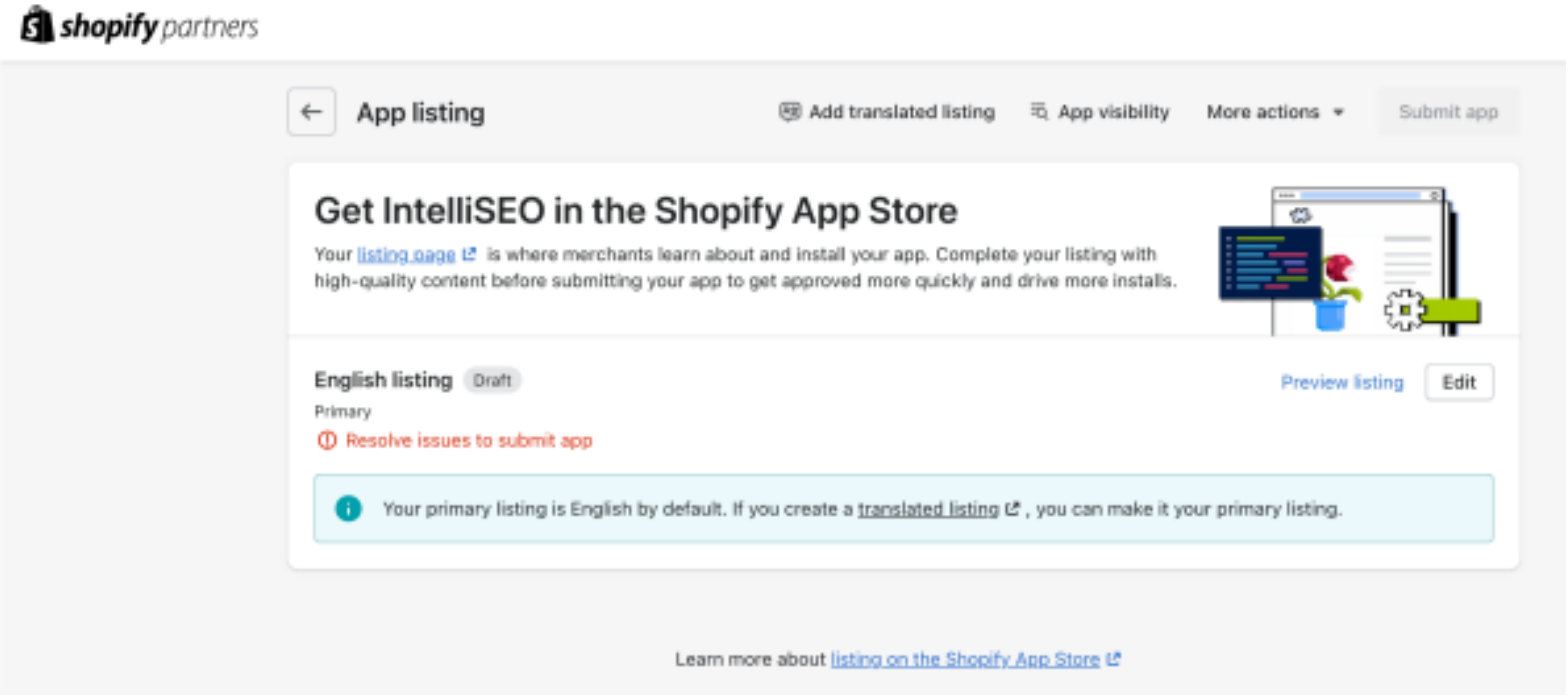
Shopify App Reviews

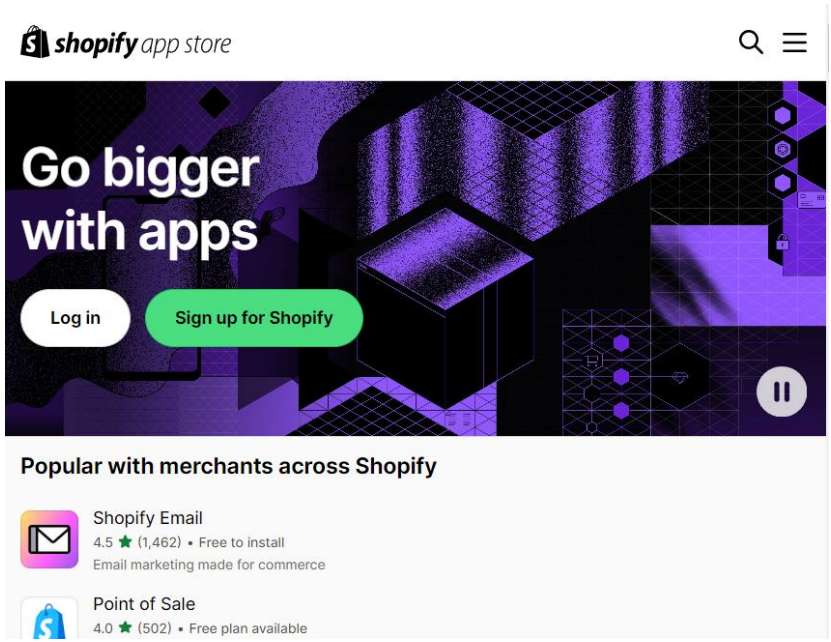
A UX content strategy case study

About the product & users

Partner Dashboard

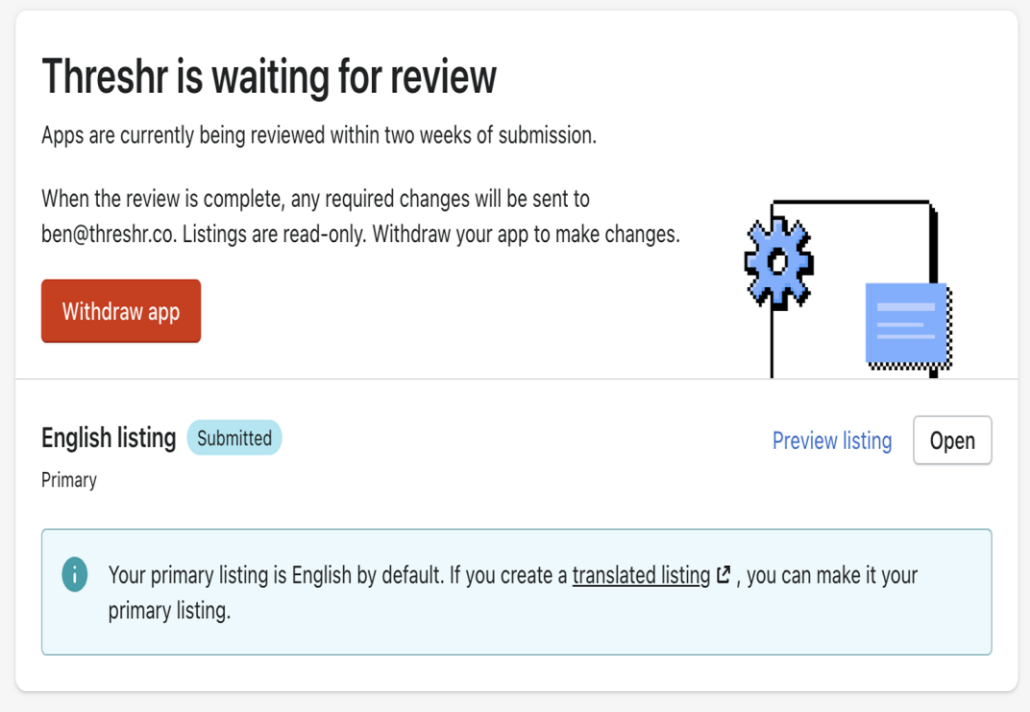
Shopify App Store



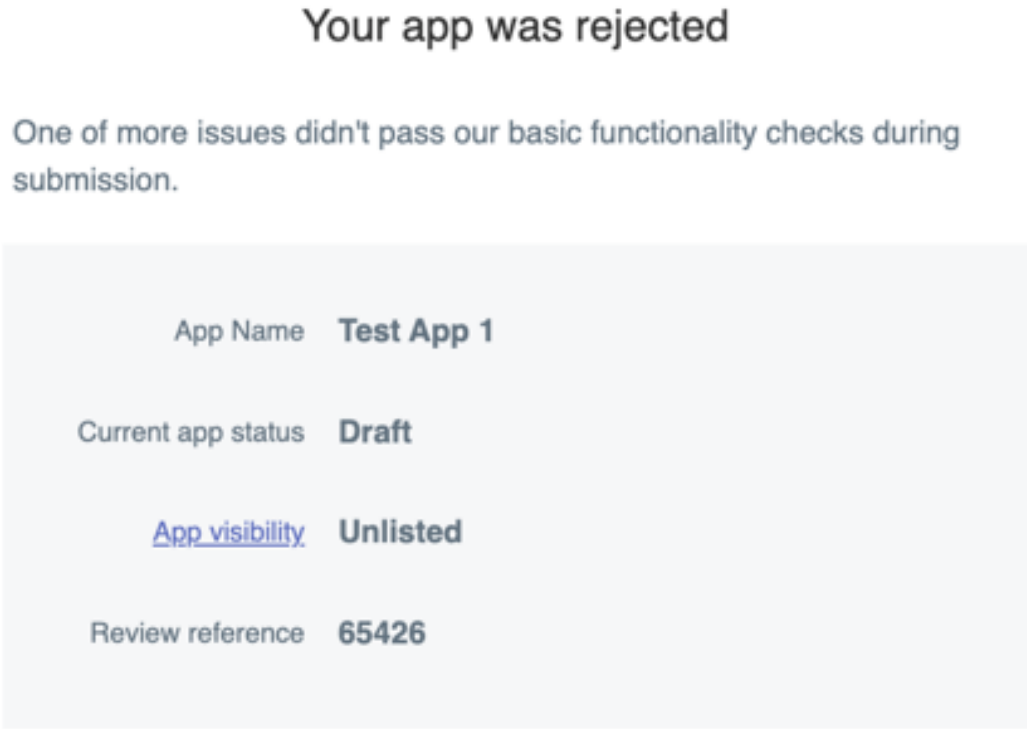


The “before” experience

Dashboard UI
Static with no guidance



Automated review update email
Not helpful, nor clear. Tonally harsh.



Business problems

- Getting apps approved to be published on the App Store was a strong area of developer dissatisfaction in 2022 and 2023
