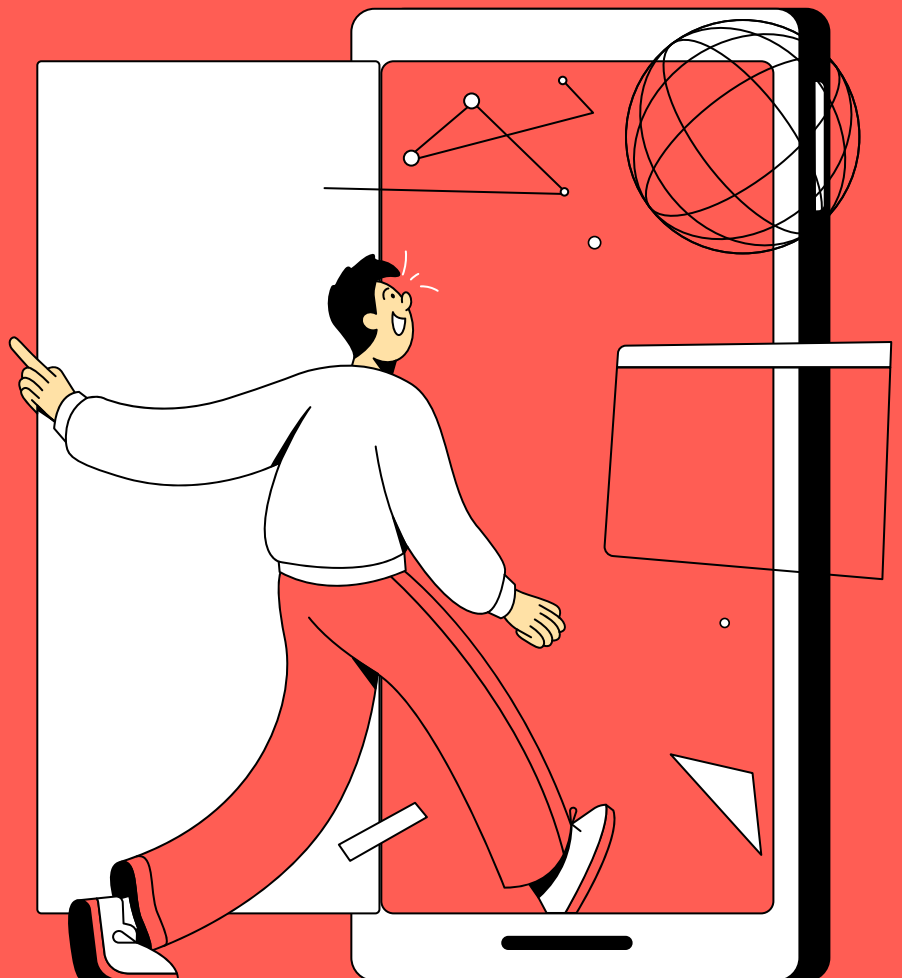


To app or not to app

Official Technology Supplier of

**BRITISH
FENCING**



Introduction

Thinking about building an app for your organisation?

You're not alone. Many wonder if an app could boost their services and streamline operations.

This guide is here to help you figure that out.

We'll explore whether an app is a must-have tool or a vanity project. We'll break down what makes an app valuable for an organisation and when it might be more trouble than it's worth.

We'll also walk you through the process of creating an app so you know what to expect in terms of planning and resources. By the end, you'll have a clear framework to help you decide: To app or not to app?

Here's what to expect:

- What is an app?
- Do you need an app?
- What if you don't need an app?
- Do you need agency help?
- How to map your app's development
- How to manage the project
- How to secure long-term success



What actually is an app?

When you think “app,” you might picture something you download from the App Store or Google Play. You wouldn’t be wrong. But an app can also be a web-based platform that you access through your browser — no download needed.

Let’s look at the three app types that might help you better understand and choose the right fit for your business.

The 3 app types

Web apps

Web apps are designed to perform specific functions accessible via a web browser on any device. They’re convenient as they eliminate the need for downloads and installations. For example, LinkedIn for desktop is a web app that allows users to network, share updates and search for jobs directly through their web browser without needing to install any software.

