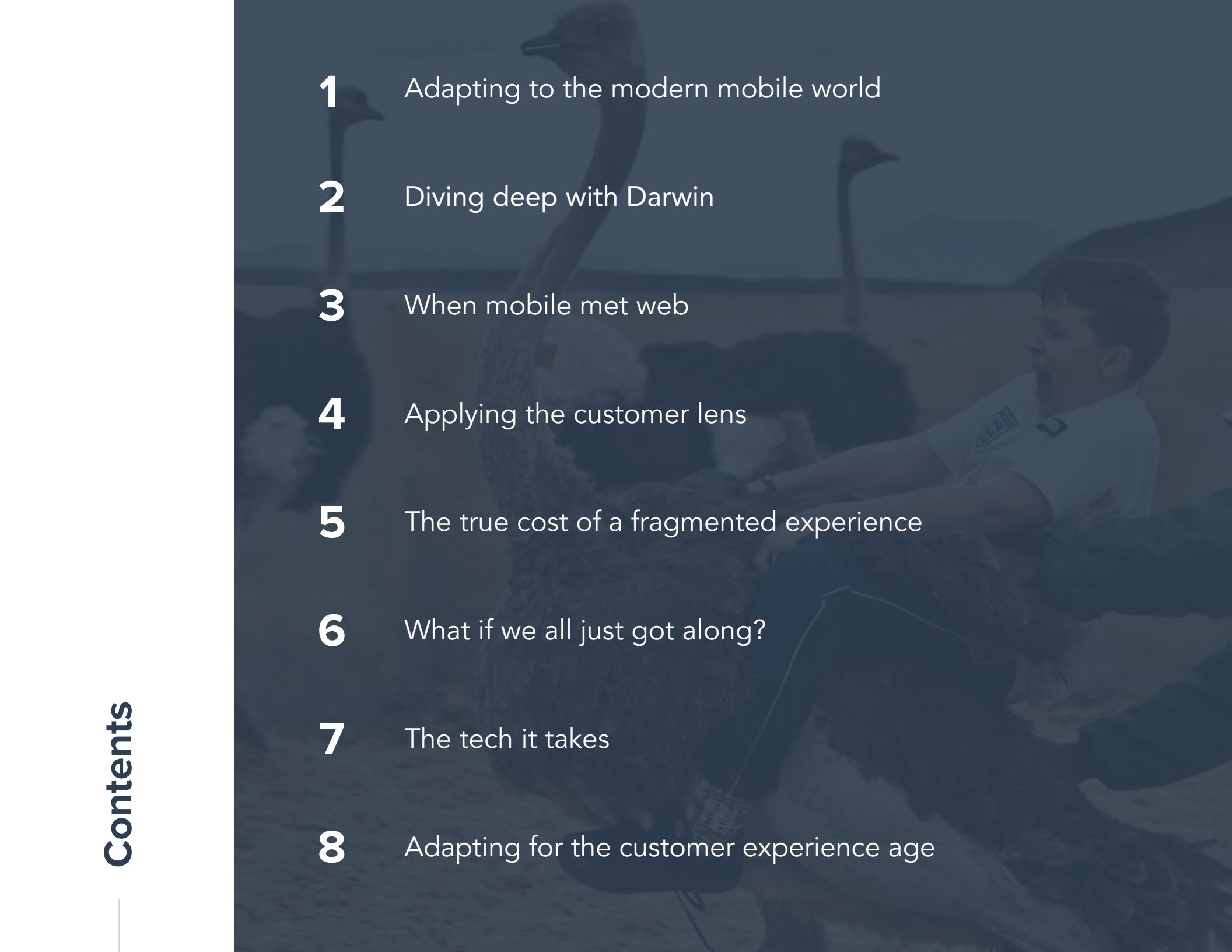partnership
cloud

What Darwin Can Teach Mobile Marketers

Why customer experience is key to partnership success

Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Adapting to the modern mobile world

The modern mobile landscape is wildly complex. There are seemingly infinite ways for users to interact on their devices, and equally infinite opportunities for them to engage with businesses and make transactions. But along with those interactions and opportunities come challenges for mobile marketers. The customer experience can quickly become fragmented and broken between web and apps, which isn't only bad for the customer, but also for transactions and partnerships on the whole. The experience needs to change, which means it's time to reconsider how the pieces of the mobile puzzle connect.

