Mobile and Social: Ten Best Practices for Designing Mobile Applications

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This paper gives ten best practices for designing mobile applications that have social-networking functions. The need for such an approach is given by the rapid growth in importance of both social networks and mobile applications. In order to make it easy to follow where the best practices come from, the paper starts with a look at why social networks are more than just a buzz word and at how the field of mobile applications is evolving. It also shows how and why the two fields go together so well. To further make the point, there is a case study of four interesting mobile applications that are textbooks examples of successful applications. The best practices are based on research done for this article and on the extensive knowledge of the author.
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1 Introduction

Two of the fastest growing fields in IT, over the last few years, have been mobile devices and social networks. Mobile devices are becoming more powerful, more accessible and more common. The so-called Smartphone's are not an oddity anymore, as more and more mobile devices are able to connect to the Internet and support applications. According to Gartner [1], in the first quarter of 2010, 17.3% of all mobile phones were smartphone's. Compared to 2009 when the percent was 13.6, which amount to an total increase of almost 49%.

Social network traffic is also growing at an astonishing rate. In May 2010 in the United Kingdom the total traffic of social media websites surpassed the traffic for search engines [2]. Just a few years ago the very though would have been unthinkable, and yet it is a reality.

What is of great importance for both fields is how well mobile devices and social networks go together. If we were asking ourselves, not so long ago, why would anyone want to update their FaceBook status while in a pub, now, it seems the only right way to do this? Twitter and FaceBook, two of the biggest social networks of the moment, are seeing a large percent of their updates being made from mobile devices. Development in phone technology, like the launch of the excellent iPhone 3GS in 2009 caused an exponential increase of the numbers of mobile uploads to YouTube [3]. Even further, location based services like Forusquare and Gowalla rely on the fact that people can update their location on the go [23], from mobile devices.

The boom of the mobile device industry is inseparably related to the growth of the number of mobile applications. Such application should not and do not ignore the popularity of social networks and, therefore, integrate various social driven functions.

As social networks now step into an age of maturity [4] we must take a hard look at what are the successful implementations of social sharing capabilities into mobile apps and which are the bad ones.

This paper does exactly that. It takes a good look at what makes a good app and why some apps are bad, from the point of view of integration of social capabilities. Based on that it presents a list of 10 best practices to follow when designing mobile apps with integrated social-networking capabilities

The paper begins with an analysis of what are social networks are and why they should be taken seriously. It continues with an exploration of the rise of mobile devices and application platforms. The next part of the paper is a case study of a few apps that have done an excellent job of using social networks and of some pure social networking applications worth mentioning. This is followed by the result of the analysis of the cur-

rent situation, which is a list of best practices for designing web apps with social networking capabilities. The paper ends with conclusions.

2 Are social networks just a buzz word?

Social Networks have been considered, for years, a place for teenagers to hang out, not a place for serious businesses or grown-ups. This, however, is changing rapidly, with the growing popularity of Twitter, FaceBook and the likes of it. And, not to forget, the possibility to integrate social-network-like features into simple websites with minimal effort, by using plugins such as FaceBook Connect or the FaceBook Like button and the Open Graph Protocol. Not only FaceBook is providing such functions. Google, the search engine giant, has been offering Google Friend Connect for a few years and Twitter has recently joined the band-wagon by allowing logging-in by using OAth, a protocol that allows users to sign into various sites by using a reliable 3rd party website.

Gartner's Hype Cycle [1] shows that even microblogging services, like Twitter, which can be considered a form of social networks, are now making rapid steps towards becoming mature products that are over the hype and stride towards productivity.

One of the most compelling arguments that can be made in this matter was done by the authors of the ENGAGEMENTdb report [5] who studied which of the top brands in the world are most engaged in communicating with their customers. A side-product of the reports is a study if the correlation of revenue and engagement (Figure 1).

The authors of the report use four categories of companies in their study. From [5]:

Depending on the number of channels and how deeply they are engaged in them, brands took on one of four specific profiles:

- *Mavens. These brands are engaged in seven or more channels and have an above-average engagement score. Brands like Starbucks and Dell are able to sustain a high level of engagement across multiple social media channels. Mavens not only have a robust strategy and dedicated*

teams focused on social media, but also make it a core part of their go-to-market strategy. Companies like these could not imagine operating without a strong presence in social media.
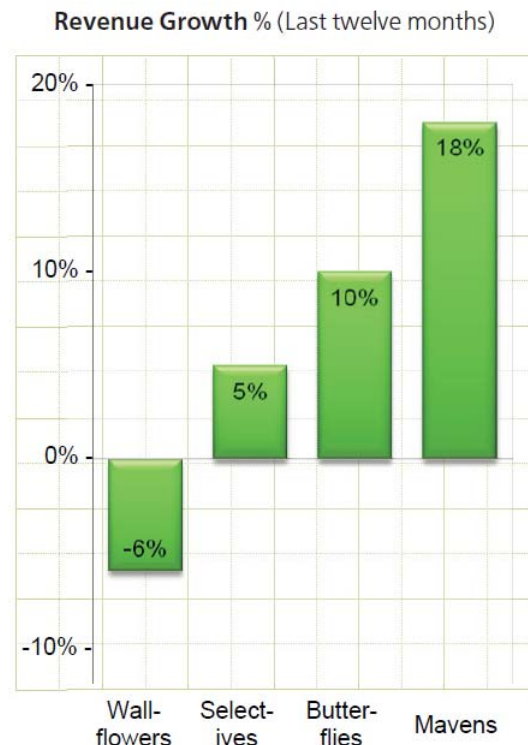
Fig. 1. Engagement Correlates to Financial Performance [5]