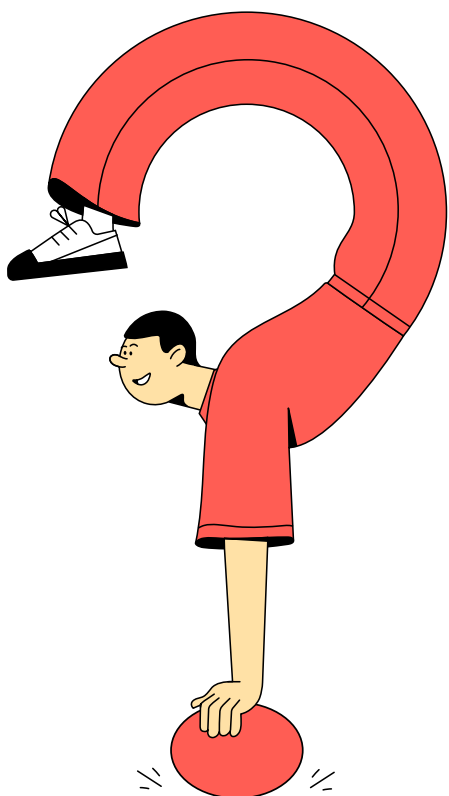
Another example is a salon that could use a web app to manage bookings. Clients can schedule appointments, view available slots and even choose specific services directly from their phones or computers.

The downside: they might not perform as seamlessly as a dedicated mobile app, especially on mobile devices where they can feel a bit clunky. Although that is becoming a smaller problem in 2024 as these web-apps are getting more sophisticated.

Hybrid apps

Hybrid apps are downloaded via the app stores but the way they are built is more like a web app. They use web technologies to code the front end (the part of the app that users interact with directly), so it can be easier for developers to write. Clever tools ‘translate’ the web code into app code.

Why does this matter? Normally, you’d have to write the entire app code twice—once in Apple’s language (Swift or Objective C) for iOS and once in Google’s language (Java or Kotlin) for Android. That means double the work if you want your app on both platforms. Hybrid apps solve this problem by letting you write the front end code once and then compile it for both iOS and Android. This saves time and effort — especially in the long run.



What actually is an app?

As an added bonus, you can even reuse the code on the web if you structure it properly. This can get complicated, but not as complicated as building your app three times ...

An organisation might use a hybrid app to let users download videos, sign up for events, and receive relevant updates directly on their devices. Updates like new events or success stories can be made centrally and appear instantly across all platforms.

Take the **British Fencing app**. It was developed to make fencing more engaging and accessible — and is accessible on all platforms: iOS, Android and web but only requires one code base.

The downside to hybrid apps? While they're versatile and economical, they might struggle with complex or heavier workloads like 3D animation, AR or gaming.

Native mobile apps

Mobile apps can only be accessed by downloading and installing directly onto your devices. Built specifically for mobile use, they offer the best performance for tasks requiring high power and speed.

Sometimes, only a mobile app will do, especially when you need to fully utilise a phone's capabilities. For example, gaming requires top-notch speed, and augmented reality features aren't yet available in hybrid apps.

GrowthMonitor is a research project's native mobile app designed to simplify child health monitoring. It enables parents to track growth at home using augmented reality (AR) for precise measurements. The app uses an algorithm to analyse growth patterns and categorise them into alert levels, helping parents take appropriate action. With high detection accuracy, it reduces the need for GP visits and ensures early health checks.