  - From partner satisfaction survey: “I want more information in advance about how to set my app up for success in reviews.”

- The review process is really long for most developers
  - Time to publish from initial submission: 21 days
  - Most submissions fail to meet requirements a number of times before getting it right

Discovery: User flow content audit

Apps index

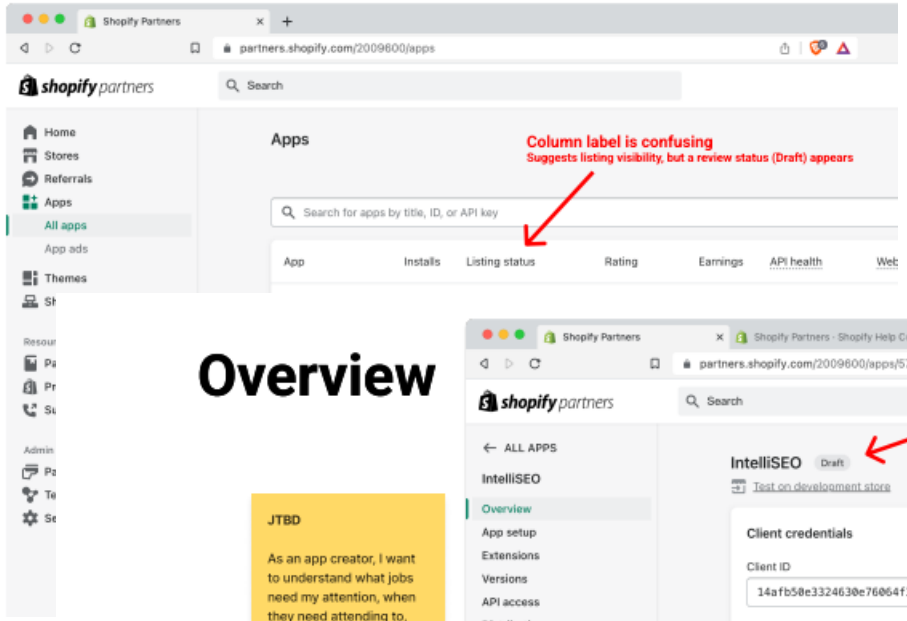
JTBD

As an app creator, I want to get to the app I want to work on, and understand critical information about the state it's in.