- *Butterflies. These brands are engaged in seven or more channels but have lower than average engagement scores. Butterflies like American Express and Hyundai have initiatives in many different channels, but tend to spread themselves too thin, investing in a few channels while letting others languish. Their ambition is to be a Maven...*
- *Selectives. These brands are engaged in six or fewer channels and have higher than average engagement scores. Selectives like H&M and Philips have a very strong presence in just a few channels where they focus on engaging customers deeply when and where it matters most. [...] These are beachheads, started by an impassioned evangelist with a shoestring budget.*
- *Wallflowers. These brands are engaged in six or fewer channels and have below-*

average engagement scores. Wallflowers like McDonalds and BP are slow to or are just getting started, dipping their toes into social media waters. [..] They are also cautious about the risks, uncertain about the benefits, and therefore engage only lightly in the channels where they are present.

In short, the more engaged companies are, the higher their revenue growth, which shows what many have forgotten or tend to forget – communicating with the clients at a basic level works exceptionally well and is far more trusted than advertising. Social networks are another way of creating knowledge and engaging [18].

At this point there might be still the doubt that mostly Generation Y [6] is present on social networks. As it turns out, different studies prove that this is not so. An interesting research, done by Pingdom.com, used publically available data to compute what is the average age for the users of the most popular networks [7]. It turns out that more than 60% of all Facebook users are above 35 years old. This is a demographic to watch for, for companies.

So far it was shown that social networks are evolving towards maturity, that it is profitable, for companies, to engage in social networks and that not only teens use social networks. This is the present. The question now is what will the future bring? Will we see a meltdown and failing interest for these kinds of applications? Or will we the growths continue.

It is mostly a guess game to figure out what will happen, however a look can be taken at what is happening at the very moment and
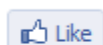
some conclusions can be made based on that.One of the most talked-about and controversial moments of the beginning of 2010 was the launch of the FaceBook 'Like' button. At a first glance there is not much to it, just a button that can be added to a website or blog on which users, which are logged in into FaceBook, can click and by doing this to show their friends and also the website owner that they enjoy that content. At a first glance there is not much to it, yet another social-bookmarking feature. Figure 2 shows very well how this is not unique; many other platforms have the same functions. However, FaceBook has two things that other platforms come short of:

- An enormous user base. From http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php? statistics :
  o *More than 400 million active users*
  o *50% of our active users log on to Facebook in any given day*
  o *Average user has 130 friends*
  o *People spend over 500 billion minutes per month on Facebook*
- An ambition to become the website to go to for all Internet users

With these two ideas in mind we can see how such an apparently small thing can be more important than it seem. And we have to keep one more thing in mind. As the Edelman Trust Barometer report shows, friends are trusted sources.

Putting it all together we can see that FaceBook, with enough data, can build an extremely relevant search engine, where the traditional link count, used by Google for calculating the page rank, will be replaced by likes and relations between users.

Fig. 2. Example of the FaceBook "Like" button and other social bookmarking buttons from. Example from searchengineland.com

As scary as this might be to Google at the moment, it's not the only way social net-

works are replacing or completing search engines. The real-time nature of Twitter has

turned it into one of the most efficient user-driven news sources [9]. In many situations Twitter has beaten major news channels to the stories.

As we live in the age of information, very easily a case can be made which to show that search engines are very important to our daily activities, professional or personal. This new focus social networks are showing turns them into much more than a simple tool for teenagers to share silly pictures.

The answer to the question this section asks – "Are social networks just a buzz world" is a definite "No".

3 Mobile devices and apps are evolving quickly

Mobile devices are spreading with an incredible speed. They are one of the fastest growing parts of the already fast growing field of IT. The growth is given by three so-called laws.

Gordon Moore, Jacob Nielsen and Mark Kryder have formulated three laws that bare their names. These are more empirical observation that actual laws and they all state that the capacity of the computing power (Moore [11]), the connection speeds for high-end home users, which is the bandwidth (Nielsen [12]), the magnetic disk area storage density (Kryder [13]) double at regular intervals. In the case of Moore's law the interval is every 18 months and for Nielsen and Kryder the period is 12 months. These laws withstood the test of time.

Such an alert growth rate has turned the three resources (processing power, bandwidth and storage capacity) from scarce to abundant, their price going down constantly. Forty years ago, in the 1960s, the price of a transistor was tens of dollars. Today the price is down to approximately 0.000001 cent for each of the transistors in Intel's latest quad-core [14].