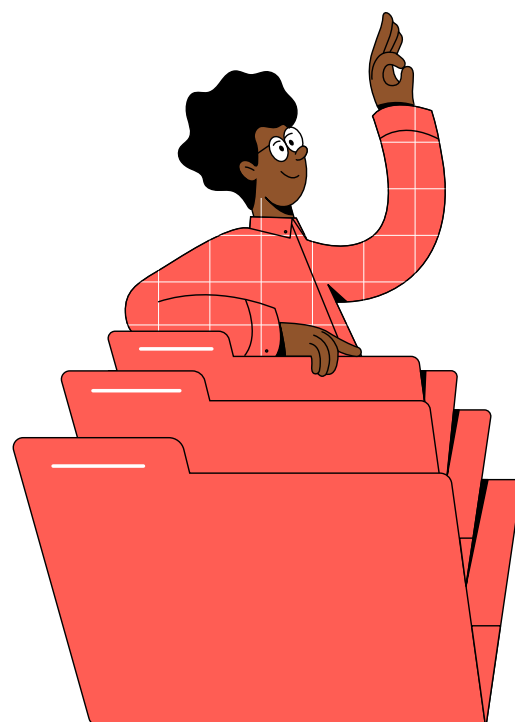
However, you need to consider that development and maintenance costs are often higher with a mobile app, because separate versions for iOS and Android are required. This can double the workload and expenses. Updates need to be managed across both platforms, complicating the process exponentially.

But where does the data go?

Building your app's front end is just the beginning. Whichever version you choose, to load or send data via the internet, you need a so-called "backend". This allows your app to communicate with databases, authentication systems or third-party content providers. This communication is done via an API (application programming interface).

An API is the thinking core of your app. It processes user inputs and sends information back and forth. For example, it retrieves content to display in the app or handles user logins. The API sends user credentials to the server, checks them against the database and returns a confirmation.

To plan an app, consider where your data will be stored, how you'll manage it, analyse data points and generate reports. You might need to integrate a CMS or CRM and choose the right databases for your data.



Do you need an app?

To be honest, the real question isn't
"Do you need an app?"

but

**"How can an app make our service
better, faster or easier?"**

Think about what an app could do for your users, clients or providers. For example, British Fencing needed a way to distribute e-learning content that could also open up new revenue streams. An app was the perfect vehicle to engage its community and sell premium content.

First, nail down the app's purpose. What should it do? Why do you need it? Sometimes, the answer might be simpler than you think. Maybe a basic website widget could test the waters before you dive into full development.

Next, check if there's already an app like the one you're thinking about. If it exists, that could be a good sign — it means people are already using something similar and find it useful. This can validate your idea and guide your development process.

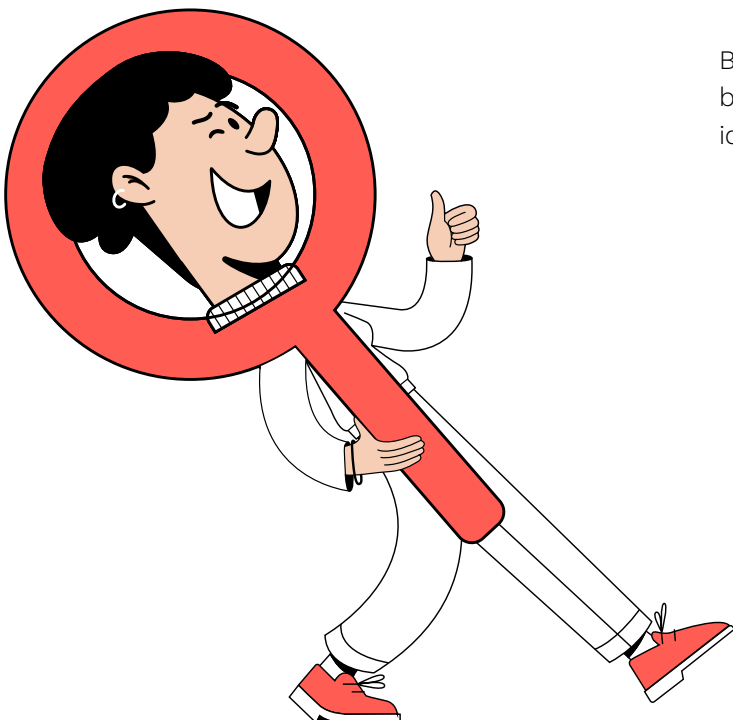
No existing app? This could be your golden ticket ... or a sign to reconsider. Is the audience too small, or is the idea too complex or pricey? Challenge your idea thoroughly.

Gather all the details:

- What the app must achieve
- What your users need
- What your organisation's goals are
- How you'll scale the app
- What your budget is

Get feedback from potential users — especially the sceptics. Listening to their concerns can help you refine your plan and build a solid business case.

