Small Business Custom Mobile App Adoption

Research Report
Fall 2024



thunkable

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Custom mobile apps were once considered a luxury exclusively for large corporations. But at Thunkable, it's our mission to make technology creation accessible to everyone. We believe in the power of custom mobile apps to boost business operations in many ways. But you don't have to take our word for it. We surveyed North American small business leaders to understand their adoption of mobile apps – let's see what they had to say.





Most small business leaders think they don't need a mobile app. They're wrong.

Most (76%) business leaders said they don't have a custom mobile app. The number one reason? They said mobile apps are "unnecessary." However, the quarter of small businesses that did add a mobile app to their tech stack were very happy they did, reporting increased revenue, streamlined processes, happier employees, and the ability to launch a new offering as some of the benefits.

So, are you one of the many who still thinks a mobile app is just an "extra?" Let's examine the data and see where you're missing out.

The Mobile App Landscape

Consider these numbers if you don't think your business needs a custom mobile app. There are more than 6.3 billion smartphone users and 1.14 billion tablet users worldwide. The average American checks their phone every 5.5 minutes, or 262 times a day. And up to 50% of global web traffic comes from mobile devices.* There's a very good chance you are reading this on your mobile device right now!

Attention is already squarely focused on mobile devices, and so are the dollars. Mobile apps are projected to generate $935 billion in revenue by the end of 2024, and gross revenue for both the App Store and Google Play will grow by 19.5% by the end of 2025.

One important point to stress is that you don't have to be a mobile app entrepreneur to reap the benefits; really, in most cases, it's about improving processes, serving your customers, and better connecting your employees. In other words, you don't have to make the next Uber or Instagram; a simple, effective app that improves your workflows and streamlines your operations is more than enough to see improvement across the board. This is where we wanted to focus our survey, on small businesses like yours that could benefit from a custom mobile app.

*Excellent Webworld



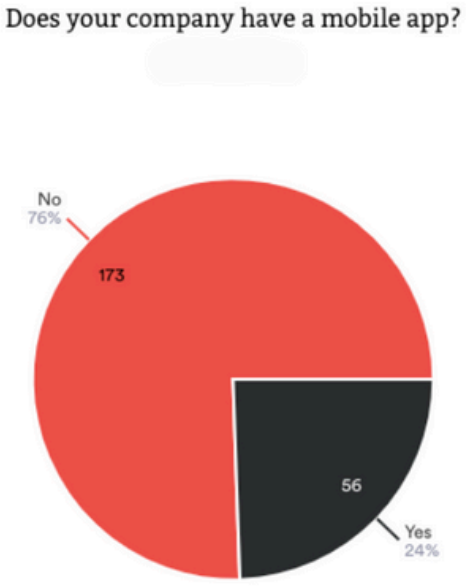
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

As we said, you definitely don't have to be a major, multinational conglomerate to get a piece of the mobile app pie. We looked specifically at small and medium-sized companies to **assess their adoption of mobile apps** and the impact of those apps on the bottom line.

For this research, survey respondents came mostly from small businesses (fewer than 1,000 employees), with a handful from bigger (more than 1,000 employees) enterprises. Almost all (92%) were located in North America and represented IT/software, construction, education, healthcare, and other industries.

MOBILE APP CREATION AND DEPLOYMENT

Most (76%) survey respondents said no, their company does not (yet) have a mobile app. When asked why not, most said they felt it was "unnecessary." (We'll talk about that more in-depth later.) Others pointed to a lack of internal expertise and the struggle to get leadership buy-in as other reasons they didn't choose to build a custom mobile app.
Finally, some said they thought creating and launching a custom mobile app would be too expensive.