In short, it's time to adapt. It's easy to lose track of how many years past have been declared "the year of mobile", always meaning something a bit different than the declaration the year before. Evolution has proven to be the backbone of the constantly redefined "mobile era," and as the era shifts into renewed focus on the customer experience, mobile marketers need to move with it. It's time to say goodbye to the last iteration of the mobile era — with its silos and separation of web and app teams — and evolve once again.

So, where can evolutionary inspiration be found? A natural starting point may be the person who coined the term: Charles Darwin. Theories about evolution and adaptation can apply just as much to business as they do to nature, and in fact those very theories can be the key to success. But how do we apply the theories of Charles Darwin to mobile partnerships?

CHAPTER TWO

Diving deep with Darwin

If inspiration can come from Charles Darwin, it's time to take a closer look at his work. Specifically, let's look at the finches he discovered on the Galapagos Island.

When Darwin visited the Galapagos Islands, he found a number of completely different species of finch. But what was more fascinating was that each species of finch seemed particularly well-suited to the specifics of the environment in which it lived.

The original

These findings eventually led Darwin to the realization that these finches had all once been the same species, like the one shown above, but that over time they had adapted to different niches in the ecosystem. They had developed characteristics that let them thrive.

All about the worms

For example, one type of finch had thin beaks and smaller bodies, which proved to be quite effective at digging for worms.

Nuts for nuts

Others had shorter larger beaks, which were well-suited for cracking open nuts.

CHAPTER THREE

When mobile met web

So, what do Darwin's finches have to do with the modern mobile world? When applied to partnerships, the answer is: a lot. In looking at performance marketing, there are at least two distinct groups.

The first group focuses on web-based partnerships. These folks are largely focused on driving revenue to their website. They started off in the desktop web world before expanding with the rise of the mobile web. They've had to learn how to diversify their partnership base, how to deal with privacy updates from browsers like Safari and Firefox, and have navigated the complex ecosystem of networks, agencies, platforms, and partnered businesses. They've also already adapted once: from traditional desktop to mobile web.

The second group — mobile marketers — rose alongside the explosion of the app economy. Typically this type of partnership is tasked with driving traffic to its mobile app. They've learned how to deal with mobile tracking and the complex ecosystem of mobile ad networks, mobile measurement partners, mobile ad units, and app store optimization. Many of them focus on installs as a primary KPI.

Download my app!

Buy from my website!

The dangers of separate evolution

Both sides have honed their skills by focusing on a specific niche of the ecosystem. And clearly they both evolved out of an earlier version of partnerships in the pre-mobile era. In other words, they adapted in the same way Darwin's finches did.

So the question is, what is the mobile world to do now? Mobile and web have evolved separately to their unique environments, just like the finches.
Hasn't that been a good thing? It worked for the birds — why not for us?

The fundamental problem is that it isn't working — and the customer experience is suffering as a result.
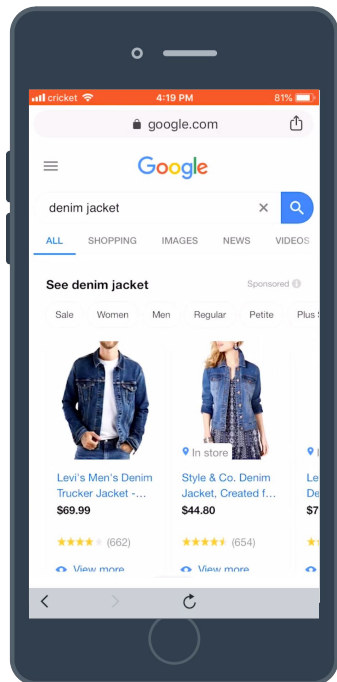
Applying the customer lens

The following example proves that point, examining the customer experience step-by-step when attempting to purchase a denim jacket through a popular department store chain.

