

7 APPS TO BOOST YOUR BUSINESS

By Mason Day

From tools to increase your bottom line to inspiration in your pocket, you'll see value in these mobile apps.

There used to be a time when you asked someone if they'd tried any new apps lately and they assumed you were talking about appetizers at a local restaurant.

It's funny how in the course of five years or so the entire meaning of the word has changed in our vernacular.

Mobile applications have become a part of our everyday lives.

They help us track calories, connect with friends and even give us up-to-the-minute weather forecasts.

Almost anything that you used to have to sit down at a computer to do can now be done on an app.

As they say, "There's an app for that!"

Apps have penetrated almost all aspects of our daily lives, but yet sometimes we still feel hesitant to whip out our smartphones when it comes to business.

There may be a lot of distractions that come in the form of apps (Candy Crush, Facebook, YouTube), but if you're not taking advantage of some key apps to enhance your business, you're missing out.

Here are seven apps you should be using to boost your business:

1 Square

At the end of the day, it's dollars through the door that keep you in business, and for retailers it's never been easier to close the sale.

Square has been out for a while, and you've definitely seen it in use in a taxi or in the local coffee shop. Why not put it to use in your sales yard?

Outfitting your sales staff with card readers (which you can get for free) can help you close a sale from anywhere on the floor, which can help capture more of those on-the-fence purchasers.

It can also decrease confusion when the purchase is an item too heavy to carry to the register.

2 Trello

Want to be able to prioritize tasks and organize teams on the go?

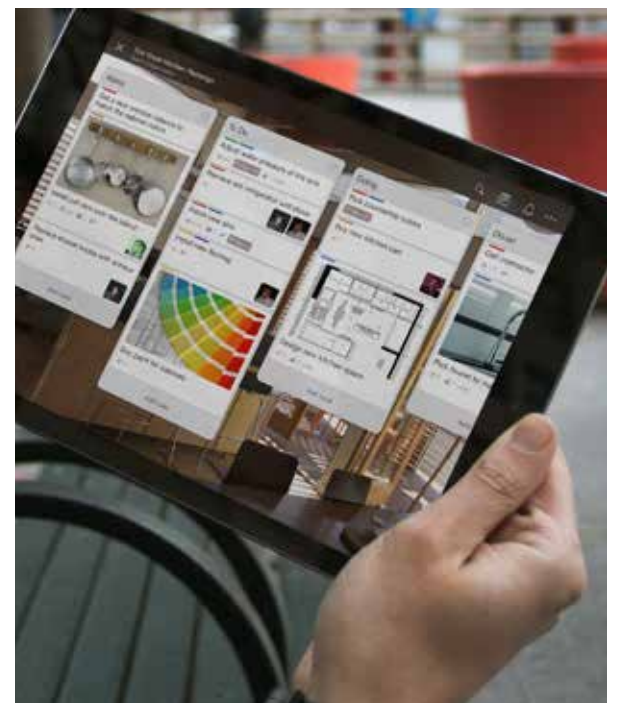
With Trello, you create different boards, write down the tasks and invite others to view them.

You can put things into checklists, and team members can communicate about the task at hand through comments.

If you have some teams that are more permanent, you can continue to add boards to their groups.

Your employees have their phones in their pockets already; it's time to put them to good use by downloading Trello to stay organized and aligned.

Teams know what has already been done, and which items still need attention.



3 Mailchimp/ Constant Contact

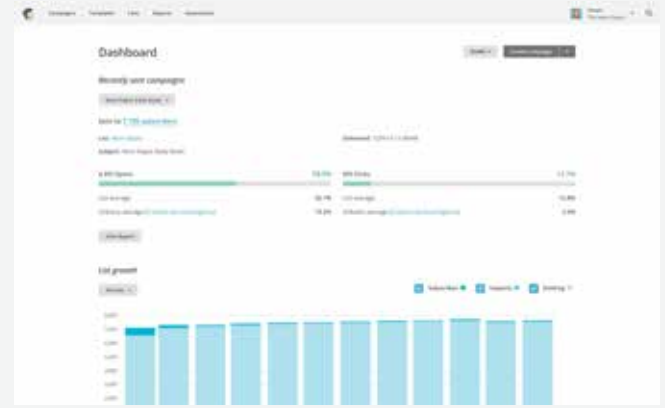
By now you should be using some sort of service to manage your customer email list.

Most of the best providers have some sort of mobile application. It's time to start taking advantage of that tool.

Not only can you track how your email marketing campaigns are doing, but you can also set up the app in your store to help you gather more customer information.

Rather than having people sign up for emails on your website, or write them down as they leave, you can now have them simply type their information into an app.

This way you have no risk of them writing down their email too sloppily to copy over, and you can take in more information about that customer ... and if you're really good, tie them into a "dollars spent" category.



4 Houzz

Does your retail location offer any sort of in-house build or design service? If so, you NEED to be on Houzz.

Set up an account for your business today.

It's how your future (Millennial) customers are going to find you. They look to Yelp to find good restaurants, and they look to Houzz for home design services.

It's also important for you to check out the app from a consumer perspective too.

Demographics and styles are changing. Take a look at some of the designs people are sharing the most, and figure out how to cater to those styles.



Speaks 5 languages fluently.
 Dominates at outdoor sports.
 Hand-crafts her own jewelry.
 Prepares meals that make the above look like child's play.

5 Snapchat

Despite what you've heard, Snapchat is not just for sending scandalous pictures.

Think of it as customer outreach. It's personal social messaging.

With Facebook and Twitter you can send a message to a wide audience of people, but there isn't a whole lot of targeting.

By setting up a snapchat account and getting your customers to connect with you, you can send personalized photo and video messages back and forth.

Show people what's just coming in, or what's going on sale. Target messages to as few or as many people as you'd like. The big guys are already jumping onboard (McDonald's, etc.).

Take advantage of this direct messaging platform while it's on the rise.



6 Duolingo

As we become more of a global society, culture shifts are happening everywhere.

Are you prepared to deal with ESL (English as a Second Language) staff and customers? Do you regret not picking up Spanish in college?

Duolingo makes it fun and easy to learn an array of different languages. It takes you through different examples and teaches you phrases.

The app also helps to keep you sharp by making you redo important lessons if you go too long between sessions.

There's a lot of software out there that can teach you a different language, but you'd be hard pressed to find something as fun and simple as Duolingo ... and it's free!



7 GrowIt!

It's the only way to "Garden Socially." Not trying to toot my own horn here, but you should be on GrowIt!.

Your customers and potential customers are on it, and they're looking for you.

It's an app that's dedicated to helping people find plants that will work in their areas.

Create a profile as your business and show off the plants you believe in.

People are constantly asking easy questions to the community that you could be answering.

Search the comments section for the word "where," and you'll find people asking where they can buy a given plant. It's your turn to jump in and answer: "Right here!"

This is just a handful of the hundreds of apps that could benefit your business. When it comes to your smartphone, remember it's OK to think outside of the box.

Even though an app might have been designed with one thing in mind, it could still prove useful in other, more creative ways.

Keep your eyes and ears open as the mobile app market is always changing. Thousands are added to the App Store every day. **LGR**

Mason Day grew up on a small horticultural operation in Michigan and is the co-founder of GrowIt!, a mobile app designed to help consumers purchase the right plants for their location. He can be reached at mday@growitmobile.com.



Savor is the freshest new line of vegetables and herbs, exclusively from Pleasant View Gardens. To add Savor to your garden center, call 603-435-8361 or visit growyourownadventure.com.