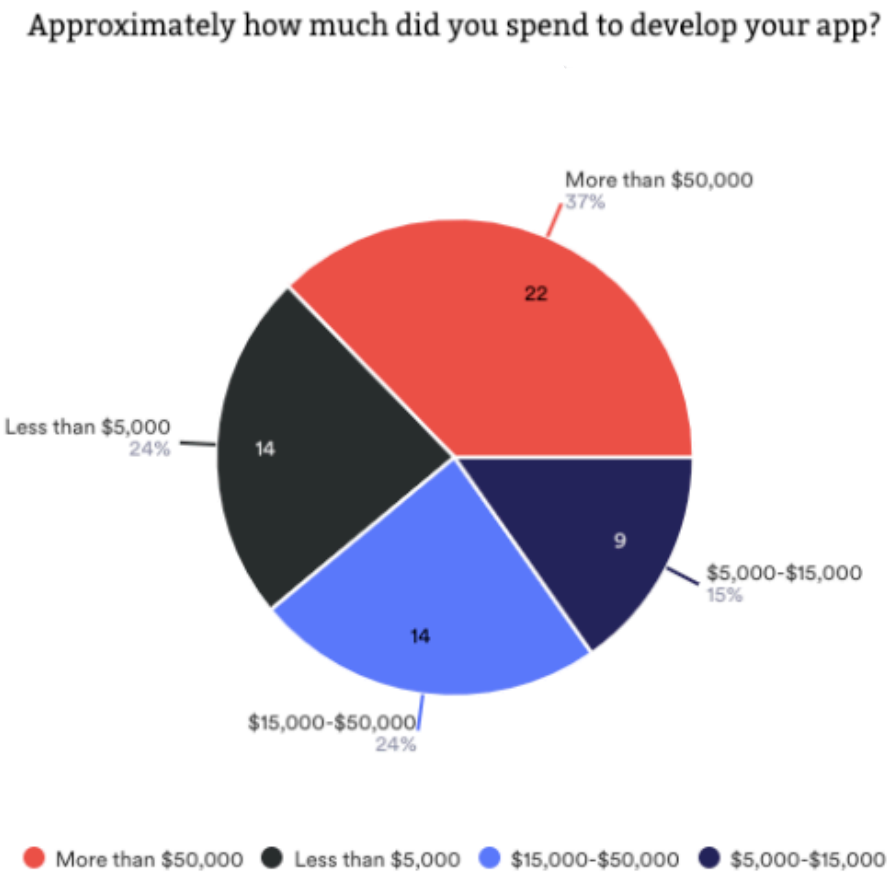


Interestingly, of the companies that did create a custom mobile app, **most (58%) used an in-house developer** rather than paying a freelancer or agency to do it (27%) or an off-the-shelf app or no code mobile app platform (13%) like Thunkable. As far as budget goes, most enterprises paid for their app development through budgeted internal funds (76%), although some sought money through loans or external investors. They aimed their apps at customers (24%), employees (19%), and in many cases, both (58%).

CHALLENGES OF CUSTOM MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT

Of course, custom mobile app development isn't without its challenges. Our respondents told us **their number one difficulty was dealing with technical issues like bugs and compatibility.** Some said understanding customer needs was tough, and a few had a hard time meeting deadlines and driving user adoption. Other issues include finding the right developer and budget constraints.

Speaking of budget, here's a statistic that really surprised us. More than a third of small businesses (37%) spent more than $50,000 developing their app! **About a quarter (24%) spent less than $5,000, and that's what we like to see.** With no code and low-code platforms like Thunkable, you can build your custom apps for far less.



Why You SHOULD Launch a Custom Mobile App for Your Business



Despite facing a few roadblocks and, in some cases, spending quite a bit of money, almost all (95%) small businesses that did create and deploy their own mobile app were happy about it. Here are some of the major benefits reported by small business app builders.

1. Increased Revenue.

In today's competitive landscape, having a mobile app sets businesses apart by showcasing innovation, responsiveness to customer needs, and a commitment to modern technology. Increased revenue doesn't have to come directly from the app. It could be the result of optimized and more efficent processes. If your employees could better serve customers in a timely manner, then loyalty improves and labor costs can decrease.

2. Happier Customers.

Having a presence on customers' smartphones ensures that businesses are visible 24/7. Customers can easily access information, make purchases, or contact the business with just a few taps. And mobile apps provide a direct channel for businesses to engage with their customers, offering personalized experiences through features like push notifications, loyalty programs, and in-app messaging.

3. Happier Employees.

From digitizing your entire employee manual to something simple like an on-the-go time tracker to log hours worked, mobile apps can give your employees easy access to the tools they need to do their jobs. Custom mobile apps are especially impactful for employees in the field who use their mobile devices as their primary means of interacting with the “home office,” management, and their fellow employees.

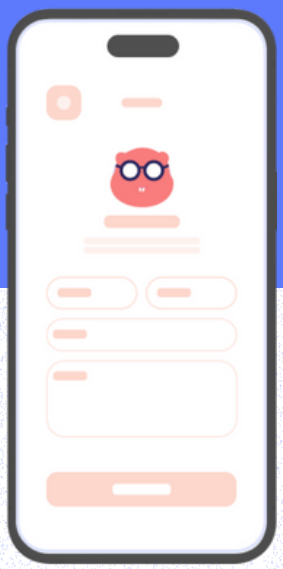
4. Streamlined Processes.