Tara Hasouris

Given the job to be done, "draft" as a status label doesn't help the developer understand anything about the state of their app.

"Draft" is a more appropriate descriptor of a listing, but not of an app. It also doesn't speak to the review process.



Overview

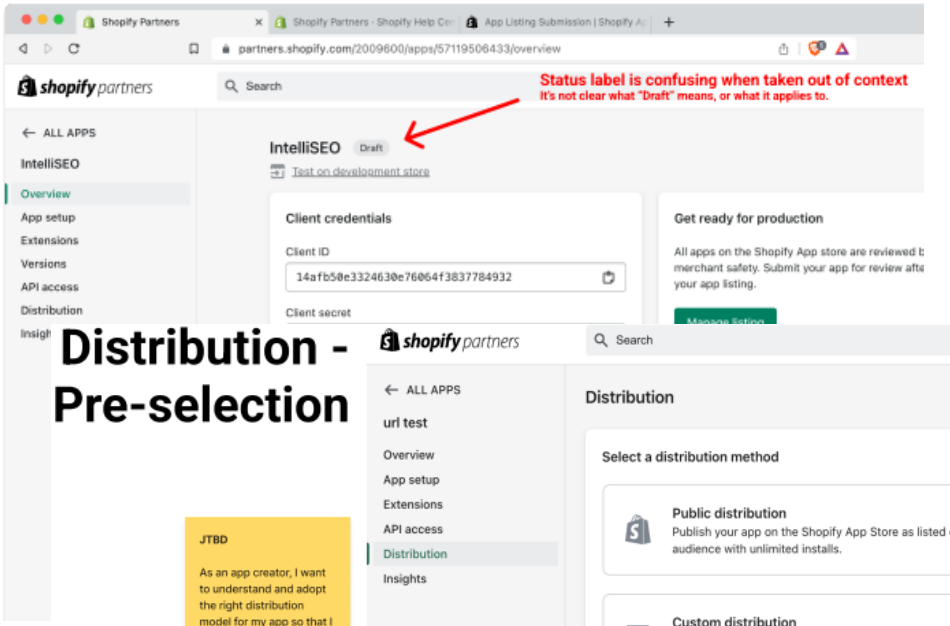
JTBD

As an app creator, I want to understand what jobs need my attention, when they need attending to, with just enough information to dive deeper, so I can consistently and efficiently provide value to Merchants.

Tara Hasouris

Given the job to be done, it makes sense to include the app status on this page. However, a label with no other explanation isn't effectively communicating "what jobs need the developer's attention."

Because there's more real estate for content on this page, there seems to be more opportunity to leverage the card about "app listing" for information about the app's status.

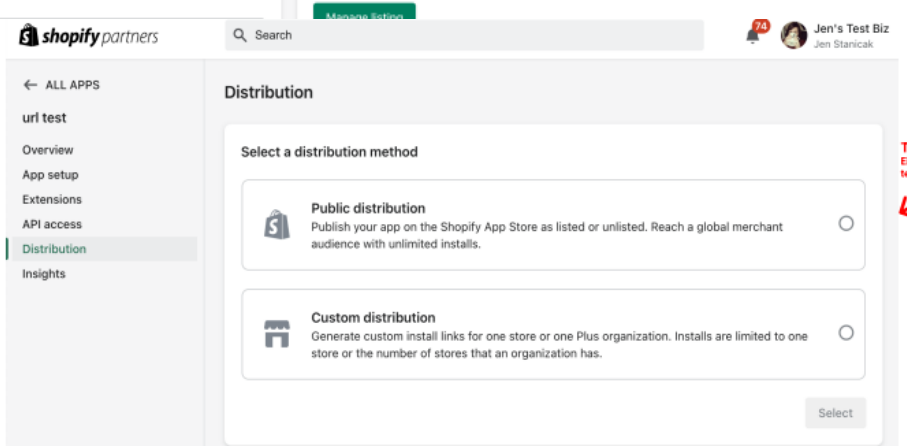


Distribution - Pre-selection

JTBD

As an app creator, I want to understand and adopt the right distribution model for my app so that I can make money in the way I need to.

Tara Hasouris



Dis

Research: Content insight from partner interviews

“Email is unstructured and easy to lose information. I want a dashboard/checklist experience to see what needs to happen, and be able to get more details or open a thread about each.”

“I think we really had nowhere else to turn and get more information. Luckily our business didn't depend solely on Shopify. We could focus elsewhere and just keep this going in the background. Other businesses might not have that luxury.”

“If seeing all issues upfront is not possible, knowing all the stages of checks and what each includes and being given expectations will be very helpful. So we can start preparing and expedite the process. Timing is the most important.”

Content problems

- **Terminology:** Review emails use different words for single concepts than what are in the partner dashboard content
- **Transparency:** Statuses are vague and sometimes overlap multiple use cases
- **Context**: There’s no guidance in the UI around Shopify’s App Store requirements
- **Communication:** No humanized element in emails
  - No clear structure making them hard to understand
  - Tonally harsh which can be discouraging when a developer needs to fix something to pass review

Let’s make this experience clear

Solution: New content standards for developer audiences

Voice and tone

- *Super clear.* Use plain language.
- *Polite but brief.* Get right to the point.
- *Humanized and conversational.*