Be honest. Be critical. Above all, be ready to pivot based on what you learn. That's how you turn a good idea into a great app.



What if you don't need an app?

If you're not actually an app business, then there could be plenty of other tech tools that might fit the bill.

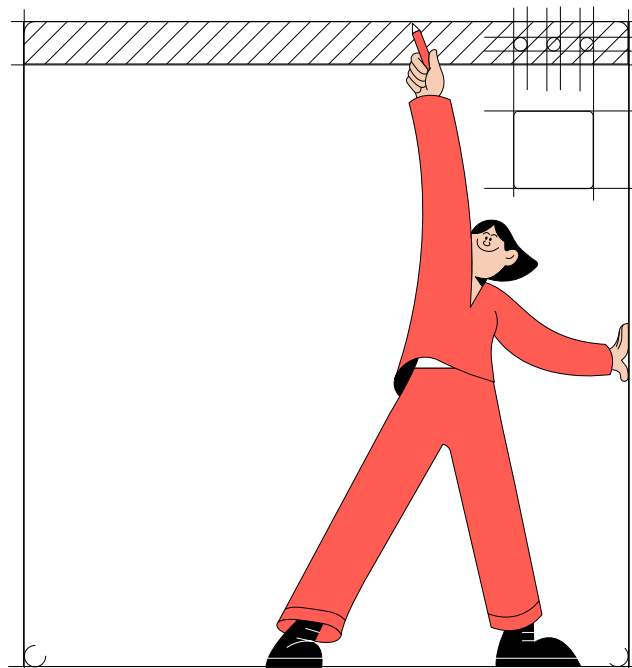
These include:

SaaS platforms: online services that help you manage different parts of your organisation, like customer service or marketing, without having to install anything on your computer.

Website widgets: small programs you can add to your website, like a button for live chat or a tool to book appointments.

Customer Relationship Management systems (CRMs): help you keep track of your interactions with customers and manage your relationships with them more effectively. These often come with public forms you can use to interact with your customers.

Case management systems: useful for organisations that need to manage flows of information, helping you keep track of everything in one place.



White labelling: Partnering with another organisation or licensing an existing system, might allow you to use their app by adding your brand to it (a process called white-labelling). It's like moving into a furnished apartment— that can be cheaper and easier than buying everything new! It can be more restrictive but that could be worth the saving of time and effort.

Investment: Or, consider buying into an existing app! It's similar to investing in a small business that's already up and running. You can become part owner and share in its growth and success without the initial heavy lifting of starting from zero.

If you're unsure whether you need an app, it's worth reading on to understand what the next steps are.

Do you need agency help?

So, you've decided you need something because it meets a very real need. But you're still not sure how. Now, the next step is figuring out if you need an agency to help make it happen.

This decision can depend on your:

- Budget
- Project complexity
- Long-term management plans
- Tolerance for tech jargon (A good agency will translate “tech talk” into “plain English,” keeping you informed and confident at every step.)

Here's when (and why) it might be the right choice:

Starting out

Start with an agency to dodge the usual early mishaps. They're great for crafting that basic first version of your app to test the waters.

A good agency doesn't just develop either; they plan. They'll help you map out your business plan, all necessary steps for production, budget and (most importantly) long-term effort and costs. Keep the project scope clear from the start and document everything — adding new features unexpectedly during development can cause budget overruns and frustrate your developers.

Development strategy

It's easier to get your specifications right before coding begins with expert support. Unclear specs are a fast track to project headaches.