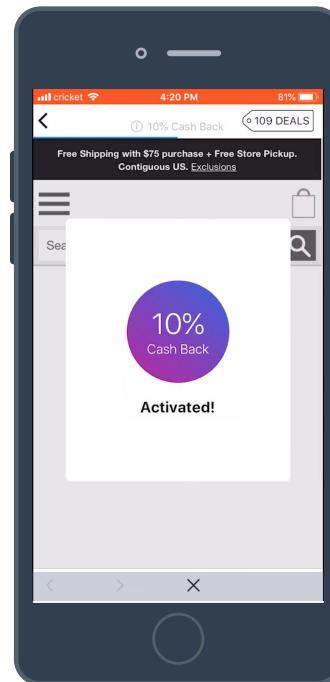| Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5

You do a search for denim jackets from the retailer you have in mind using your mobile phone, clicking through to the retailer's app from the search results.
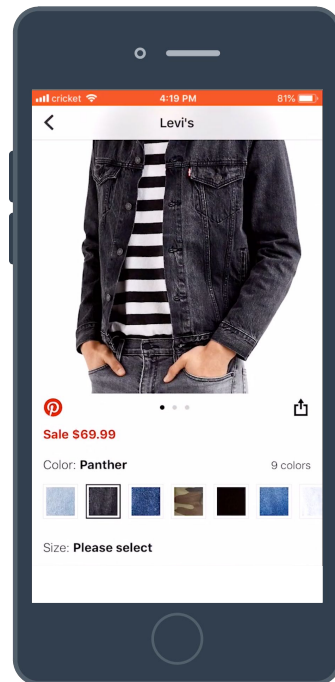
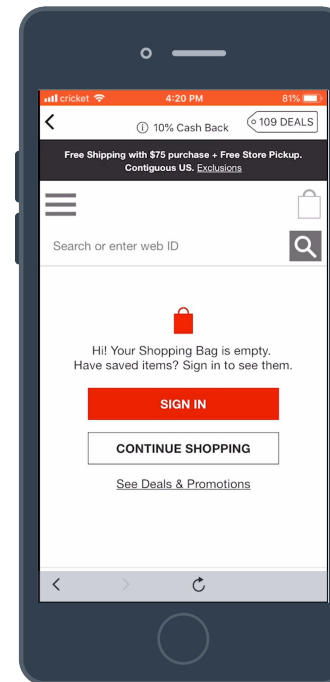You find a jacket you love and choose the perfect fade and size, adding it to your shopping bag.

You decide to open up your favorite cashback app to search for deals. You find one for the retailer, so you click on that discount offer through the app and are brought to the retailer's website.

But wait… where's the jacket you just put in your cart on the retailer's app? Because you were routed to the retailer's mobile site rather than the app where you started, you have to go through the full search process once again.
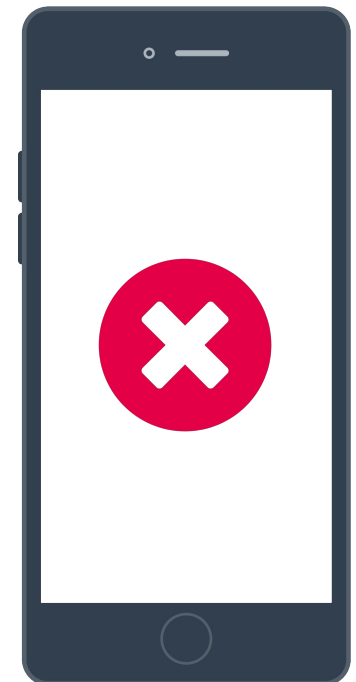
This is where you probably say "forget it." The effort is just too great, and everyone loses.

What just happened?

If this experience seems familiar, you're in good company — most consumers have experienced something similar. So, what just happened? The user visited the retailer's website through both a search engine and an app. But when they clicked on the search engine option, they were taken to the retailer's app. When they clicked through the cashback app, they were taken to the retailer's website.

Who loses here? Clearly, the retailer just lost business, and the cashback app lost a potential payout. But perhaps most critically, the user lost out on a potentially great customer experience — and The opportunity to fulfill their shopping goal.

So really, everyone loses. And while that's just one example, the industry metrics don't lie.

Applying the customer lens

The true cost of a fragmented experience

The statistics to the left represent the true cost of fragmentation. A whopping 88% of users are likely to leave a website after having a bad experience, while 52% are likely to not return again.

Interestingly, 87% of users think brands need to put more effort into their mobile experience. Because a native app experience is typically far superior to web, this translates into conversion rates tripling in-app over mobile web. The size of orders grow significantly, and users return twice as often to make a purchase.