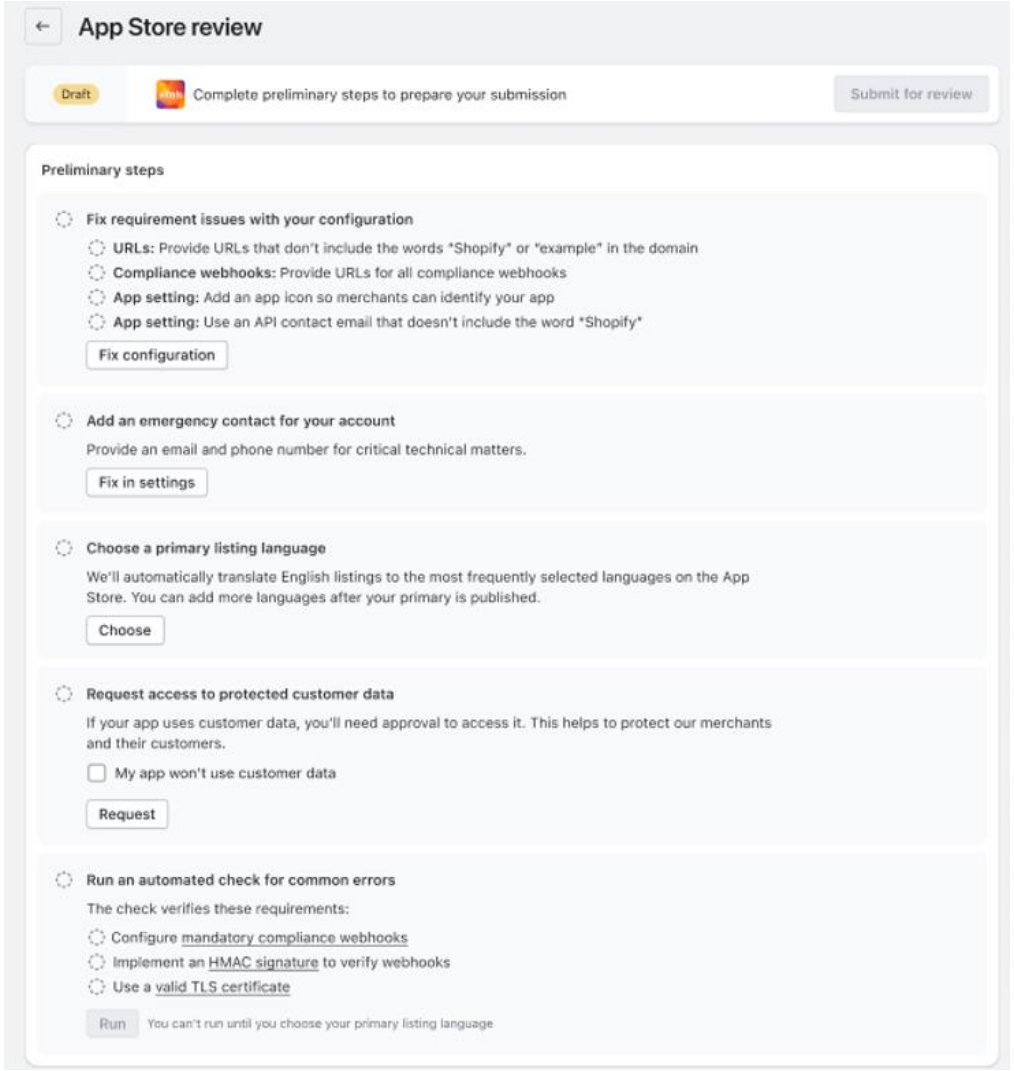
Guidelines

- Lead with verbs, as the “to-do.” This makes it almost impossible to miss when and what needs to be done
  - For example: “Fix the problems to get relisted” not “to get relisted, fix the problems.”
- Make the consequences crystal clear.
  - For example: When we say “delisted,” make it clear that means the app is no longer on the Shopify App Store.
- Use the same simple formatting for all emails. The consistency helps reinforce that they all come from us.
- Be specific about dates and timelines for Shopify to review things, and for developers to submit fixes to requirements not met.
- Where it makes sense, reinforce the merchant benefit, AKA the whole reason we have app requirements in the first place.
  - For example: “You need approval to access customer data. This helps protect the privacy and safety of Shopify merchants and their customers.”

Solution: Clean up terminology

Term	Definition	Terms not to use	category	Dos / dont's
app listing	A page on the App Store that provides merchants and other visitors with crucial information about an app. The listing is the object that results from a successful review. Once published, developers manage their listing content on the app submission form in the Dashboard. Listings should be high-quality and policy-compliant to establish merchant trust.	app details page, ADP	App Store visibility	Do reference this concept more generally, when possible. ("Get your app on the Shopify App Store" or "Get your listing on the Shopify App Store" vs. "Get your app listing page on the Shopify App Store.")
App Review Specialist	The title of the human Shopify reviewers who review App Store submissions.		General review terms	
App Store status	A blanket term to generally reference the different types of statuses related to an app's standing with the App Store.	app status	General status term	
automated checks	A check of security-related App Store requirements. They are done on the back-end by the system, not by human Review Specialists. Developers initiate these checks on the App Store review page before submitting for review. They may also be done on a pre-scheduled cadence after submission.	Cambridge check, preflight check, precheck	General review terms	
core review requirements	Requirements that are checked first by App Review Specialists during review. They're critical to the continuation of the review. If not met, the review is paused. Developers will submit fixes for them on the App Store review page in the Dashboard. This submission of fixes may be assigned to a different Specialist for re-review.	blocking requirements	Requirement type	
	An app that's shared with merchants through means other than the App Store. Usually via a direct link to download the app. Custom apps are never published to the App Store. Also called custom			

Solution: Content design a dynamic, action-oriented product UI



App Store review

Submitted

We're assigning a reviewer to your submission

Withdraw

Success! We received your submission.

If there are any issues, we'll email you at [email address] with more details. It's important to respond to these emails as soon as you can to keep the review process moving.

Listing

Your listing content can't be edited while we're reviewing.

English Primary

App Store visibility

When your listing is published, it will appear in search and recommendations for all merchants to find.