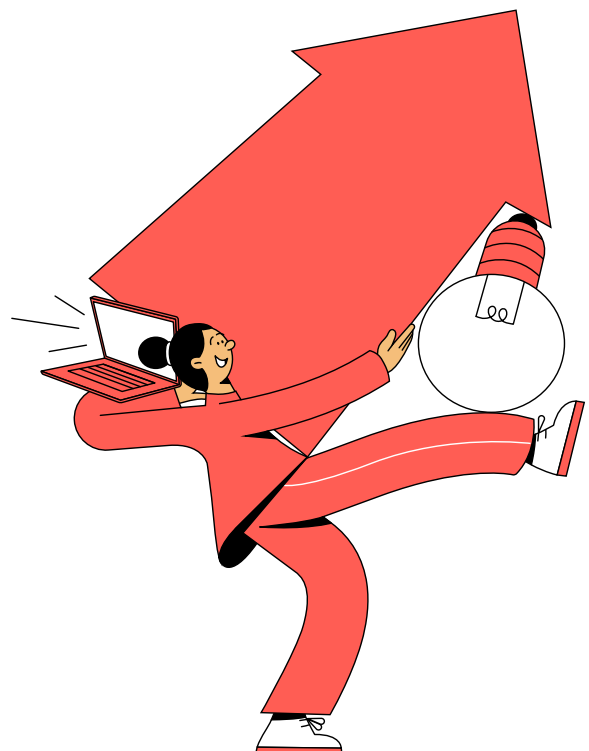
You might be planning to take over with your own team eventually. But an agency can set you up for success. They'll advise on the tech talents you'll need and step in if your current team isn't up to the task. They might even be able to help you hire a 5 star inhouse team!

Choosing the right experts

Yes, choosing the right agency is crucial — just ask British Fencing. After a rocky start with their initial app development, switching to a more compatible agency made all the difference.

Here are extra points to keep in mind:

- Opt for flexibility: choose agencies that are willing to customise existing tools for quicker, cost-effective builds. Avoid those that only push their own solutions and don't question “Why you actually want an app”
- Leverage modern tools: with today's technology, including white-label apps and reusable components, look for an agency that can deliver builds without reinventing the wheel and sacrificing quality in design and system integration.
- Ensure system compatibility: your app will likely need to integrate with other systems like online payments or customer management. It's essential that your agency has expertise to connect and integrate these features.



Mapping your app's development

Creating an app is more than just what users see on their screens.

Behind the scenes, it needs to connect with systems like:

- content management
- payments
- customer relations
- accounting
- stock levels
- analytics

It's a complete system providing valuable insights and data for your organisation.

Start by gathering detailed requirements and putting them into a clear plan. This should include security and privacy consideration for your users, communication flows, user onboarding experience and a launch plan. Research available tools and components you can reuse. Then, create a detailed roadmap for the app's development and maintenance.

Budgeting for app development covers several stages:

1. Initial planning
2. Content generation
3. Design
4. Development
5. Ongoing maintenance

Estimating costs can be tricky — saying “an app” is like saying “a house.” Is it a palace in London or a beach shack in Thailand? Setting clear expectations early is crucial.

First, decide how much you can invest. Consult with experts to see if your budget matches your desired app. If it does, great! If not, your planning partners can help find the next best solution.

This might mean starting with a simpler version and adding features over time. They can also help you seek extra funding, like grants or innovation funds. Some agencies might even co-invest if you have a strong business plan.

Effectively plan and allocate resources. For instance, if you have £10,000, you can start with a **simple MVP** (Minimum Viable Product). Use this to demonstrate its value to funders and secure more funding based on evidence of its success. But be prepared that you might have to start from scratch again once your concept has been proven, because the quick and dirty first version might not scale!

Also, plan for non-monetary resources. Someone from your team needs to work closely with the development team, potentially create content, develop marketing materials and manage internal rollout plans.

For revenue-generating apps, it should make more money than it costs to develop and maintain. For non-profits, the app might save costs or expand services.

Controlling spending

Control spending by discussing ongoing costs early. Budget for essentials like domains and hosting and plan for future updates based on necessary platform upgrades and user feedback.

Understand your long-term goals and have a backup plan. And above all: avoid the sunk cost fallacy — if your app isn't performing as expected, it's okay to reassess and pivot!

How to manage the project

So, you've nailed down your budget, chosen the right agency and mapped out your app's development.

Now, let's make sure the project runs smoothly.

1. Avoid scope creep

This one comes up again and again, but we can't say it often enough. Establish concrete requirements from the start. If you're working with an agency, they will help you define these. Stick to the plan to avoid budget blowouts and timeline issues. You can always add extra ideas to a 'roadmap' list somewhere to address once the basics are done.

2. Define team structure

Understand everyone's roles and create clear communication channels. Whether you're working with an agency or in-house, everyone should know their responsibilities and how to communicate effectively.