88% | Likely to leave
Source: Invision: Statistics on User Experience

52% | Likely to not return
Source: Impact Learning Center

87% | Bad mobile experience
Source: SuperOffice: Powerful Customer Experience Statistics You Need to Know

3x | Conversion Rates
Source: Criteo Global Commerce Review

140% | AOV
Source: Branch Metrics: Building an Effective Mobile Growth Stack

2x | Purchase Frequency
Source: Button 2019 Mobile Commerce Report

Lost Revenue

There were a lot of statistics on the previous page, but the key one to remember is 32%. This number represents the channel revenue you are leaving on the table by not routing your users into your mobile app, according an estimate based on the stats from p.10.* That statistic doesn't even include the expected lift gained by being able to find new mobile-specific partnerships.

Now the challenge with siloed mobile and web working structures becomes more clear: The in-app experience is a vital piece of the revenue puzzle. So what's kept web and mobile apart for all these years, even in the face of mounting user experience issues?
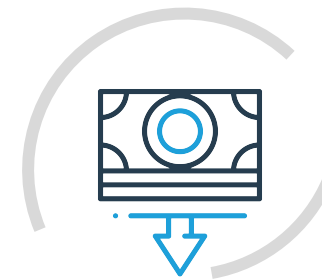
32%

Lost revenue

*If the conversion rate is multiplied by 3, AOV is multiplied by 1.4, and 10% of mobile web purchasers have the app installed, estimated revenue would rise by 32%.

CHAPTER SIX

What if we all just got along?

The silo challenges of these two groups start with the fact that typically they're focused on different goals. Web partnership teams are looking for revenue, whereas mobile teams are generally focused on driving installs.

These different goals have contributed to the fracture between web and mobile partnerships, causing the rift to deepen.
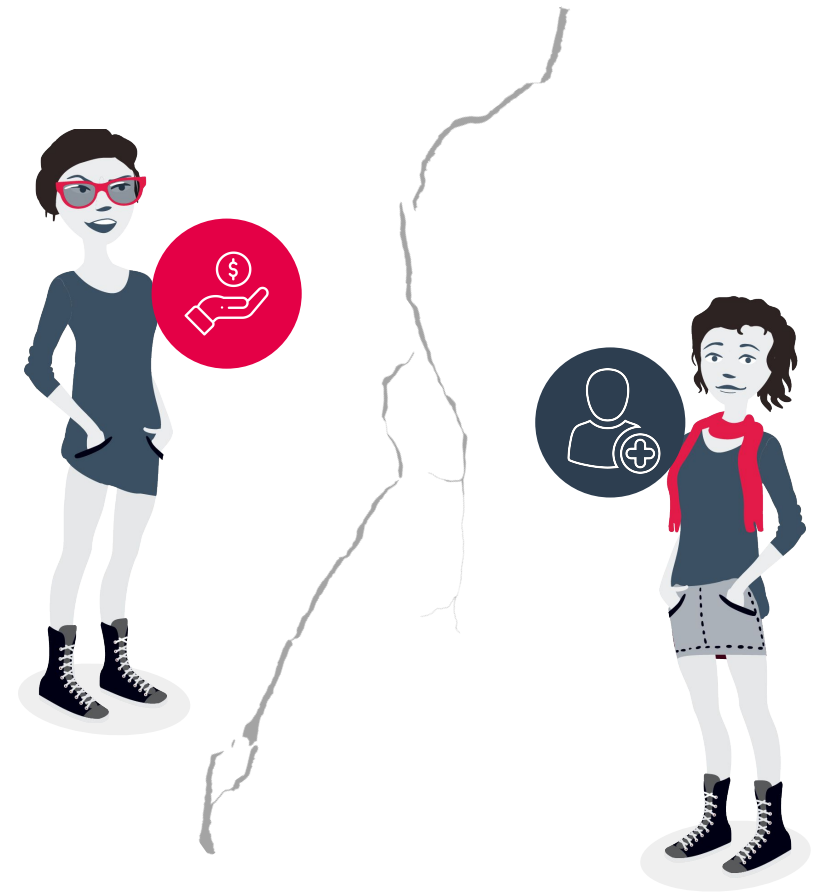
We're more aligned than we think

While that may seem like the end of the story, it isn't. In reality, mobile teams are constantly checking on the lifetime value and active usership of their install base. Additionally, they're putting in the work to understand what the true value and loyalty of a new user is based on considerations like when that user was acquired (for example, is a user of higher value if acquired on Black Friday? One week after Black Friday? Two weeks?).