App Store review

Your fixed submission could take up to two weeks to be reviewed

Paused

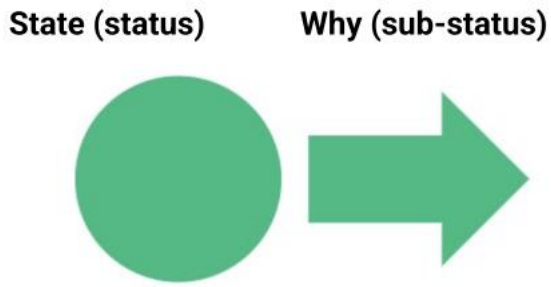
Fix requirement issues—check your email for details

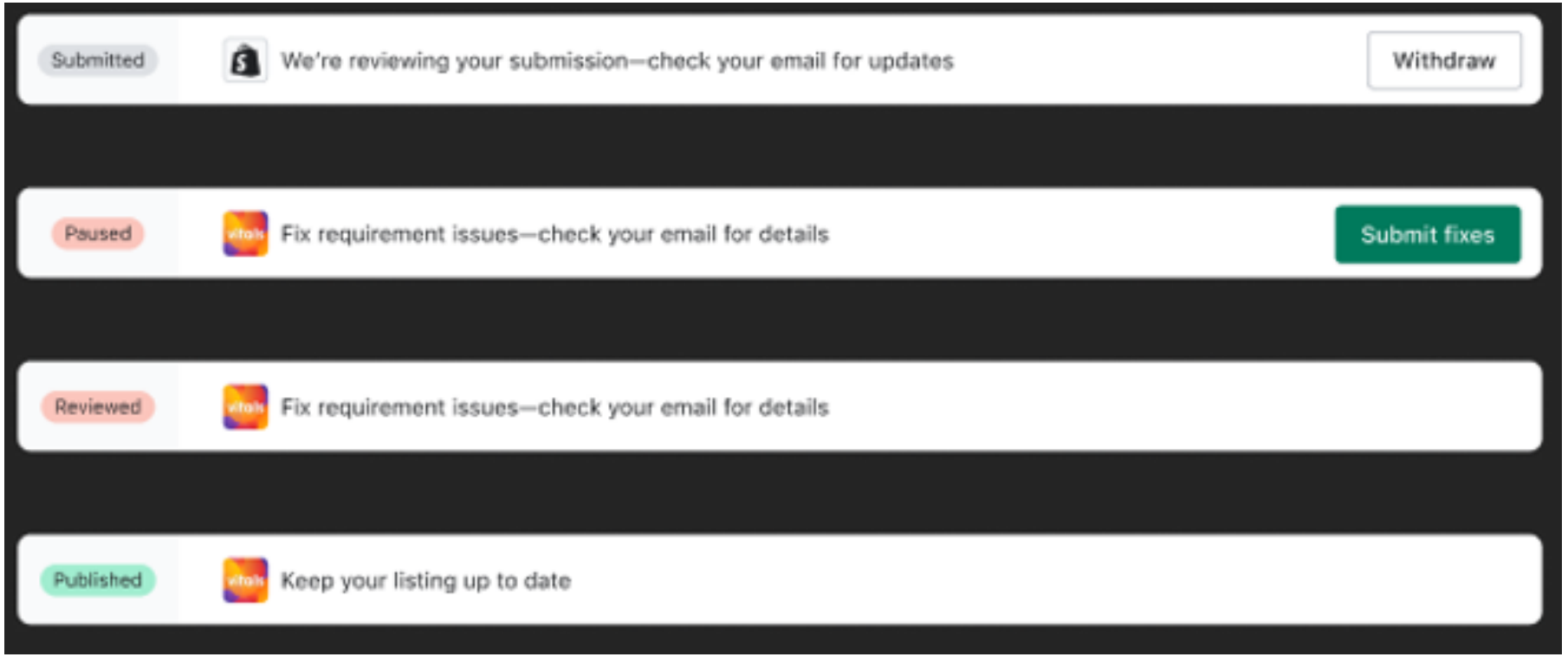
Submit fixes

Preliminary steps

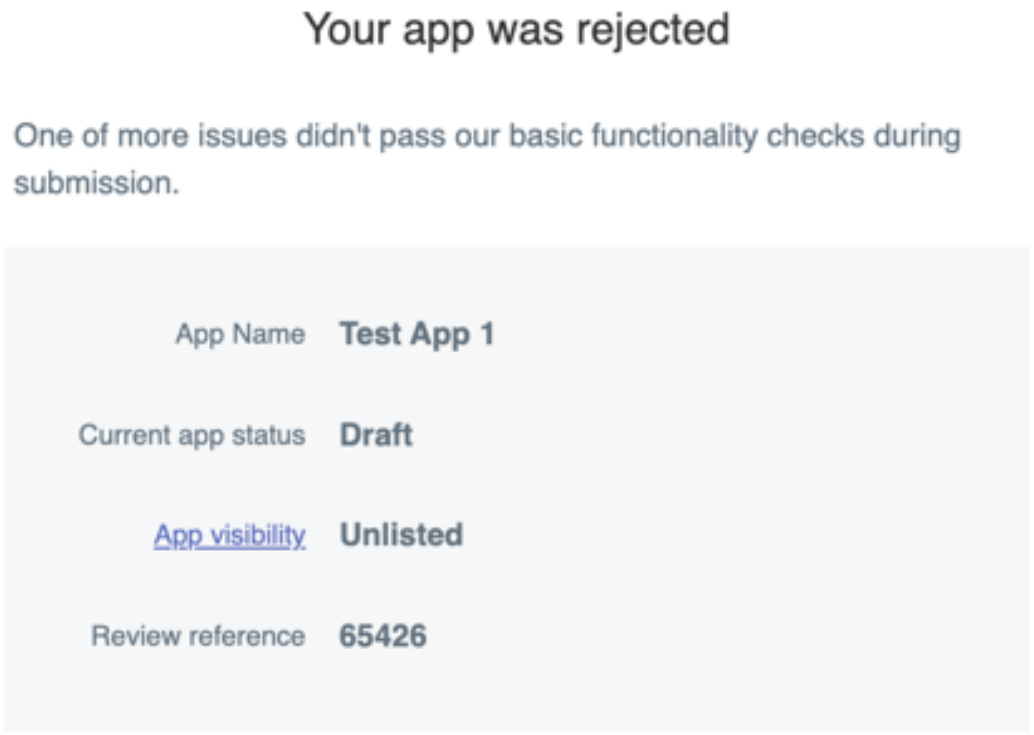
- Fixed requirement issues with configuration
- Added an emergency contact for your account
- Created an English listing — Edit
- Completed request to access protected customer data — Review
- Passed automated check for common errors

