



URBAN AIRSHIP



Onboarding New App Users

Part of our "From Good Push to Great Engagement" series

Onboarding New App Users

In the lifecycle of a user, the period referred to as “onboarding” begins from the time the user first opens your app, through the initial hours and days of getting to know your app and the value it delivers. It is the most critical stage in the entire app lifecycle, and the stakes are high to get it right. Those who see value right away become loyal users, and those who don’t are not likely to give your app a second chance.

THE FIRST OPEN

How do you capitalize on this crucial, one-time opportunity to make a good impression on your customer?

During your first interaction, it’s essential to educate your customer swiftly yet thoughtfully on the high-value content in your app. What are the compelling, must-have features or offers that will give them the most value? Highlight these features right away to impress upon them the ways in which your app can improve their life and they will become regular users and potential brand advocates.

This is also the time to put your best foot forward and help your new user get to know your brand’s personality.



WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome messages are branded, full-screen pages that welcome users and highlight key features, giving them a reason to proceed with the app. It's an opportunity to thank app users and reinforce the app's value proposition. Some welcome messages have multiple screens that the user can swipe through.

For example, retailer Express welcomes new users with a series of screens that orient them with the app and its valuable features such as push notifications and location sharing. The app sends a push notification to new users one hour after they first open the app which deep-links to message center content.

Best practices for welcome messages:

- Keep it short — the fewer screens the better.
- Use images — the fewer words the better.
- Communicate the value of opting in to push notifications immediately, prior to presenting the standard iOS opt-in screen.
- Communicate the value of the opt-in to open the lines of communication and learn more about users' interests:
 - Opt-in to notifications and location
 - Prompt to register
 - Prompt to log in

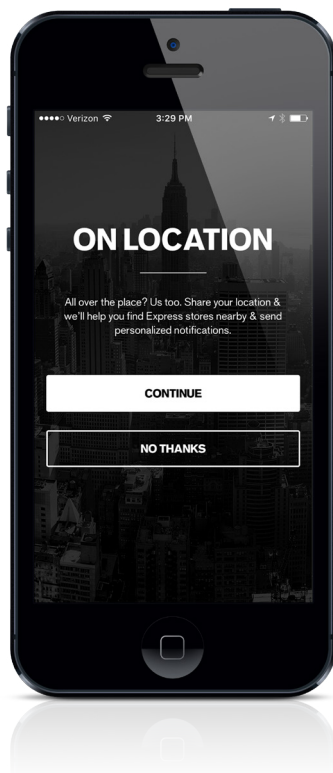
PUSH NOTIFICATION OPT-IN

One of the main objectives of your initial interactions with a new user should be to welcome them in a way that makes them want to accept your push notifications. Users who opt in to push are retained at nearly double the rate of those who do not, and have 26 percent higher average monthly app opens.¹

Give strong consideration before deciding to prompt your users to opt in to push notifications in your initial welcome message. A common mistake is making this request before communicating the value of opting in. Think about what your customer needs so you can make as strong a case as possible. What offers or exclusives can you give them that will entice them to opt in? If at all possible, explain how the app's push notifications are a major part of the functionality of the app. Show how these features will allow you to better serve them, and then give them control over what notifications they'll receive and how often.

An alternative approach is to delay prompting the customer to opt in until the next time they open the app. This can be accomplished through automation rules and in-app messages, or with native app code. This may feel more relaxed and natural for the customer, rather than being asked right off the bat.

Note that while Android users are automatically opted in to push notifications for an app, users often view push notifications they haven't opted in to as spam. The best way to earn their trust is to give them the option to opt in. Urban Airship provides tooling to support opt-in to Android push notifications out-of-the-box.



Express welcomes new users with a series of screens that orient them with some of the app's most important features, such as location sharing.

LOCATION OPT-IN

If location is a key aspect of your app, follow a similar approach to asking users to opt in to notifications — convey the benefits before asking for permission, and if at all possible, tie the request to the core functionality of your app. For example, the best time to ask a user to opt in to location services is when they are trying to find something on a map. Offering to make something easier for them, in the moment, is a service provided and not a pushy imposition.

REGISTRATION/LOGIN

Again, the key is to communicate the benefits of logging in, but your approach here will vary depending on how much of your app content and features you gate by login. Some apps essentially require login in order to use the app. If registration/login is optional, your benefits have to be substantial to prompt customers to log in. Companies that offer rewards and benefits through their loyalty programs, or special offers, are the most successful in driving customers to log in.

For example, Redbox incentivizes users to register by offering a free movie rental upon registration. This special offer saw 300 percent greater redemption than a typical promotion.

MOBILE APP ONBOARDING CAMPAIGNS

Leading companies automate entire onboarding campaigns to fully educate their customers on the benefits of using their app, increase engagement, drive conversion results and maximize lifetime value.

An onboarding campaign introduces a user to your app over a period of time with a series of messages, rather than an all-in-one welcome message.

These campaigns are most successful if the user has opted in to receive push notifications, as they will drive more of the app audience to open the app. However, if you have a message center or utilize in-app messaging, you can still deliver this content to your app even if the user has not opted in to push notifications.

Companies looking to maximize the reach of their message can deliver the same message as both a push notification and an in-app message in a single delivery. This gives you conversion reporting for the message reach all in one place.

Mobile app onboarding campaigns focus on:

- Feature education
- Securing opt-in to push notifications, location, registration or login
- Driving first-time conversion goals

Taking the time and care to onboard your customers in the right way will make them much more likely to return. With a cost per install of around \$2 per app user, you've spent a lot to acquire each member of your app audience.² Proper onboarding is your best bet to retain those users and maximize the ROI of that initial investment. Show them the value your app can offer and they'll keep coming back.

SOURCES:

1. "Good Push Index," Urban Airship, May 2014
2. "Fiksu Indexes," Fiksu, September 2015

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