3. Set realistic timelines

Create a timeline with clear milestones and regular check-in points to measure progress. Tools like Trello, Monday or Jira can help you manage tasks and timelines. And make sure you add in adequate buffers because life just happens...

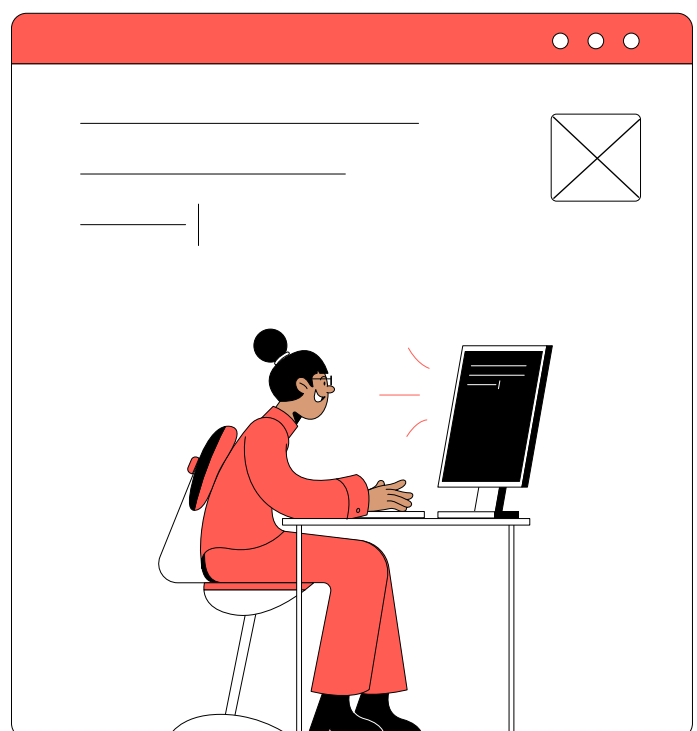
4. Maintain regular communication

Your agency shouldn't disappear for months and then surprise you with a finished product. Schedule regular check-ins and incremental testing so everything is on track. Be available to answer questions and address uncertainties, so developers don't have to guess on your behalf.

5. Testing and launch plan

Have a clear plan for testing and launching the app from the start. It's important to understand how you will review and sign off on the app, and know when it's officially 'done.' It will take a while from the 'finished' app to it actually being available for end users. Don't forget to factor this into your timeline!

Managing an app project might seem daunting, and it is (luckily, otherwise we'd be out of a job ...). But with these steps, you can keep things on track.



Thriving beyond launch day

**Let's pretend for a second ...
Congratulations, you've launched
your app! So what's next?**

**Now you need to keep it successful
in the long run, right?**

Here's a few helpful tips to keep you going:

Gather feedback

- Use A/B testing to compare different versions of your app. For example, try two different designs for your navigation menu and see which one keeps users engaged longer
- Analyse app store reviews and ratings for user feedback
- If you can, set aside some money for in-depth testing to really understand what your users think

Manage your marketing

- Use social media, email campaigns and app store optimisation (ASO) to promote your app and keep users engaged
- ASO? You might have heard of SEO — it's the process of improving an app's visibility on an app store. Think optimising your app's title, keywords and videos, as well as encouraging users to leave positive reviews and ratings
- Make sure you have the resources to keep your marketing efforts ongoing and effective

Monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

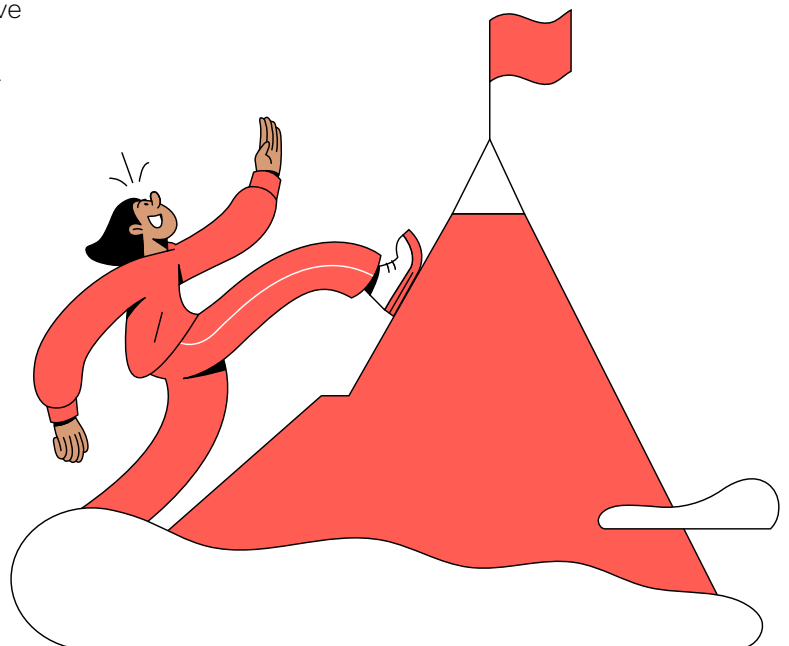
- Track metrics that are valuable for you — there's no point tracking daily active users (DAU) if you're selling a high value app to a small number of people that only check in once a month
- Regularly compare actual performance against financial or other goals

Plan for updates and maintain

- Schedule regular updates to fix bugs, add new features, and keep your app secure, fresh, and user-friendly. Browsers and app stores are constantly evolving, so keeping your app compatible requires regular new releases.
- Have regular meetings with your maintenance team to make sure everything is running smoothly and address any issues quickly
- Potentially hire a product owner if needed to oversee continuous improvement

Don't forget this final point

When you succeed, celebrate like it's 1999! A product launch can feel like an anticlimax because of all the hard work still to come. But you've made it this far, and that's worth celebrating!



Appy ever after?

Let's revisit the core question:

“How can an app make my service better, faster or easier?” Why ask this again?

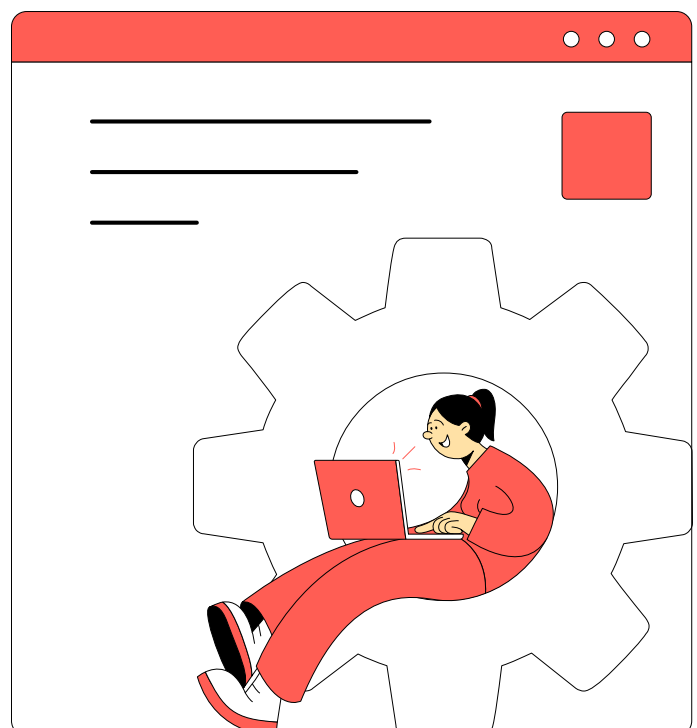
It's the foundation for making sure your app meets real needs, provides value and improves user experience.

But if an app doesn't align with your business objectives, don't force it. SaaS platforms or CRMs might be a better fit for your needs. Explore all your options before making a decision.

Feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of building an app? That's normal, especially for big projects. Consult with an agency to make the process more manageable — maybe even enjoyable (we're very entertaining)!

At Telescopic, we turn app development chaos into clarity. We'll help you plan, build and maintain your app — or maybe an alternative — with precision and ease. No more guessing games — we'll find a way that fits your needs perfectly.