Understanding how much computing has evolved and what it brings with it is a difficult task. A few years ago there was a fierce debate among specialists from the field of informatics and the Internet of weather the rise of content in the form of multimedia will overwhelm the existing infrastructure of the web. History has showed that the evolution in networking hardware was more than enough to prevent the apocalyptic meltdown of the Internet. One of the heroes of the multimedia revolution is YouTube. The website, which allows users to upload their clips for anyone to see, has produced an amount of traffic in 2008 which is equal to the whole Internet traffic in the year 2000 (Figure 3).
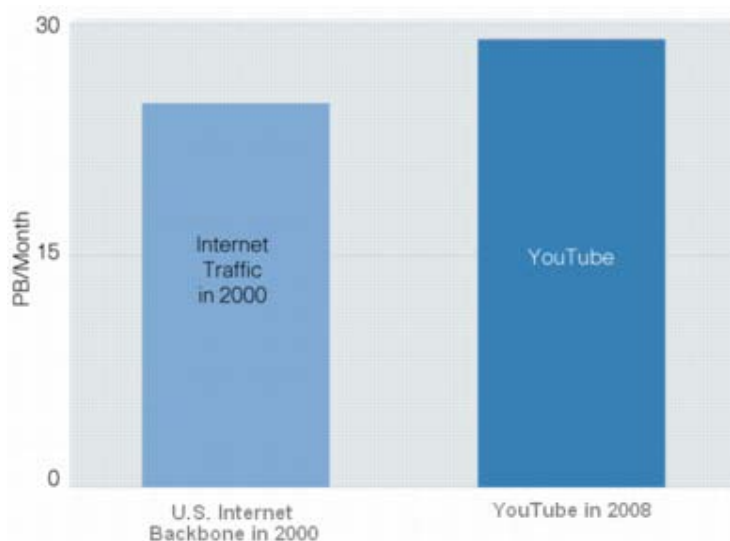

Fig. 3. YouTube traffic in 2008 vs Internet Traffic in 2000 [15]

The evolution of the carrying infrastructure, the miniaturization and decrease of the cost of computing power made it possible to put into very small devices the computing power

of gigantic supercomputers from a few decades ago.

But, as it was soon found out, the biggest problem of mobile devices soon became not the computing power or the battery life but the small screen size. No matter how high the resolution is, a 10cm screen is still a 10 cm screen, and there is a limited amount of easily readable text or images that can be put onto such a screen. Interacting with the images on a small screen is as challenging as getting the device to be able to process all that data, in the first place.

Therefore one of the biggest brake-troughs of the last 5 years has been not the increase in the number of megapixels in the device's camera or the storage but the design of the user interface (UI).

The biggest merit of the iPhone, design wise, is that it showed the world that a touch-screen device is not only possible, but feasible and extremely efficient. Natural gestures, zooming and a surface that is constantly adapted to the application that runs at the moment is what a staggering amount of the

powerful mobile devices have nowadays.

This freed the developers to do innovative and easy to use applications. This, in its right, created more demand, from the users of mobile phones to buy the phones with the best applications, which made the mobile device manufacturers to build phones that are focused on running applications that are as versatile as the developer's imagination and making app-stores where developers can monetize their creations. More developers translate into more apps, more apps attract more users and more users attract even more developers and the cycle continues. It has become unthinkable to launch a smart-phone with some chance of success, without a powerful developer community behind it [22].

The fight for the best app-store created a fragmentation that reminds of the early days of the PC era. As a side note the current era is called the post-PC era by some of the leaders of the industry, the likes of Steve Jobs.

At the beginning of 2010 the most used mobile platforms, by developers were the Android and iPhone (iOS) platforms (Figure 4).
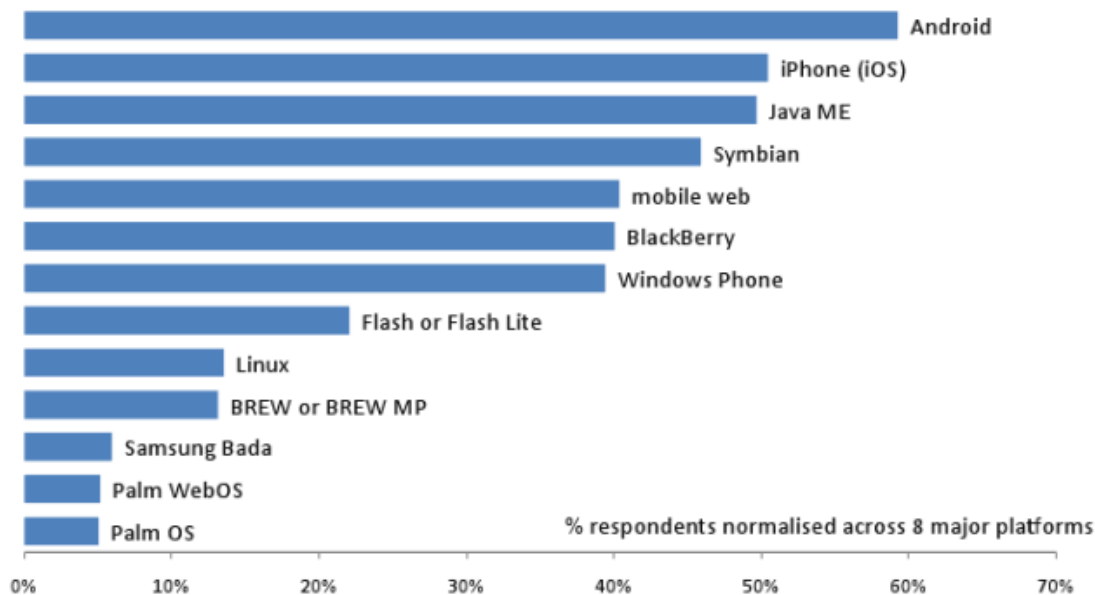

