

Cross-Platform Mobile Development with PhoneGap

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Friday, April 2, 2010

Hi everybody! My name is Jonathan Stark and I'm from Providence RI. I'm a mobile application consultant, which means that I make a living by helping BIG COMPANIES with their strategy for LITTLE APPS ;)

Huge & Growing

- 4.8 billion cell phone subscriptions
- Smart phone share at 15%
- 56% of public Wi-Fi connections were from mobile devices

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Preaching to the choir, but I want to start with the big picture. Mobile is huge and its growth is accelerating:

- Cell phone subscriptions to hit 5 billion on 2010
- 15% of phones sold in 2009 were smart phones
- 56% of public Wi-Fi connections in 2009 were from mobile devices

Mobile Apps

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For most companies, the entry point into the mobile space is apps.

Types of Mobile Apps

- Native apps
- Web apps
- Cmd line apps

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There are three types of mobile apps that I think will remain relevant for a long time:

- Native apps (e.g. WebEx, Salesforce)
- Web apps (e.g. Gmail, Google Calendar)
- Command line apps (e.g. Google SMS, Twitter, Aardvark)

Types of Mobile Apps

- Native apps - Fragmentation
- Web apps - Sandboxing
- Cmd line apps - Discoverability

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We could debate the pros and cons of each approach all day long. Ultimately, each has a glaring achilles heel.

Types of Mobile Apps

The approach that is best for you depends on your goals and target market.

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The right one for you depends on your situation:

- Selling iPhone cases in U.S.? Native app
- Selling office supplies in North America? Web app
- Providing banking services in rural China? SMS app

Web Apps Win

- Cheapest to produce
- Most standardized
- Easiest to distribute

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I typically work with corporate clients who are trying to reach a really broad market with their apps. They want to be on iPhone, Android, and Blackberry at least.

- Platform is easy to learn, most orgs have web talent in house already.
- Web is a proven, stable platform that works reasonably well across the widest range of devices.
- Host your app and email out the links.
- No approval process, no multiple app stores, no delay on bug fixes.

jQTouch

- jQuery plugin
- Created by @DavidKaneda
- Native CSS3 Animations
- and tons more...

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There are a number of javascript libraries that make building mobile web apps a lot easier. iUI was the first, but my lib of choice is jQTouch.

jQueryTouch

Demo

Native vs Web

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I want to drill down on a native vs web for a second because I know that there is a lot of confusion there.

Considerations

	Native	Web	Depends
Cosmetics	X		
Features	X		
Development			X
Testing		X	
Distribution		X	
Payment			X
Support		X	

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Mention that web apps can run 100% offline.

Hybrid Apps

PhoneGap gives developers the
best of both worlds.

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Actually, you don't have to really pick between native and web. Single code base that can be deployed as a standalone web app AND deployed with additional functionality through the various app stores.

PhoneGap

- Open source
- Created by @Nitobi
- Native app wrapper
- Multiple platforms

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Cross platform mobile framework for building native mobile applications with html, css, and javascript.

Considerations

	Native	Web	Depends
Cosmetics	X		
Features	X		
Development			X
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	Native	Web+PG	Depends
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PhoneGap

Demo

Conclusion

"If you can build your app with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, then you probably should."

- Jonathan Stark

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I think this is the most pragmatic approach. If nothing else, it's the most flexible. And the way things are growing at this point, flexibility is of the utmost importance.

More Info

- <http://jonathanstark.com/books>
- <http://jonathanstark.com/contact>
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