Mobile apps can streamline various business processes, from inventory management and appointment scheduling to order processing and customer support, thereby saving time and reducing operational costs.

5. Ability to Launch New Business or Offering.

For some entrepreneurs, the app is the business. Think Uber, Instagram, or our very own Sound AiSleep. These leaders had a big idea and built a whole business around an app. In other cases, small businesses can roll out a new service to augment what they already offer, like online ordering or delivery.





How Thunkable Can Help

Thunkable simplifies the app development process, making it accessible even to those without extensive programming knowledge. You can build a mobile-first product, or extend your existing services.

NO CODING REQUIRED

Thunkable's intuitive drag-and-drop interface allows entrepreneurs and small business leaders to build fully functional mobile apps without writing a single line of code.

SAMPLE APPS

Thunkable offers a variety of sample apps tailored for different business needs, whether it's e-commerce, service-based businesses, or informational apps that can be customized to reflect your unique branding and functionality.

INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES

Thunkable supports integration with popular APIs and services, allowing businesses to incorporate features like payment gateways, social media sharing, and analytics seamlessly into their apps.

CROSS-PLATFORM COMPATIBILITY

Apps built on Thunkable are compatible with both Android and iOS platforms, which means you can reach a broad range of users across different devices.

Case Studies: Mobile Apps in Action



Since 1987, family-owned Pumice Israel has been importing pumice, gypsum, silica sand, and pozzolana. Pumice stone is a eco-friendly product with numerous implications for modern construction sites. It offers superior thermal and noise isolation while being lighter than alternatives.

WHY THEY BUILT AN APP

Pumice Israel needed an app that could streamline its sales process. The sales team provided clients' quotes on paper—and sometimes, they were incorrect. Pumice Israel needed a way to easily show cost and also convert tons to cubic meters. Pumice Israel built a native mobile app with a custom calculator that expedited the sales process. Building on Thunkable was so easy and intuitive that they added inventory tracking, push notifications, and an ordering system.

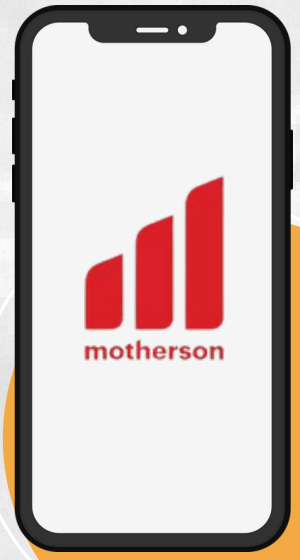


IMPACT OF MOBILE

The company was able to create a calculator to measure and convert tons to cubic meters that shows overall savings for the construction project, which boosted sales. They also designed and implemented an app that tracks materials in transit, and end-to-end inventory tracking for Pumice Israel's three warehouses Another feature send push notifications to administration and operations every time a sale is made.

Case Studies: Mobile Apps in Action

Motherson is one of the world's leading auto component makers, operating globally from 350 facilities in 41 countries spread across five continents with more than 180,000 employees.



WHY THEY BUILT AN APP

The Motherson team in Brazil needed a way for employees to access internal information and employee updates on the go. Since employees primarily worked on manufacturing lines and away from desks, Motherson needed a way to update their workforce. They turned to Thunkable to build an internal-facing HR and Employee Communications app that includes a company calendar, important communications, social networking functions to connect employees, a payment hub, and many other internal programs

IMPACT OF MOBILE

The Motherson team built a mobile app for employees to use that satisfied their operational needs and made HR capabilities more efficient, resulting in a happier and more productive staff.



CONCLUSION: WHY SMALL BUSINESSES NEED A MOBILE APP

We understand the hesitation to jump into building a mobile app. We really do. However, almost all of the small businesses who told us they did design and deploy a custom mobile app were very happy with the impact it had.

The smartphone has become more than just a communication device—it's a powerful tool for businesses to connect with customers and streamline operations. For small businesses, embracing mobile app technology can mean staying competitive, enhancing customer engagement, and boosting productivity.