Fig. 4. Platforms most used my mobile developers [16]

The Android platform, still being the underdog, aims high, and has the biggest growth, both in number of apps and number of Android-enabled devices, which also plays a big

role into the growth of the platform. Apple still rules the mobile apps (Figure 5) world, however, with the growth rate of Android its supremacy might be challenged soon.
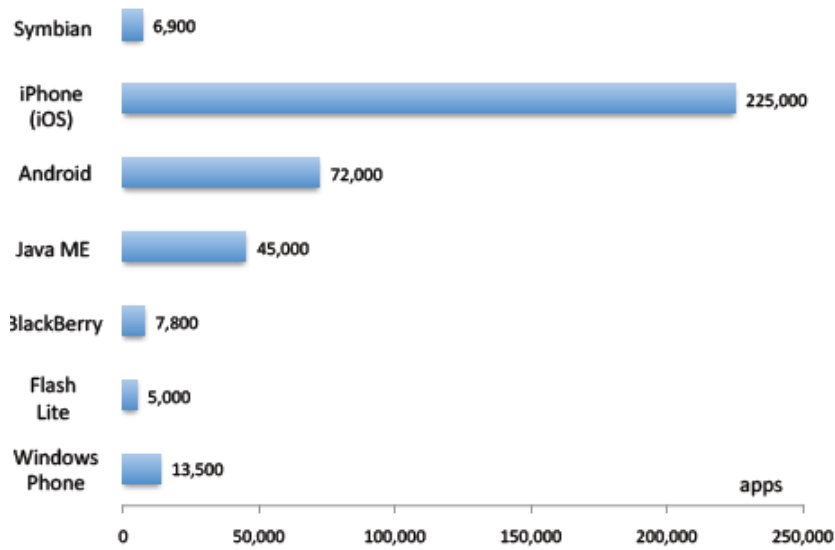
Fig. 5. Number of apps available in app store [16]

The big diversity of platforms makes choosing the winning platform more of a gamble, for developers. Changing platforms and learning new skills is time consuming and in a world where changes happen at a maddening pace, losing a couple of months with the wrong platform can be costly. The question is – is there such a thing as the right platform? The answer is mostly a big no, but there are some trends that can be watched. BlackBerry is more office oriented, iPhone and other devices that come with accelerometers are great gaming devices.
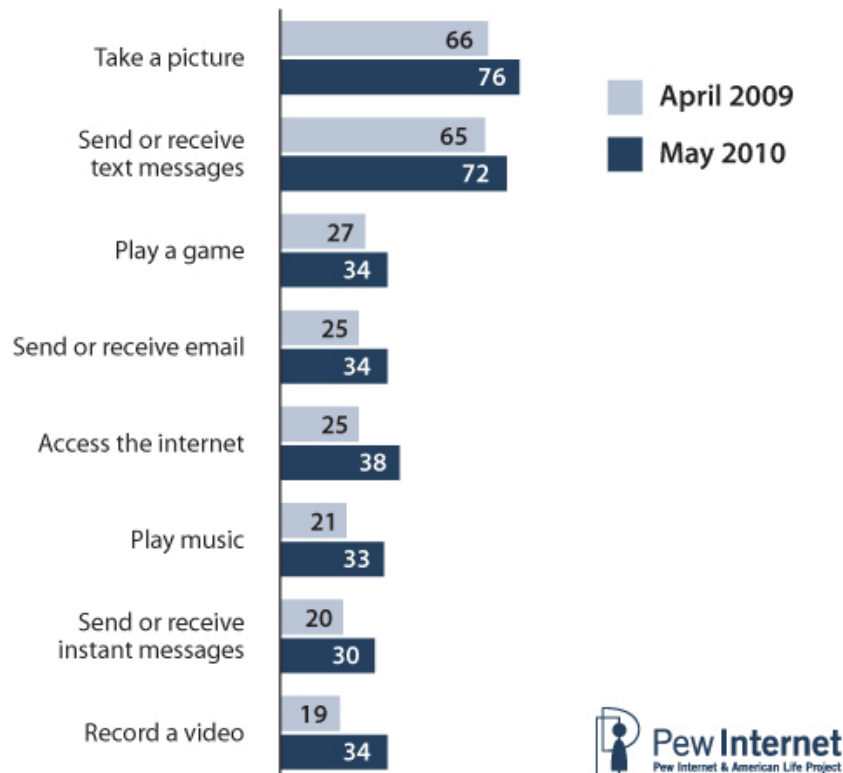

Fig. 6. Percent of cell phone owners who use their phones to do one of the above [17]

Until a clear winner emerges developers will still have to continue to guess. But one thing is clear, mobile device usage is growing and mobile devices are more and more used for

non-voice data applications. According to a PEW Internet report released at the beginning of 2010, the use of non-voice data applications has grown significantly in 2010, compared to 2009 (Figure 6)

For the biggest part of this activities there are enumerable applications developed by different users. As it was shown, social networks are here to stay and many of these applications either have some sort of social-networking functions into them or are built primarily as a social networking app.

