

# There Should Be an App for That

Top 10 Indicators of Mobile App Opportunities



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## INTRODUCTION

My focus as a half geek, half entrepreneur has always been answering the question: how do we take really advanced, amazing technology and do something useful with it?

It is not about blinky lights. It's about figuring out how we drive real business and end user value in the mobile space with the rapid rate it is changing. How do we as organizations understand mobility and embrace it so we can generate new opportunities and revenue streams? This short e-book is the first in a series that will explore and explain the mobile application landscape from my unique vantage point as CEO of two mobile software firms and veteran entrepreneur.

Anywhere you see one of these 10 signs should be a chance to pause and think, “**there should be an app for that.**” These signs are specific, hard indicators that mobility can be directly applied to an area of your business.

I hope you enjoy reading about the top 10 indicators for mobile application opportunities!

## 1

## CLIPBOARDS OR BINDERS

Both clipboards and binders imply a paper-based system that needs to be mobile, so it can be picked up and carried around as part of a business workflow. Mobile devices, especially the iPad, are clipboard killers. I'm not referring to paper cluttering up someone's desk, but rather any paper that moves around the business environment in hand and is written on as it travels. Mobile paper tells us, there should be an app for that.

## 2

## DATA DOUBLE-TAKE

Ask yourself, where is someone walking around with a pad of paper or mobile tickets? It could be a police officer writing citations. It could be a waiter in a restaurant taking an order.

Imagine how much faster your food would arrive at a restaurant if your waiter could submit your order to the kitchen as you give it, rather than writing it down and then entering it into a computer several minutes later.

We have the mobile platforms. There is no reason people should have to do data entry twice. Historically mobile data entry could be slow or cumbersome, but with the new breed of mobile devices it's very realistic to put in place systems that are very quick on their feet. Recording information once reduces the chances of entering data incorrectly or of someone not being able to read the handwriting.

## 3

## SPECIALIZED HARDWARE

Anywhere specialized hardware is in use there's a high probability there should be an app for that. Warehouse systems use expensive specialized hardware that can be complex to operate and new development is difficult. Thanks to the application development capabilities of mobile devices like the iPhone, we can now build systems that work on cellular networks or WiFi to replace specialized hardware that costs 100 times as much.

Another great example of proprietary hardware replacement is the point of sale system used in Apple Stores. The cash register it replaced wasn't initially mobile but taking it that direction transformed the customer checkout process, allowing transactions anywhere in the store. This system consists of an app on an iPod touch inside of a case that contains a bar code scanner and credit card swiper. It has mobile connectivity via WiFi. Using the iPod touches in the scanner/swiper case instead of the old proprietary hardware reduced the transaction time from over 11 minutes down to two minutes -- an eye-opening increase in efficiency. Next time you see specialized hardware in use, ask yourself how the workflow would be different if that capability was based on a mobile platform instead.

## 4

## LOST REVENUE DUE TO INCOMPLETE INFO

Does your outside sales representative or field service worker generate incomplete invoices that result in lost revenue? An app can help your team think through the sales process, so they capture every product used and every service rendered on site, in nearly real time. This type of 'pricing wizard' app also creates consistent pricing across all employees by calculating uniform discounts, seasonal sales and other special offers. Anywhere you see lost revenue due to incomplete invoices, there should be an app for that.

## 5

## DATA LOCKED AWAY

If you have technology in place for a small subset of your team that could provide value to other, remote audiences, there should be an app for that. For example, a police dispatch officer views video in a back room full of monitors, but the officers patrolling the area do not have access. Give the remote officers a mobile device with an app that ties into their cameras and you've placed real time information in the hands of people who have to make quick decisions.

## 6

## REMOTE VPNS

Virtual Private Networks are used to access corporate data while on the go. Very often these connections are used for data lookups or simple functionality that really don't require the cumbersome link to a laptop. A suite of secure mobile apps can provide the quick data retrieval mobile users need without lugging out a laptop. Take a look at the resources VPN users are accessing and you'll probably find there should be apps for that.

## 7

## MOBILE WEB CROSSING

Take a look at your web site log files. For all the websites your organization already hosts – marketing sites, corporate sites, intranets and extranets – who is using them? Go see how many iPhone, iPad, or other mobile users are already hitting web assets today. The results may surprise you.

Find out what mobile web users are doing on your site. What functionality are they using? What data are they trying to access? You might be able to break out that chunk of mobile functionality or data and deliver it as an app that better addresses the needs of this group. Significant web traffic from mobile devices screams, 'There should be an app for that!'

## 8

## SELF SERVICE

Anywhere you see a stationary kiosk that is used to look up information, there may be a mobile app opportunity. Kiosks tell users they have to physically go somewhere to get something they want, even though the information is not stored on the kiosk anyway (it's usually on a server somewhere else).

Anywhere in an organization where you are asking people to use something like a kiosk, there should be an app for that. People should not have to come to your store to look something up or interact with your data and even if that's the ideal place for the interaction, they're not wandering the aisles if they're standing at a kiosk. Kiosks are a great indicator that you need to extend data to your user on a mobile platform so they can have it with them regardless of location.

## 9

## PLAYING TELEPHONE

Is your sales team constantly calling back in to the main office because they are mobile and can not get to the latest data? The sales brochure? A shipment status? If your outside sales force has to call people in your office to ask questions, there should be an app allowing them to access that data without disrupting other employees.

## 10

## TURNING YOUR BACK

Anywhere you have a customer touching workflow -- whether it is in medicine, selling a car, or working with someone out in the field -- if you have to turn your back on the customer to walk away to find the data and come back, there needs to be an app for that. Having data immediately available can speed up work flows and improve the customer experience.

## About the Author

Alex Bratton is a technology visionary and veteran entrepreneur motivated by his passion for implementing technology in new ways. He specializes in identifying unique business opportunities by forecasting the impact of new technologies, and then applies that knowledge to create revenue generating companies, products, and systems.

Alex currently serves as CEO for two Chicago area technology companies – Lextech Global Services, leading developer of mobile applications with serious business value, and Lextech Labs, award-winning mobile video surveillance solution provider. He founded 7 other companies before founding Lextech Global Services in 2001 and Lextech Labs in 2008.



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## About Lextech Global Services

Lextech Global Services is a 'serious mobile apps' firm based in Lisle, IL. Lextech helps clients with mobile strategy, visual app definition and development of serious apps across iPhone, iPad and other mobile platforms. Learn about serious apps or Lextech Global Services by visiting <http://www.lextech.com>.



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