

# Five survival tips for mobile app startups



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1 Comment

Guy Goldstein



*This is a guest post by Guy Goldstein, founder and CEO of [Check.me](#).*

So you have a killer technology, funding, a budding team, and stores of determination. But the mobile [app](#) universe is a very crowded space.

To help you stand out, I've had a think about the lessons I've learned over the years. These factors alone don't guarantee a successful plunge into the market — or more importantly, user adoption and revenue. But to increase your chances of building a mobile startup that lasts, here are five important tips:

## 1. Build a phenomenal service

Building a great product is like motherhood and apple pie. But, it's easier said than done. In times when revenue isn't pouring in or user acquisition isn't what you expected, it's easy to say, "let's stop investing in the product for a bit." If your product isn't there yet, it's a big mistake. Don't stop investing in your product — having something that customers need and want to use is where everything begins and ends.

## 2. Find a distribution engine that works

We spend lot of time thinking about features and functionality, but the only way to grow your business is finding the right distribution channel. At the end of the day, a great product might not be enough— you have to

get it out there. Rarely do products just grow organically by word of mouth; it usually requires an extra push. I don't believe in magic here. It's a lot of hard work and experimentation. Consider adopting one of the following engines to get your product in front of potential customers:

- **Partnerships:** Typically range from a few very big distributors to several smaller ones.
- **Media buying:** Most companies choose this route. It's a vast and mature space, so there are at least a million combinations you can concoct to gain customers and creatively reduce acquisition cost. Just remember that it's an investment, and the key to success is to earn more from each customer than it costs to reel them in.
- **SEO:** With an unknown brand, it takes a substantial investment and technical know-how for you to achieve a high rank in the search engines.
- **Viral:** Your product needs to have an inherent viral component; most products do not.

### 3. Before you commit, experiment

A startup has very limited resources, so before you commit any of them, experiment with your ideas. A lot has been written about [continuous innovation and the “lean startup” mentality](#), and any mobile [app developer](#) should take this thinking into account. That said, applying these principles to a mobile application is much more difficult than traditional web development. The main problem is that if you deliver functionality that is not fully backed, customers will complain publicly. This can lead to the application's kiss of death: negative reviews in the AppStore.

To avoid this fate, you need to limit untested functionality to a subset of customers. From the onset, try to create technology in your application that will permit you to “split” your customers, so you can run tests to small portions of the population without jeopardizing proven functionality.

The good news is, once you've run the test on one of the mobile platforms, be it Android or iPhone, you're good. Usually, users behave similarly across most platforms.

### 4. When things aren't working, admit it

While it sounds simple, it's hard to call it quits because most of us are attached to our ideas. The aim is to be bold enough to back new, promising ideas, but smart enough to pull back when something isn't working. I can't stress how important it is to acknowledge failures publicly within the company. This encourages openness, and is the quickest route to regrouping and gathering the right people to solve the problem.

### 5. Celebrate your successes

Startups are hard. We've all heard the facts — 3 out of 4 fail. So, when you do have a success, whether it's breaking a revenue goal or rolling out that long, overdue new product, celebrate it. It can come in the form of a catered lunch, team activity, or a simple impromptu shout-out across the room. You want your team to feel proud. Celebrate success because the next big challenge is just around the corner.



*Guy Goldstein founded Check.me (previously Pageonce) in 2007, raised \$25 million in venture capital funding, and grew its users to more than 8 million. At Hewlett-Packard, Guy led M&A and strategy for its Business Intelligence unit. At Mercury Interactive, he managed an international team of engineers that built products generating \$350 million in sales. Guy began his career in the Israeli Air Force.*