In order to have a starting point for discussing which are the best practices of designing mobile apps with social-integration, a case study of four of the best mobile applications, up to date, is presented in this chapter. Each application is chosen for a specific strong point it has. All applications are available on the iOS iPhone platform.

a1. FaceBook iPhone application

Strong point: dedicated application which is very easy to use. It extends the functionalities of the complex FaceBook website to mobile devices seamlessly.

It's considered by many one of the best mobile applications and it's definitively one of the most used. For many businesses it's important to provide great experiences both on a laptop or desktop and on mobile devices. This is exactly the case of FaceBook, which managed to put most of the functionalities of the website on a very small screen (Figure 7). The secret of the application is that it does not try to replace the website. It's an addition to the services of the website.

The description from iTunes makes the point perfectly:"*FaceBook for iPhone makes it easy to stay connected and share information with friends. Use your iPhone to start a conversation with FaceBook Chat, check your friends' latest photos and status updates, look up a phone number, or upload your own mobile photos to FaceBook while on the go*".

Lesson to be learned: Mobile applications don't have to replicate the website. They need to provide just enough functions to be useful and to allow the users to stay con-

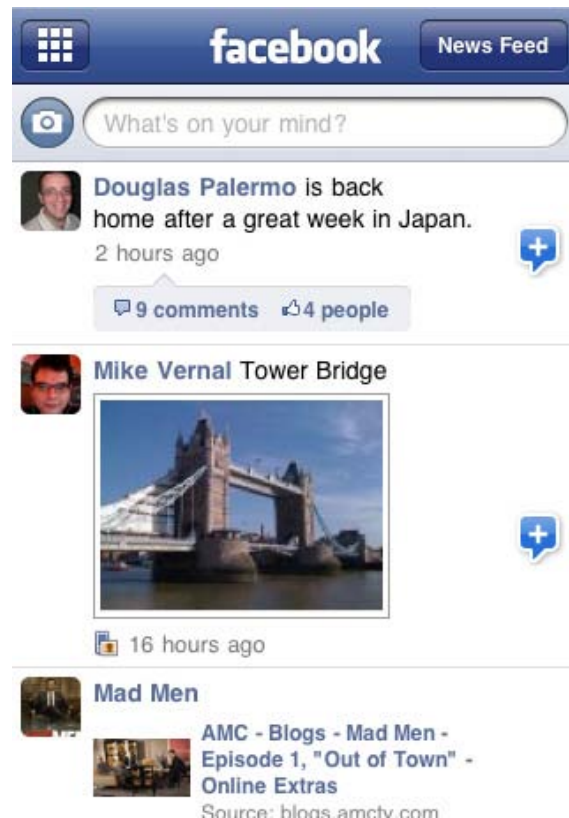nected with a minimum amount of clicks.

Fig. 7. Example of FaceBook iPhone app main screen, source iTunes

a2. Foursquare

Strong points: Novel use of social networks and the capability of mobile devices to be taken wherever the user is. It uses social gaming to engage users.

Foursquare is truly a service build for mobile devices. The best way to explain the service is to quote the iTunes description "*foursquare helps you find new ways to explore your city. See where your friends are, learn about the places they frequent and unlock rewards as you travel through the city*". To see if any of your friends are around the same place as you, on a Friday night, you need to be able to access the service on the go. To tell your friends where you are you need the same capability. Location based services [23], the likes of Foursquare came to be called, are an excellent example of how outside the box thinking can unlock incredible possibilities in mobile devices (Figure 8).
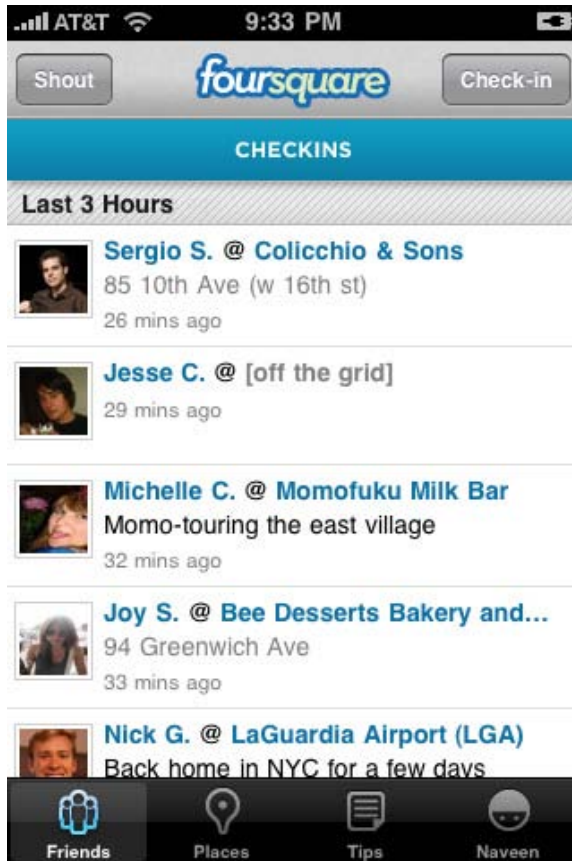
Fig. 8. Example of Foursquare iPhone app main screen, source iTunes

The whole service shouts of simplicity. There is a very limited amount of actions that can be done with it and all are very well defined. Another thing foursquare proved is that using social gaming, like badges (see also the next chapter), engages the users a lot.