On the web side of the world, many have put in place special bounties for partners that drive a new user to purchase, valuing acquisition of new customers over just immediate revenue. That strategy just makes sense, right? Why wouldn't mobile teams care about in-app revenue and web teams care about new user acquisition?

Because really, all teams just want one thing: growth.

**What if we all just got along?**
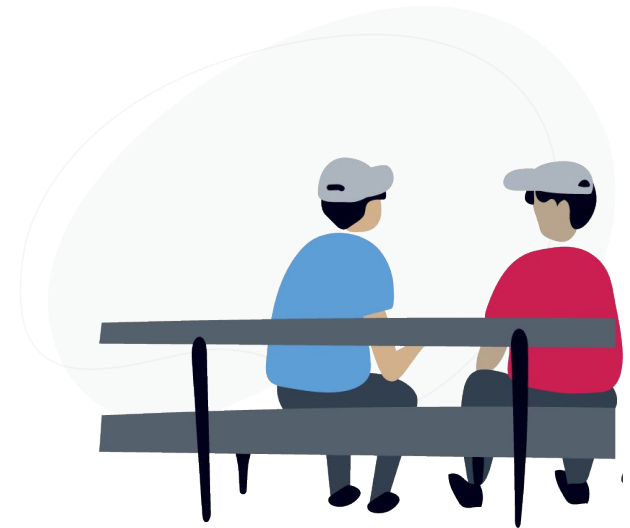
Combining goals for growth

This just goes to show that while both teams may use different terminology, their goals are actually surprisingly aligned. As such, they can learn a lot from each other about how best to grow their partnerships overall.

The next question is: how does this apply to partners?

Historically the web and mobile partnership teams have worked with vastly different partners. The web folks are used to having relationships with individual partners (even though some do work with subaffiliate networks). On the mobile side, however, most installs are coming through mobile ad and CPI networks, which act as middlemen usually arbitraging CPM buys into CPI sells.

What if we all just got along?
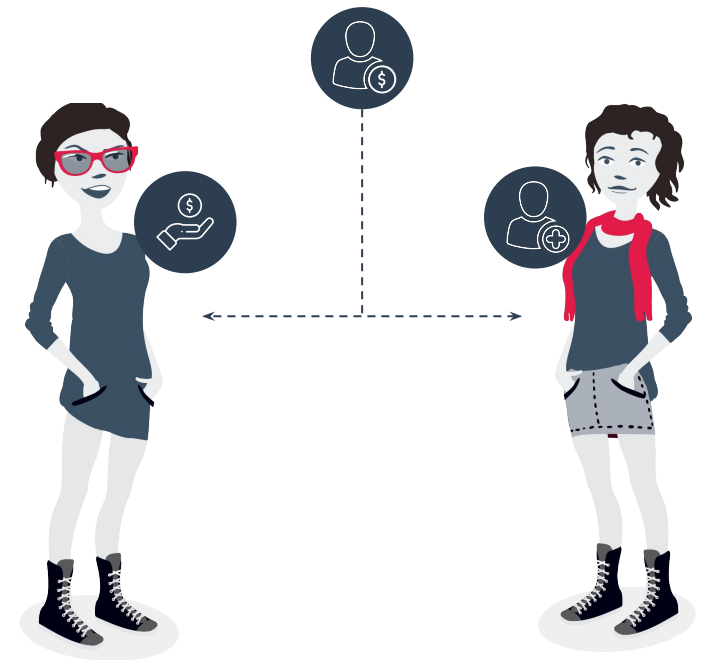
Real-world examples of mobile partnerships

However, the line discussed on the previous page are beginning to blur. A lot of traditional web affiliates, like this coupon publisher, have diversified.