Solution: Content framework for statuses





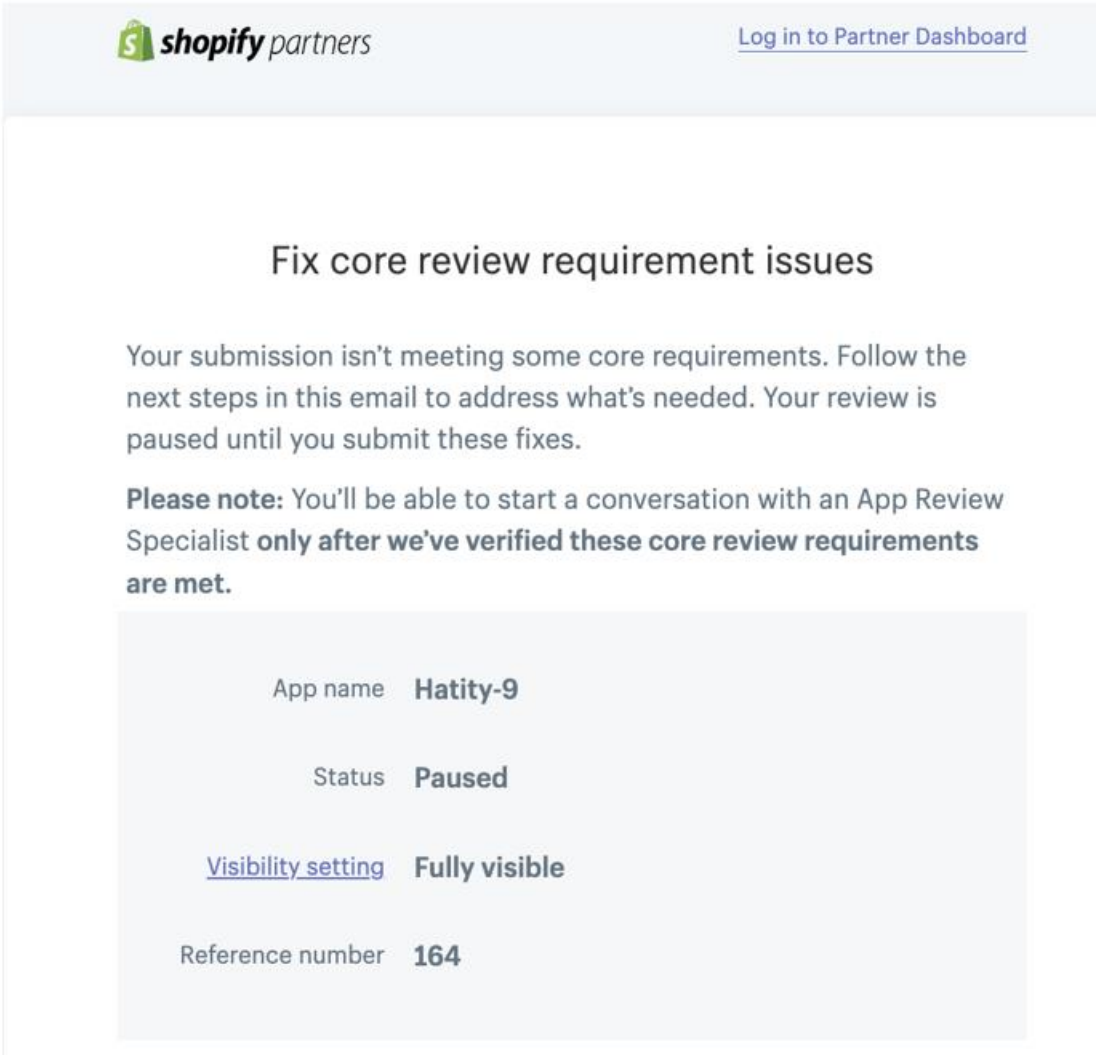
Solution: UX writing the emails



Your app was rejected

One of more issues didn't pass our basic functionality checks during submission.

App Name	**Test App 1**
Current app status	**Draft**
App visibility	**Unlisted**
Review reference	**65426**



shopify partners

Log in to Partner Dashboard

Fix core review requirement issues

Your submission isn't meeting some core requirements. Follow the next steps in this email to address what's needed. Your review is paused until you submit these fixes.

Please note: You'll be able to start a conversation with an App Review Specialist **only after we've verified these core review requirements are met.**

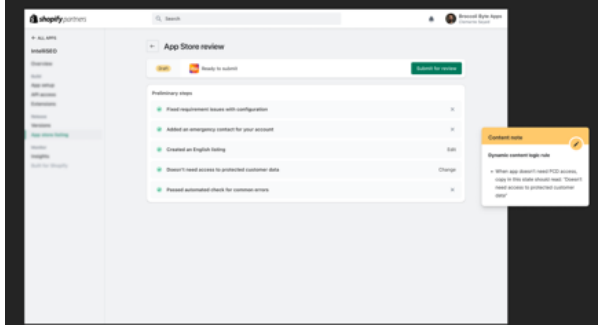
App name	**Hatity-9**
Status	**Paused**
Visibility setting	**Fully visible**
Reference number	**164**

Automated email: Submission received

Partner will see state content in dashboard first

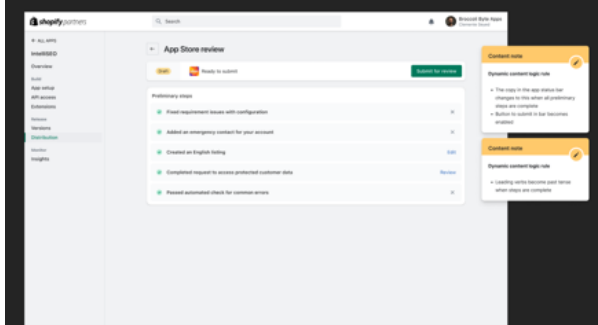
Automated email: Non-blocking requirements not met