Let's see if an app fits your organisation.
[Get in touch.](#)



Telescopic - Digital transformation relief

**Basically, we fix your tech troubles.
You'll uncover workflow insights,
optimise your processes and
automate these pesky manual
tasks away.**

Our proprietary 4 phase approach ensures that your systems will be clear and easy to understand, streamlined, efficient and won't break the bank. No jargon. No unnecessary tools. Just straightforward solutions that work.

We're in it for the long haul. We work as one team, making sure you grasp the tech driving your success.

We know our way round your sector:

- Nonprofits
- Manufacturing
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- Agencies

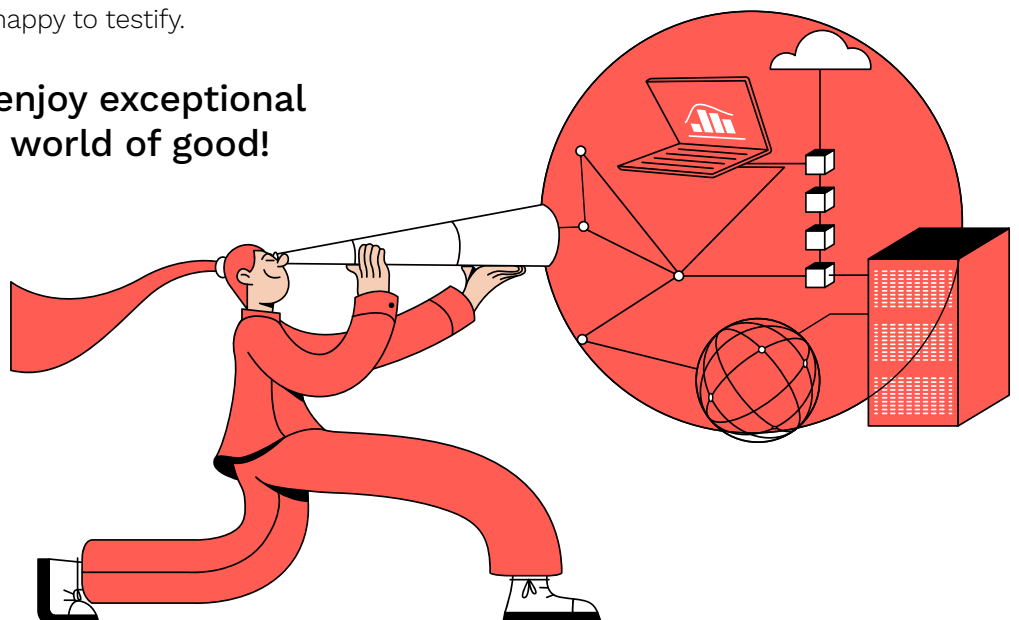
But don't just take it from us:

Our ISO27001 certification ensures your data is always secure.

As a B Corp, we support working parents, promote women in tech and set standards for accessibility and carbon-neutral practices.

Our clients thrive, and they're happy to testify.

**Partner with us and enjoy exceptional
results while doing a world of good!**



Telescopic x British Fencing - Official Technology Supplier.

Telescopic successfully helped relaunch British Fencing's Explore Fencing App and offer strategic advisory support to BF's continued developments in the digital and tech space.

This official partnership was a development of an already strong relationship. Telescopic are excited by the ideas, programmes, and work that BF do and are keen to go the extra mile to help in the lead-up to the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

As a valued partner in BF's wider commercial partner and sponsorship programme they help BF complete digital projects much faster.

"At BF, we are blessed to have multiple suppliers that help bring to life our vision and mission as an organisation. There are some suppliers, however, with which we connect more deeply. We found this to be the case with Rita and her team at Telescopic, especially at a time when we went to find a supplier because we needed help the most. They have shown an incredible ability to provide honest feedback in a respectful way, and to provide a level of service that has kept our work on track. Moreover, they have helped to drive the overall excellence of what we are trying to achieve at BF"

– James Craig, Commercial Director at British Fencing.





We're on your team, talking your talk and making the tech world a bit more understandable.

The goal is simple - ensure technology works for you, simplifies your life, and leaves no room for confusion.

Ready to get started?

Say hello on hello@wearetelescopic.co.uk
or call us on 02036331575

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