Should your utility have a mobile app?

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Today's customers want fast, easy experiences when interacting with a brand, both in-person and online. For utilities, that means offering a way for customers to successfully manage their account with as little friction as possible. A well-optimized mobile app helps your customers connect with you and provides a positive customer experience.

New development and mobile engagement platforms are allowing companies to build mobile-app-like experiences across multiple operating systems, regardless of budget. But according to our mobile-app scan of more than 100 utility apps, 53% of utility companies don't have a mobile app at all.

I know what you're thinking. If you already have a mobile-optimized website, is it really that important to also have an offering on the Apple App Store or Google Play? I would posit that the answer is yes, but mainly because of how easy and cost-effective it has become in the last few years to create a branded mobile app or an optimized web presence on mobile.

Are mobile apps worth the investment for utilities?

We've heard from our utility members that one reason they're skeptical of building a mobile app is because they're worried about building a channel that won't be worth the investment. After all, according to research firm Clutch, the enterprise-level apps that utilities typically deploy can cost as much as $500,000 to develop. But new development platforms and technologies, such as Progressive Web Apps (PWAs), have created opportunities to build one set of code across the iOS, Android, or Windows operating systems without customization. PWAs load the same way as web pages but offer functionality like push notifications and offline access.

And then there's "app fatigue"—growing tired of having too many apps on their phone and constantly being asked to download a proprietary app—a phenomenon that has only come to light as smartphones have become commonplace. While this can certainly be an issue, it's important to consider usage statistics and ensure you're catering to younger customers. Our Omnichannel Survey found that customers age 18 to 34 are significantly more likely than those age 35 and up to use a company's mobile app. We also found in our Digital Metrics Survey that about 4% to 7% of respondents have downloaded their utility's mobile app and these people are among the most likely to complete self-service transactions using the app. While that may not seem like a large segment of customers, it can be

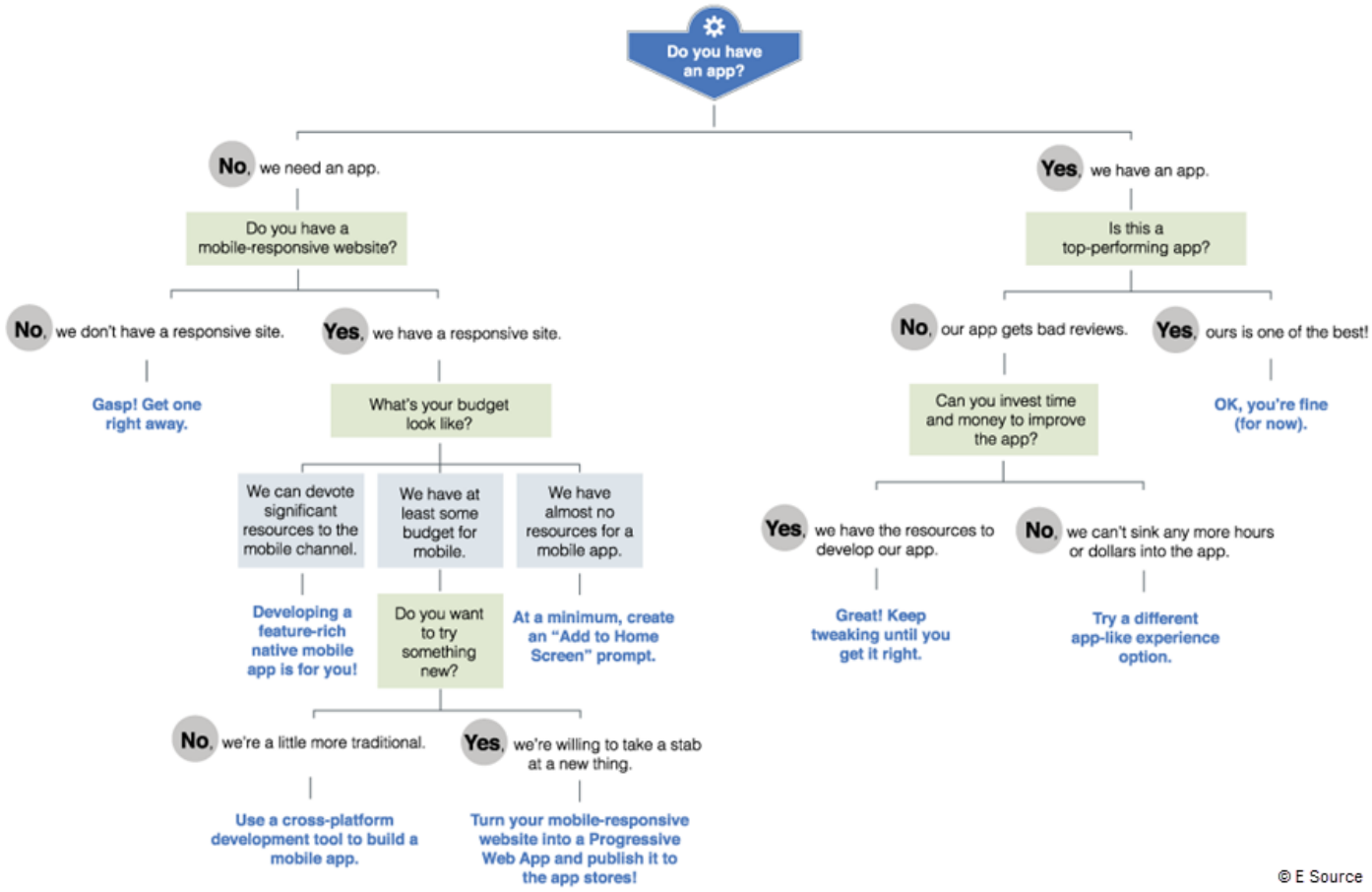
well worth the investment if the development and maintenance costs are lowered.

Step through our mobile-app decision tree

If you're not sure which mobile-app strategy is best for your utility's budget, resources, and objectives, use our mobile app decision tree (PDF) flowchart to guide you.

Mobile-app decision tree

Use this flowchart to determine which mobile-app strategy is best for your utility, given your budget, resources, and objectives.



Even if your utility decides not to pursue the development of a mobile app, you should at least have a mobile-responsive website with an Add to Home Screen prompt to increase ease-of-use and self-service transactions.

To learn more about how to establish a mobile presence, develop cost-effective apps, and ensure your mobile strategy is aligned with company goals and priorities, read our report Why you should have a mobile app and how to develop it without breaking the bank.

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