Looking at the publisher's website on a mobile device, the publisher is both driving actual sales and installs. For instance, the promotion of the food delivery app pictured below links to both: the app's website to drive a meal order, and the App Store encouraging users to pick up the app.
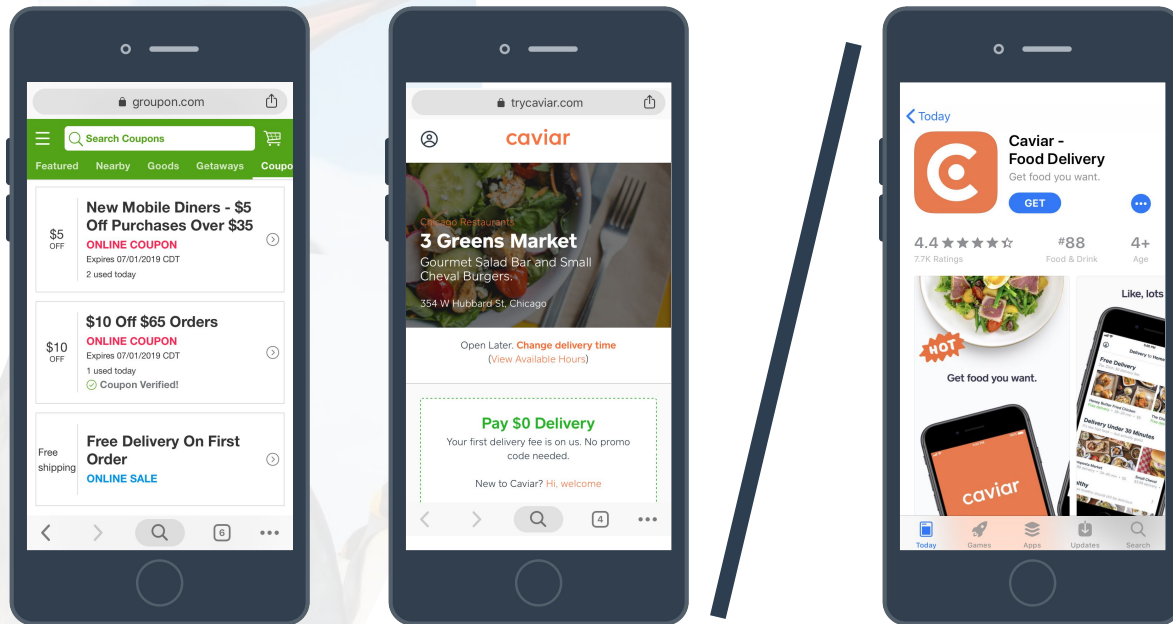
Real-world examples of mobile partnerships

On the other side, there are mobile ad networks like the one demonstrated below. It works across a lot of mobile game apps to present offers to users. In the image below, if a user is playing the Jurassic Park app and runs out of credits, they're brought to an offer wall, which encourages users to download the video streaming app, while also linking to places like the streaming app's mobile website encouraging the user to signup for a subscription.

What if we all just got along?

Real-world examples of mobile partnerships

In this way, it's clear that multiple types of partnerships are all working with both web and mobile app-based offers. Revenue-focused web programs should seriously consider working with app networks. Install-focused app programs shouldn't ignore traditional web partners like affiliates. The strict divide between a "web" partner and a "mobile" partner makes less and less sense. Instead you just have partners.

That leaves us with the third and perhaps the biggest

Divide between web and apps: the issue of technology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The tech it takes

Websites and apps are built on different technology. Links and tracking setups don't translate easily from web to app or from app to web. Platforms and tracking providers typically focus on just web or just apps (not both).

This is a core reason that the user experience broke down in the earlier retailer example. The traditional way brands work with partners and measure their contribution just won't work in the app world.

But all of that is changing. New deep linking technologies (such as Impact's TrueLink™) make it possible for partners to link from anywhere directly into an app, mobile web site or the app store. It allows for the ultimate control to create the best user experience possible.