Lesson to be learned: Mobile devices are not miniature computers, they are, first of all, devices that can be carried and used anywhere. Leveraging this characteristic is crucial for successful applications.

a3. Kindle
Strong point: Fantastic cross-device integration.

With the launch of Amazon's e-reader, the Kindle, a new market appeared, where e-readers compete for the top spot. The Kindle is just a screen that allows users to read books in electronic format, while having an experience as close as possible to reading a real book. It became apparent from the beginning that Amazon's business was not the

selling of the Kinde but of the content, the books and magazines. Amazon did a very smart thing by launching both desktop and mobile applications in which the customers could read the books they've already bought. Therefore the iPhone Kindle app is just a reader, but it comes with a twist. The only surprising thing about the Kindle mobile application is how well it acknowledges that the application is just another way to consume content. It does not compete with the Kindle, it does not compete with the desktop application, it does not compete with Amazon's website, and it just completes the services.

The most acclaimed feature is that the iPhone app and the Kindle itself synchronize on simple things like the page you were reading. If you stop reading on your Kindle at page 54, when you open the book on the iPhone, it will be opened on page 54 and vice versa. Even more surprising is that the iPhone app, which works great on the iPad, the iPhone'a big brother, turns the iPad into, what many consider, a superior e-reader than the Kindle itself, yet nobody seems to mind. The superb integration of the mobile app with all the devices and services is a text-book example of how an app should be integrated in the whole business process. The Kindle apps and device go even one more step forward, in the latest release allowing for users to add remarks on specific passages, in books, turning reading into a social experience, of course, well integrated across all platforms.

Lesson to be learned: Mobile application must not be competitors to the services a company offers, they have to be integrated into the whole process.

a4. Shazam
Strong points: Novel use of a mobile device and great example of sharing

What is Shazam? According to the iTunes description: "*Shazam gives you instant satisfaction when you want to know what song is playing. Just point your phone towards the music source to identify and buy the track, or share your discovery with friends and family*". Such a service was in the realm of SF just a decade ago, yet there it is.
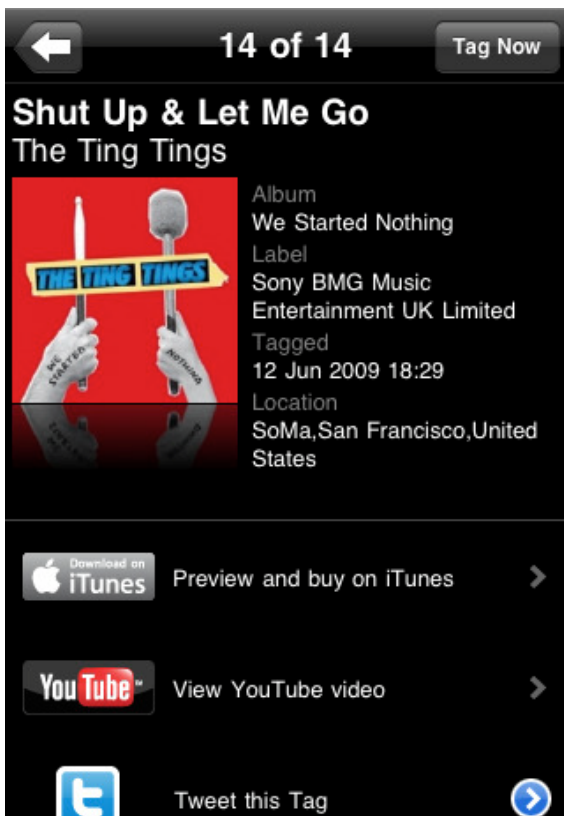
Fig. 9. Example of Shazam iPhone app main
screen, source iTunes

Besides the Star Trek worthy function of be-
ing able to identify a song by just listening to
a very short part of the tune the application
excels at giving a superbly easy interface to
share the song or buy it (Figure 9). It's truly
one click to share on Twitter or FaceBook.
Such simplicity, in combination with a great
service is a true formula for success.
Lesson to be learned: Mobile applications
with social-networking functions must make
sharing a truly one click, effortless expe-
rience.

**4 Making mobile apps more social – 10
best practices**
Putting everything together, it is now possi-
ble to make a list of 10 best practices to keep
in mind when designing mobile applications
that have social-networking functions. The
best practices below are the result of exten-
sive research and analysis in mobile applica-
tions and social networking applications and,
on extensive experience the author has in de-
veloping web applications and understanding

of usability.