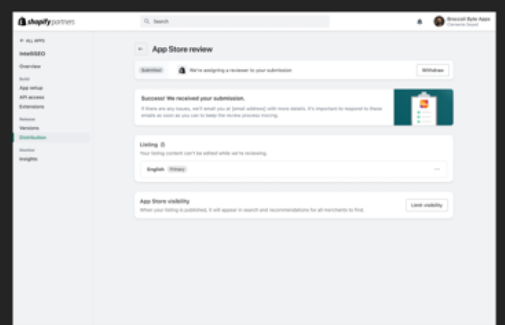
Partner will likely see content in email first

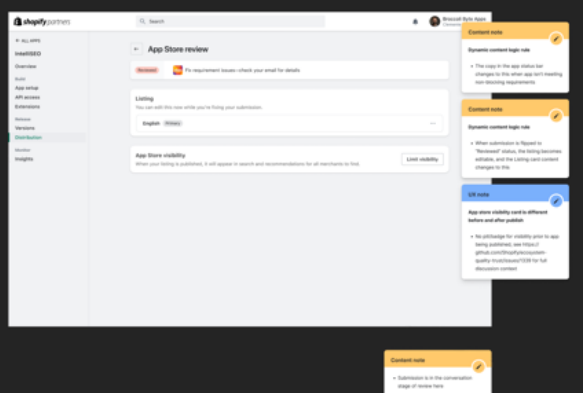


In review: limited visibility selected

In review: fully visible



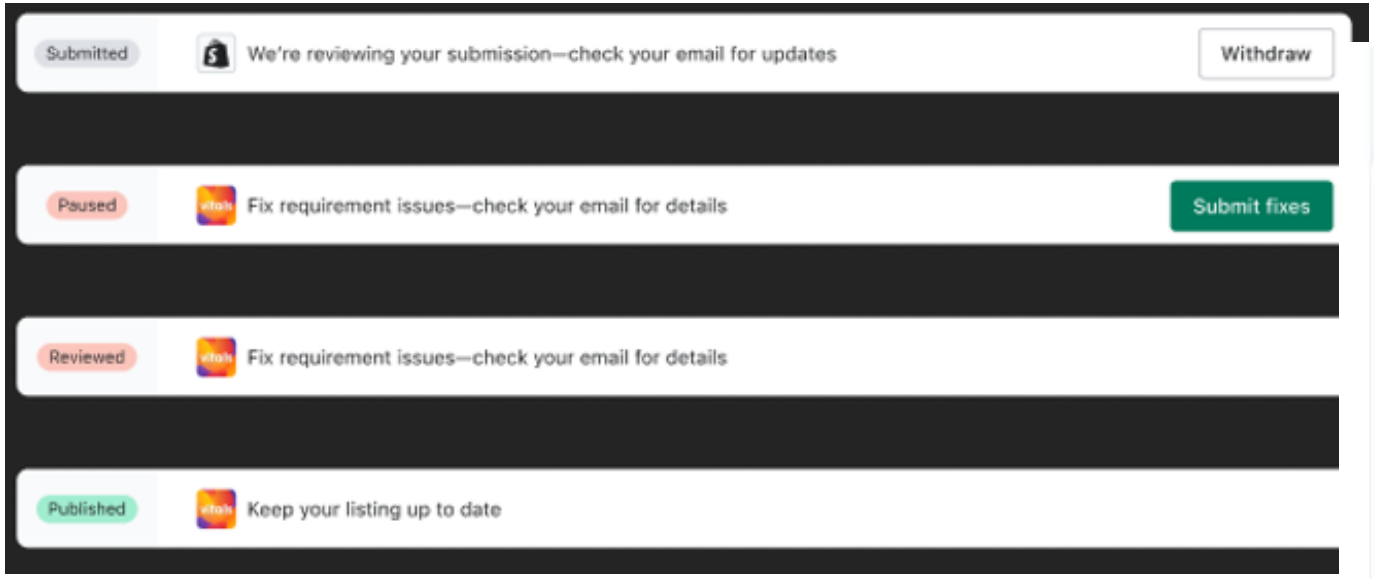


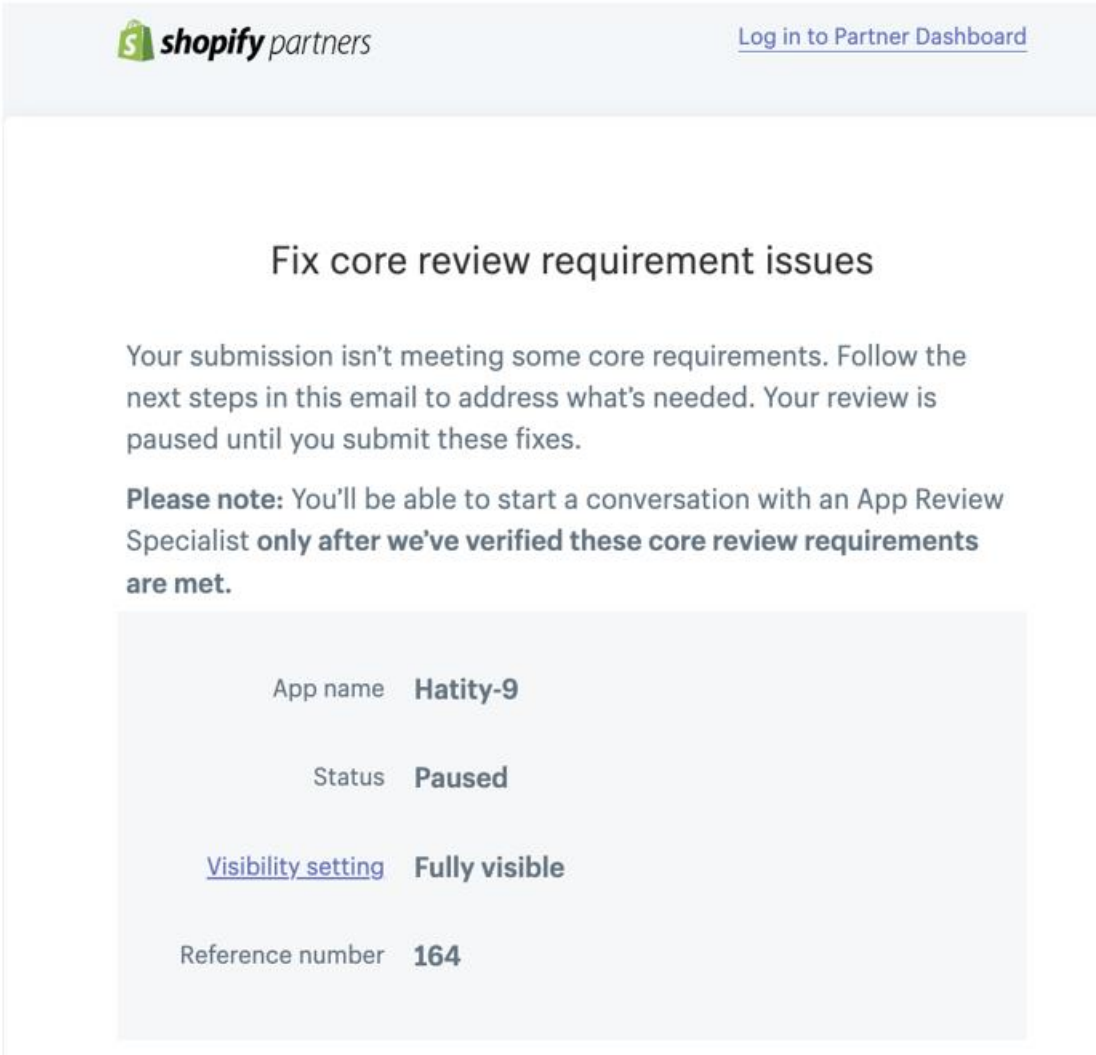


“We can’t build that by Editions”

—Shopify Engineering

Content design: The real MVP



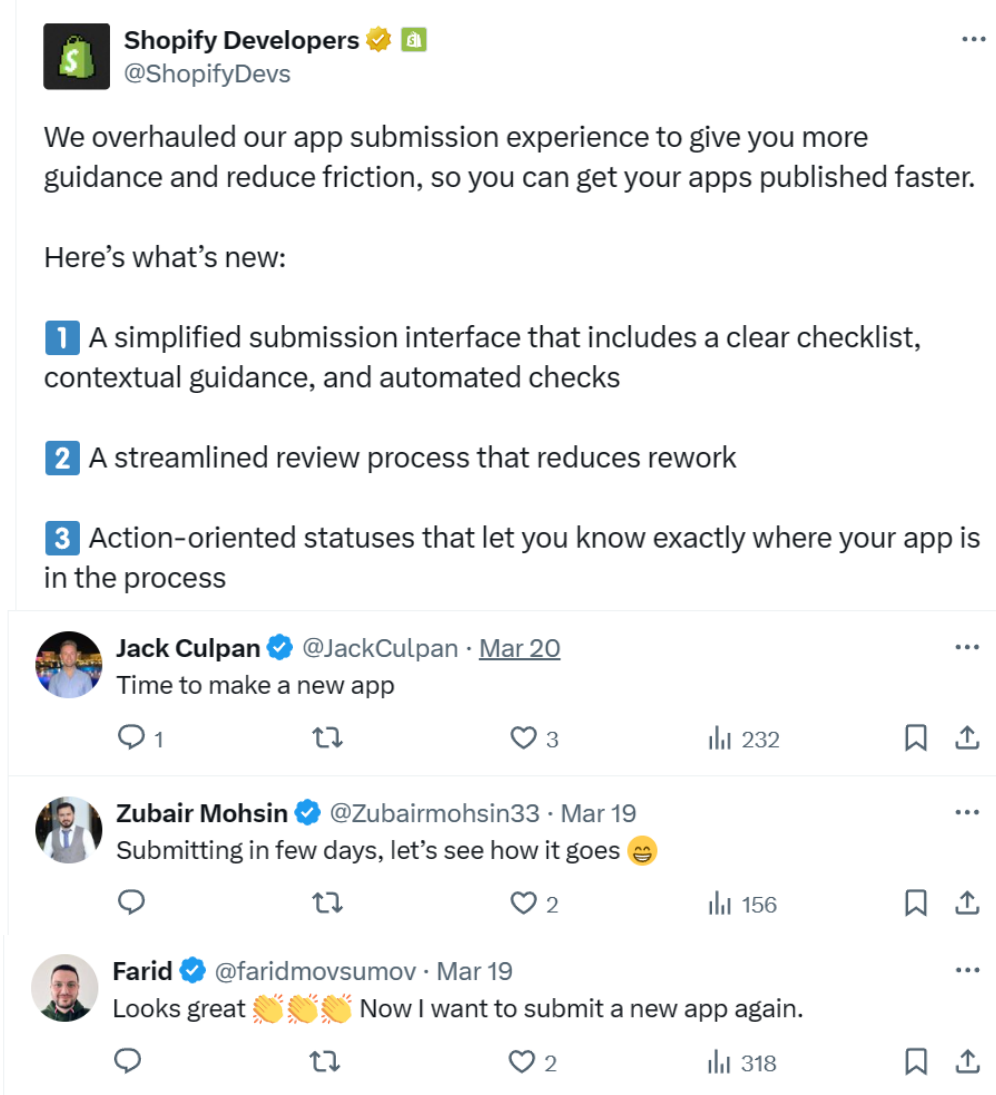


Results

Quantitative

In an initial MVP release of only content updates (emails and UI statuses), we decreased the average length of time taking developers to resubmit their apps for re-review after a rejection from 2.2 to 1.5 days.

We believed this to be connected to our strategy of eliminating tonally harsh words and language from the “rejected” status content, and replacing them with more encouraging, action-oriented terminology. (Rejected → Paused)

Qualitative

Generated empirically positive user sentiment and feedback in public-facing Shopify developer communities. Source: @ShopifyDevs on X