Partner

impact
TrueLink™
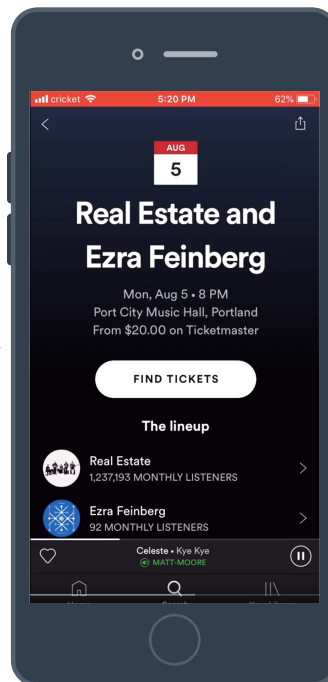
Mobile Web

Page in the
App Store

Deep Link App

Real-world examples of mobile partnerships

What does the user experience look like when deep linking technology like TrueLink is applied? Check out the journey pictured below — a user finds a concert they're interested in seeing within an app and prepares to buy tickets. They exit the app to find a coupon code through a search engine on the mobile web. Under ordinary circumstances, exiting the app in search of a coupon code means the user would have to start all over again in their purchase process. But with deep linking, they're able to toggle seamlessly between the mobile web and the app.
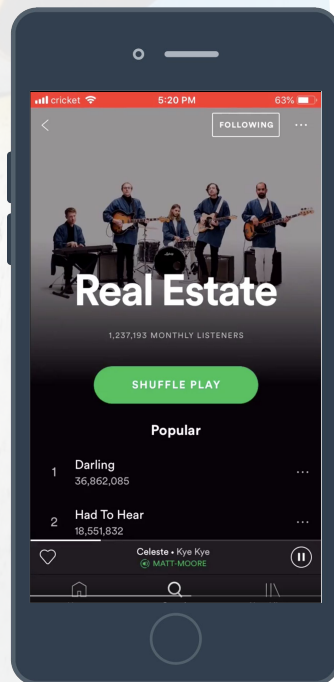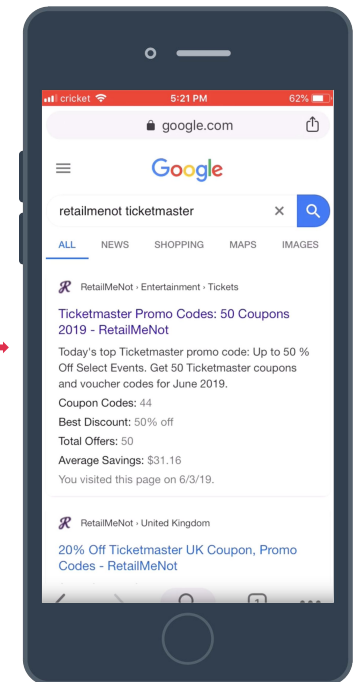
User is in music app
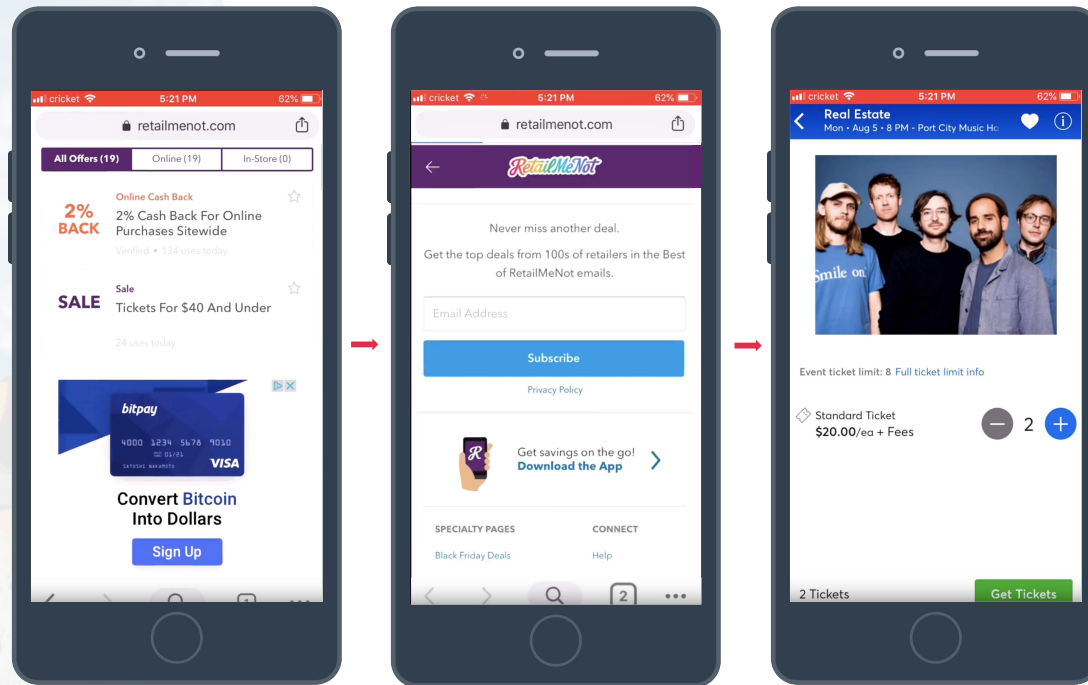
User finds concert, preps to buy tickets
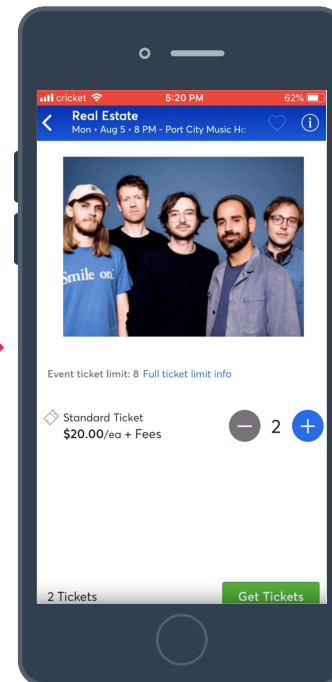
User is on ticket purchase screen