**0) *If it does not bring value, don't integrate
social-networking functions!***
It is the first in list, and, in this paper, con-
sidered to be the most important. Social
Networking brings value, as was shown,
it's growing and it seems that it will gain
increasing importance. However not eve-
rything needs to be social. The ENGAD-
GEMENTdb [5] report, cited previously,
shows that revenue and engagement is
correlated positively and it shows one
more thing, that companies with the low-
est engagement are the one from the fi-
nancial industry. The Health Care industry
did not even make it on the list. And this
is not accidental. Some things are more
likely to be shared than others. We might
be eager to point out that we have been to
a Rolling Stones concert and that we like
the band or that the latest movies we saw
was not so good but we are not so eager to
let the world know what our medical
problems are or how much money we
have in the bank. The fact that you paid
your telephone bill might not be the most
exciting thing for your friends, or the
world, for that matter, to find out.
Of course there are always exceptions,
like the controversial service blippy.com
which has its motto 'See what everyone is
buying, on Blippy'. It allows you to share
your credit card transactions. Or the With-
ings' Wi-Fi Body Scale, which can auto-
matically share on Twitter your weight,
whenever you use it. Why would anyone
want their scale to shout to the world you
gained a pound is debatable, but the fact
that such gadgets and websites exist is a
fact.
The short story is that, in case your appli-
cations' goal is not to challenge the status-
quo, think deeply about what information
your users are comfortable sharing [21],
what should stay private, and very well
protected and only after you have a well
thought list see if there is something worth
sharing. Privacy is still first, so don't do
social-networking just for the sake of it.

1) *Clear opt out is not optional – privacy is important*

If you choose to integrate social-networking functions make sure that you don't force people to share things they would rather keep private [19]. Make 100% clear that something is going to be shared when a certain action is performed. Everybody can make such mistakes, but we can learn from others. When Google Buzz was launched the simple fact that it was not clearly explained what is shared and that everybody was opted-in by default caused for one person to be harassed by her ex-husband, a story that made the tech-blogs headlines for days. Nobody wants such publicity. Make it easy to keep it private and strive to make sharing and opt-in setting.

A good example of a very simple way to keep things private is the Delicious.com plugin which shows clearly an option to not share the bookmark (Figure 10).

Fig. 10. Example of the possibility to keep a bookmark private with Delicious

2) *Logging in must not be a hassle*

Ease of use is extremely important and yet, many application developers forget that nobody likes remembering 100+ usernames and logins or to type in the password every time they want to check what their friends are up to on FaceBook. Make your login system very simple and quick, don't make people think. Keep in mind the following:

o *One time set up*. Once entered, remember the password, securely and don't ask for it every time the application is opened.

o *Don't ask for the password again*, unless for serious reasons like updating crucial parts of the settings, changing the password, modifying privacy options.

o *Make use of available single-sign-on systems*. Use FaceBook Connect or the likes of it, as alternatives for your own login, whenever possible

An example for this is the iPhone game Agency Wars which offers the possibility to login with FaceBook Connect (Figure 11).

Fig. 11. Print screen from the iPhone game Agency Wars showing the login with FaceBook button

3) *Piggyback - Nobody wants yet another social network so use the services at hand*

Closely connected to the previous best practice, this implies that you not only use the login functionality but you also make use of the social graph that is offered through SDKs' (Software Development Kits) like FaceBook connect. The number of applications that make use of such capabilities is impressive.

The reason behind this is very simple. Creating your own social network is incredibly expensive and time consuming and there are many places where you can go wrong. Making use of hugely popular social networks, like FaceBook, is not only faster, incomparably cheaper, but also much more user friendly.

With a click of a button the user can have access to an already established social network where she has little to do but in-

vite a couple of his already existing friends to start using a new services, not recreate a profile.

The hugely popular and talked about FourSquare uses exactly this approach, so does the competitor Gowalla.

Some apps even go so far as to be an extension of the capabilities of the social networks they integrate with. Such an app is TopFriends, which, in its FaceBook and iPhone app forms has more than 12 million users. Other iPhone applications that use FaceBook Connect are: PhoneBook, iFightU, Scramble, Scrabble, LuckyCall, FindMyFriends, Trapster, iNapkin, ThisMoment and many others.

Without doubt the most popular social network SDK/API is FaceBook Connect, but it's not the only one. Use the SDK that best fits you. Figure 12 shows the most popular identity providers on the web.
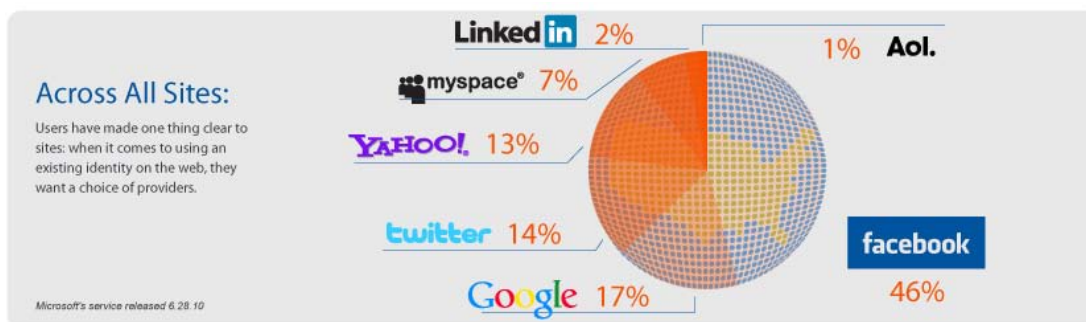

Fig. 12. The most popular identity providers on the web [11]

4) *Show friends first*

Any application that uses some sort of a social graph and has a public side needs to be able to give higher priority to the updates from those people that your users consider to be friends. The new version of the popular bookmarking website Digg does exactly that. It puts the bookmarks from the social-graph of users on top.

