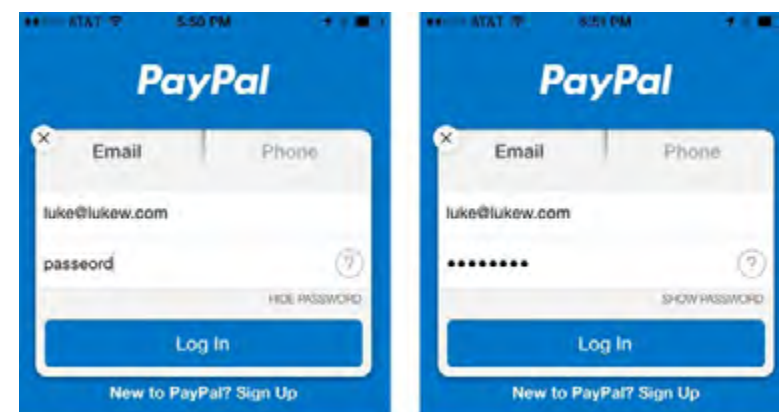
For others whose logins are core to functionality, consider some alternative UX improvements:

Decrease the amount of clicks for your users. Nobody likes going through a bunch of steps, but they like typing things in even less. Typing logins on a tiny on-screen keyboard can be a huge deterrent for users trying to log in. Consider using a login process that doesn't require users to type their passwords such as social logins or even Slack's unique deep linking verification.



Slack's fun and effective method for verifying user identities only requires a few clicks. The app utilizes deep linking via a user's email to confirm their identity and automatically guide them through with only a series of clicks. Combined with great copy, it's an excellent onboarding process to excite users and get them going with minimal effort.

It might seem like a bit overkill, but showing passwords in plain sight is another surprising method. Luke Wroblewski of Google fame has pointed out that on mobile, hiding the password with ••••s doesn't actually do a whole lot in terms of security.



On a desktop with a large monitor and a wide range of viewing angles and the tactile feedback of a keyboard, hiding passwords is logical. On mobile, it's just an inconvenience. Allowing users to view their passwords as they type it (while still giving them the option to mask it) can be a simple but effective UI change to make the process less frustrating.

Remove Distracting Features

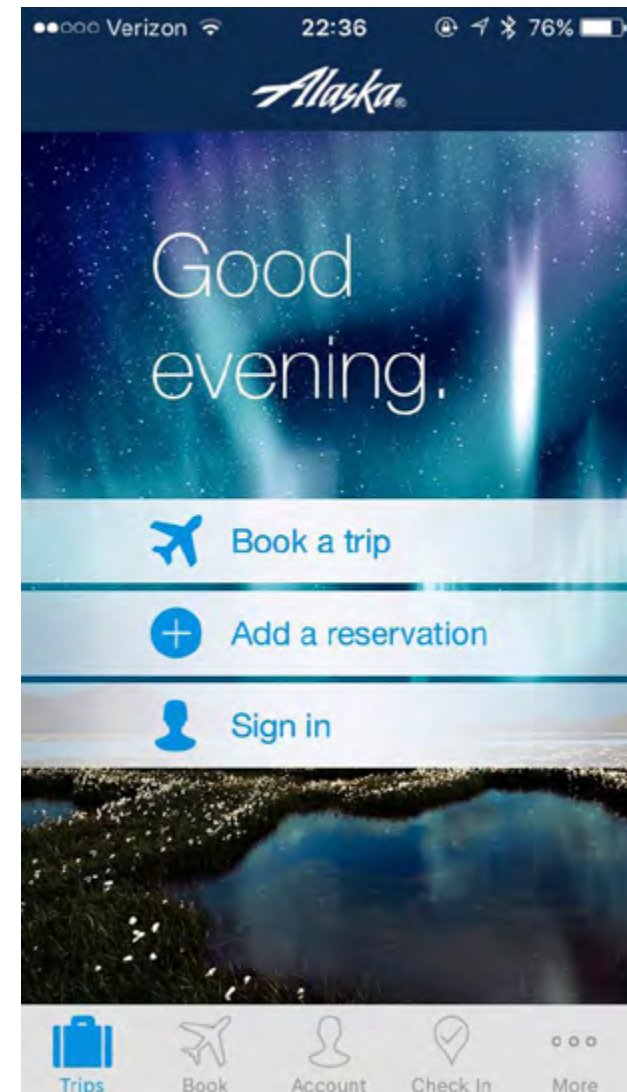
Lastly, we want to remove any distractions that can get in the way of our users achieving their goals.

Unnecessary features can also be very distracting on a mobile app. Since the users' goals are typically to complete one or a few simple tasks quickly, having too many options can actually make it more difficult to accomplish those goals. They may spend more time deciding and finding the correct action to take, or even be put off by decision fatigue.



While all of these apps have a wide variety of functionality, it's difficult for the user to find/decide on which of the features they should use to accomplish their goals quickly. Streamline the homepage by directing users towards a few key actions, and hide the rest in a clickable menu.

Alaska Airlines does a great job of highlighting only the key actions they want users to take.



Conclusion

When it comes to mobile onboarding, you want to show your users that you're trustworthy, that you help them achieve their goals, and that you make it easy for them to do so. If your users answer all these questions with a resounding "Yes!" then you've done a great job.

Using the techniques learned in this eBook, you can start testing out some different onboarding flows/ideas to help increase the likelihood that your users will engage in your app and retain over the long term.

- "What works for us does not necessarily
- work for you. The one thing you should
- not do is assume you know something."
-
- - Sergei Sorokin
- Product Manager at Yahoo! Growth

As with any changes in your app, make sure you're testing to validate them and ensure that their introduction into the flow actually improves your metrics. What works for one app does not necessarily work with another. That's why testing is so important. It allows you to backup your hypothesis using data, and push forward with confidence.