User switches to search engine to find a deal

Real-world examples of mobile partnerships

User selects deal

User switches back from
mobile web to app

User buys tickets

The result?

The user is happy.

The partner gets paid. Everyone wins, and technology is no longer a problem.

That brings us back to the big picture question: what, exactly, is keeping web and app teams apart? The only conclusion that can be drawn is . . . not much.

The tech it takes

CHAPTER EIGHT

Adapting for the customer experience age

It's clear that adaptation needs to happen, which means it's time to return to that Galapagos ecosystem that was covered earlier. Why? Because right now it's being disrupted. There's a new hybrid species developing, and it combines attributes from two of the existing species. Scientists are calling it "Big Bird" because it's bigger than your standard finch. It's extremely competitive and could completely disrupt the ecosystem — unlike the other birds that can only eat worms or nuts, this new species can eat both. Scientists don't yet know how things will shake out, but it could very well lead to the decline of other species if the population grows big enough.

It's pretty clear that the same future lies ahead for businesses that are able to combine the mobile web and app technologies effectively versus those that focus on one or the other in siloes. The "Big Bird" — the new hybrid of mobile and web —gets the worm, every time.

Built for cracking nuts

Built for finding worms

Built for everything

It's time to think holistically

In the past, the mobile era was all about meeting customers where they were in the journey — on their devices. The truth is, that dream didn't quite become reality.

Customers don't think in terms of mobile and web, online and offline, sales and installs. But they do see what's easy and difficult, and they can tell the difference between a great interaction and a mediocre one. The focus on KPIs has been so heavy over the years that it was easy for mobile professionals to lose sight of the ultimate goal: happy customers.

As the mobile era evolves into the era of the customer experience, it's time to think holistically about how you and your partners engage your customers. Web and mobile cannot continue on in siloes, but instead needs to adapt and work together to create a seamless customer experience.
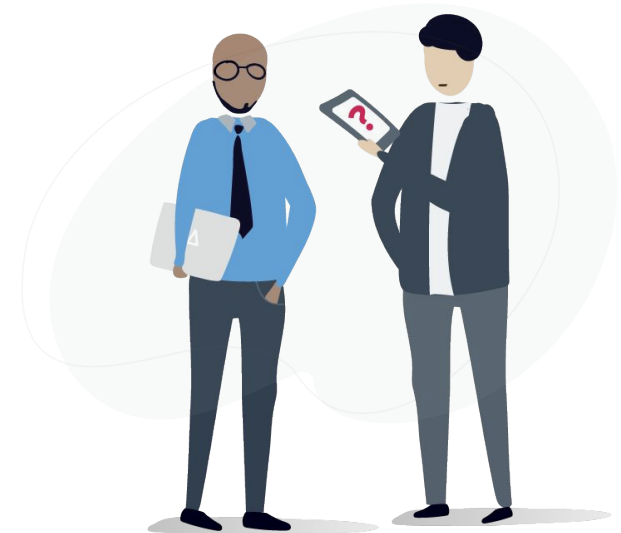
About Partnership Cloud

With global capabilities, Impact's Partnership Cloud provides an integrated, end-to-end solution for managing all of an enterprise's partnerships throughout the world.

From discovery, recruitment and contracting to tracking, optimizing and commissioning — essentially the whole partner lifecycle — the Partnership Cloud answers enterprises' need to drive revenue growth from partners across the spectrum: traditional affiliates, influencers, strategic partners, app-to-app, premium publishers and more.

To learn more, visit impact.com/partnership-cloud/ or contact grow@impact.com to schedule a free demo.

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