The previously mentioned social capability of the Kindle to add comments to certain paragraphs has been both praised and criticized. All agree that it is an interesting and potentially very useful feature but the critics complain, and justly, that anonymous comments or comments made by strangers while sitting in some bookstore are less than relevant. The possibility to see only comments from your friends or certain friends would be more than welcome.

The lesson from this is to always give users the possibility to manage the updates stream, either by filtering, lists, or any other means. Friends always have more interesting things to say than strangers do.

5) *Discover and connect - suggest new users, suggest similar products*

One of the most powerful features an application with social-networking functions can have is to let its user feel that they are not alone. All friend networks begin with just one person – the user that creates the new account. Even though it can make use of features like FaceBook Connect to tap into the existing social graph, we need to give our users the tools to convince their existing friends to start using the new service.

Application developers can do some of the following:

o Implement features that will allow searching for friends that have already joined the service.
o Use the friends' lists from popular services like Google, Yahoo, Twitter, FaceBook to see if any of your existing friends already joined and also give the possibility to invite some of them.

Another important feature, practiced by many successful services, social networks and not only, the likes of FaceBook, Audible, Amazon, Grooveshark and many others is to suggest, based on your previous activity new friends (FaceBook) or new items you might be interested in (Figure 13). This makes it much more engaging and easier for users, new and old, to use the services more.

Fig. 13. Example of Recommendations from Amazon.com

6) Make it fun, make it a game.
This is probably the simplest to understand and the hardest to implement. Applications' social-networking features must be fun to use; It must be like a game. It is easiest to understand if we think about offline real-world interactions, between people that are meeting and a bar and having a laugh. It's fun, it's easy, it's not guided by strict rules but by simple guidelines, it's spontaneous. The same effect must be achieved with the application. It must be easy and sufficiently flexible to use the features. Sharing must be done quickly from all parts of the applications or at least from those parts that make sense.

Fig. 14. Some of the badges used by FourSquare in New York

Try and involve people into games. Simple tasks like checking in on FourSquare will win you different badges and you can become the mayor of your favorite coffee house (Figure 14).
As childish as this is, grown man go out of their way to become the mayor of pub X and train station Y. Games are fun and challenging. Make your applications fun!

7) Keep it simple stupid
In one phrase - if it takes 3 clicks to share something - it's already 2 clicks too many. Keep it simple.

8) Don't forget you don't have a big screen, simple serves a purpose
Simple is implemented with a purpose, it make the users live simpler. It's the over told story of the success of the iPhone, and many other great products. On a small screen simple is that much more important. On a big monitor we can afford to waste space, but not on a 10 cm screen.
Data input is always much more difficult on a mobile device. Virtual keyboards are difficult to use and physical ones are not always a solution. The team behind one the very first smartphones, the Palm Pilot, had people with the position of tap counters. A tap counter was a person responsible for counting how many clicks. or taps on the keyboard, it would take to perform a certain action. If it was above 3, the feature was rethought.
The success of the Palm Pilot is a testimony of the efficiency of keeping things simple. A note of caution – simple must be the user experience, if you have to go and invent a new way of inputting data, or perfecting one (as the iPhone did), to get what you want, than that is what you need to do.

9) Once on the web everything is public but privacy is dead serious.
Make sure your users understand how your privacy settings work and make sure your users fully understand it too. Make sure:
o If updates are sent, by default, as public, it is 110% clear to your customers what is the situation;
o Or, alternatively, start with everything private and make your public settings opt-in, not opt-out (that is, you have to specifically tell the system to publish updates as public);
o Explain clearly who owns the content created by the users and how;
o Give the possibility to quit the service at any time;
o Make sure you give enough controls for users to control their privacy settings.
Twitter has one of the simplest privacy related policies out there as 99% of all updates are private, yet, even twitter, from time to time, faces problems with the privacy. FaceBook is now notorious for changing directions and infuriating users

by moving from all private to fully public. This point overlaps heavily with point 0, and this is done on purpose. Privacy is paramount. Getting it right is very important and can make or break a service or application.

5 Conclusions

If we need to sum the conclusions of this paper in one sentence it would be: when designing mobile applications with social-networking functions remember that a mobile device is not a smaller, less capable computer, it's a powerful device that is always available, no matter where we are.

A simple statement, yet so very important! Many developers tend to treat mobile devices and applications as a less capable version of their computers or websites, but this is not so. Mobile applications don't need to replace or replicate a website. They need to complement the already offered services. They need to offer these services in a very easy to use way, because of the limitations of the small screen and have to always be aware of the privacy and how that is implemented.

Understanding mobile devices for what they are, acknowledging the importance and role of social networks and never losing sight of privacy and good design practices is the key for success for mobile applications with social-networking functions.

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