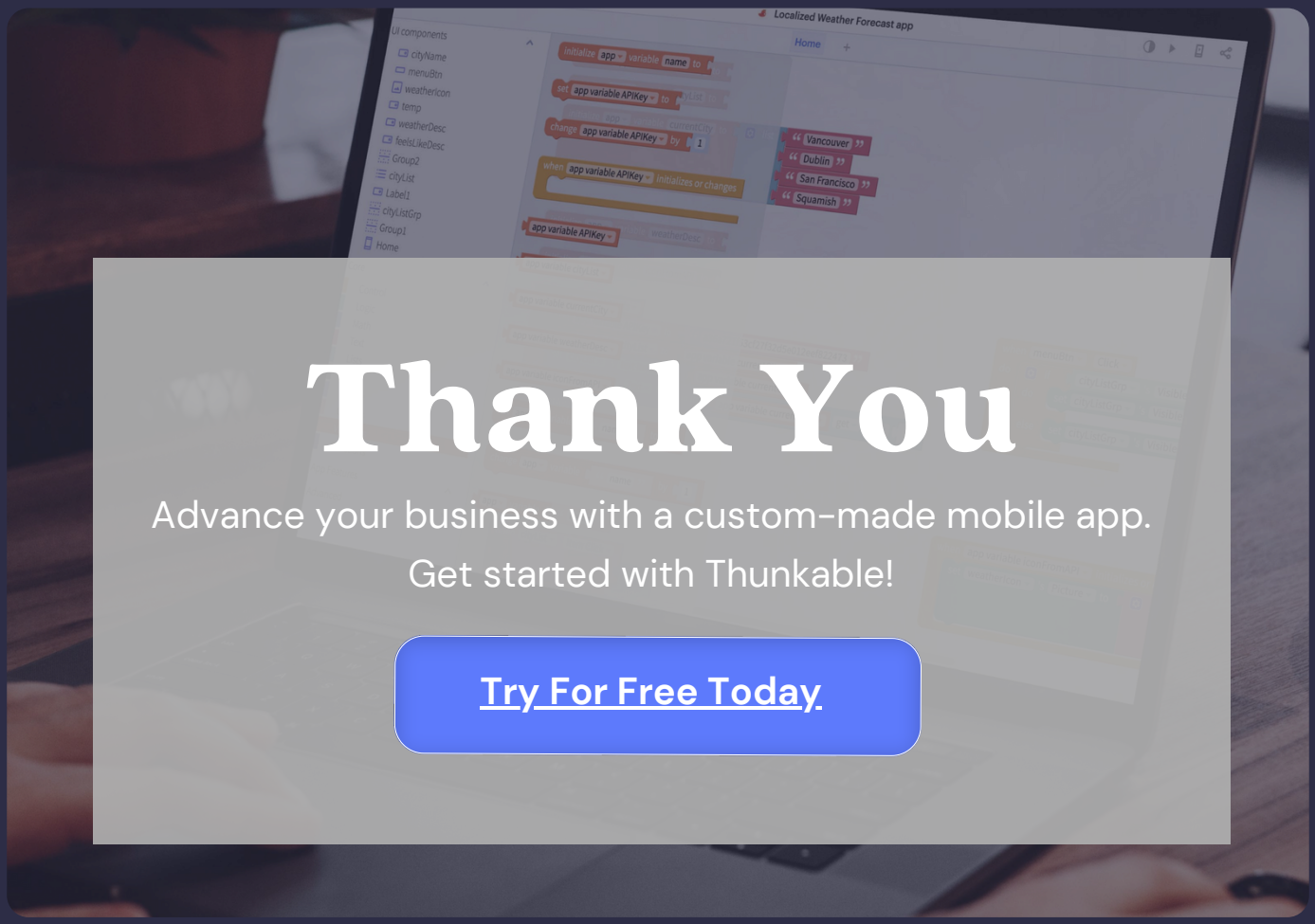
And the beauty of no code and low- code platforms like Thunkable, is that with small investment, small businesses can stay competitive, build stronger relationships with their customers, and drive growth and success in the digital age. Investing in a custom mobile app is no longer a luxury but a necessity for small businesses looking to thrive.



Get Started

You can stand out among your competitors and keep your operation running smoothly by building your own mobile app. By investing in mobile, you can provide opportunities for growth and change, and foster an environment of open communication, collaboration, and experimentation.

No code mobile app development tools like Thunkable make it easier for organizations to innovate, rapidly test ideas, and stay agile in an ever-changing marketplace.



Thank You

Advance your business with a custom-made mobile app.
Get started with Thunkable!

Try For Free Today