

Building and Maintaining an Effective Utility Mobile App on a Budget

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J.D. Power offers best-in-class voice of the customer analysis to answer: **What do your customers think about their experiences with your brand?**



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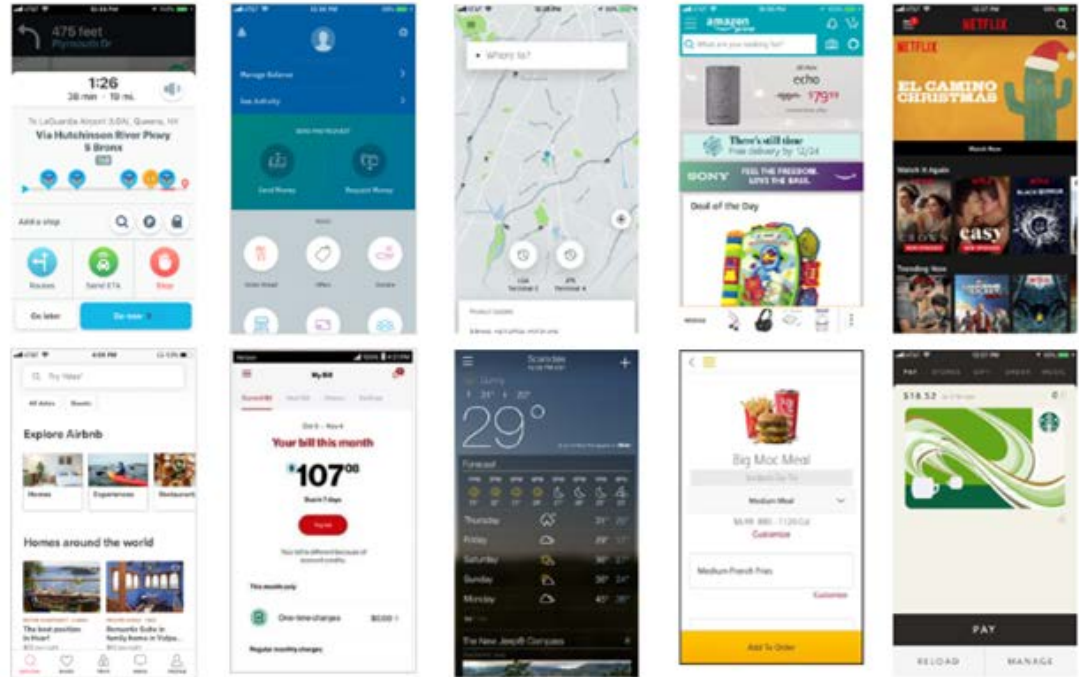


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Centric Digital's proprietary classification system, DIMENSIONS™ offers a unique industry agnostic view of digital best practices to answer: **Are you meeting customer expectations for a modern digital company?**

Apps Have Changed how Companies, or even Entire Industries Interact with Customers

- **New and Innovative use cases** - Uber, Netflix, Airbnb, Lime
- **Better User Experience** - Maps, Venmo, Amazon
- **Increased User Interaction** - Bank of America, Chase, Geico
- **Alternative Revenue Sources** - NY Times Crossword, Public Transportation Info Maps
- **AI and Operational Efficiency** - Zelle, USAA

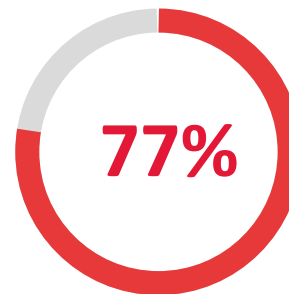


But Apps are Challenging to Build and Get Right

Companies often spend a lot of time and money investing in apps for little return. User attention is valuable, but difficult to retain and manage.



Of apps are
abandoned after
first time use



Average daily active
user loss in first 3 days
of install

Source: LukeW Ideation + Design

Only 29 Utility Brands Offer a Mobile App



Mobile Apps are Part of the Future for Utilities

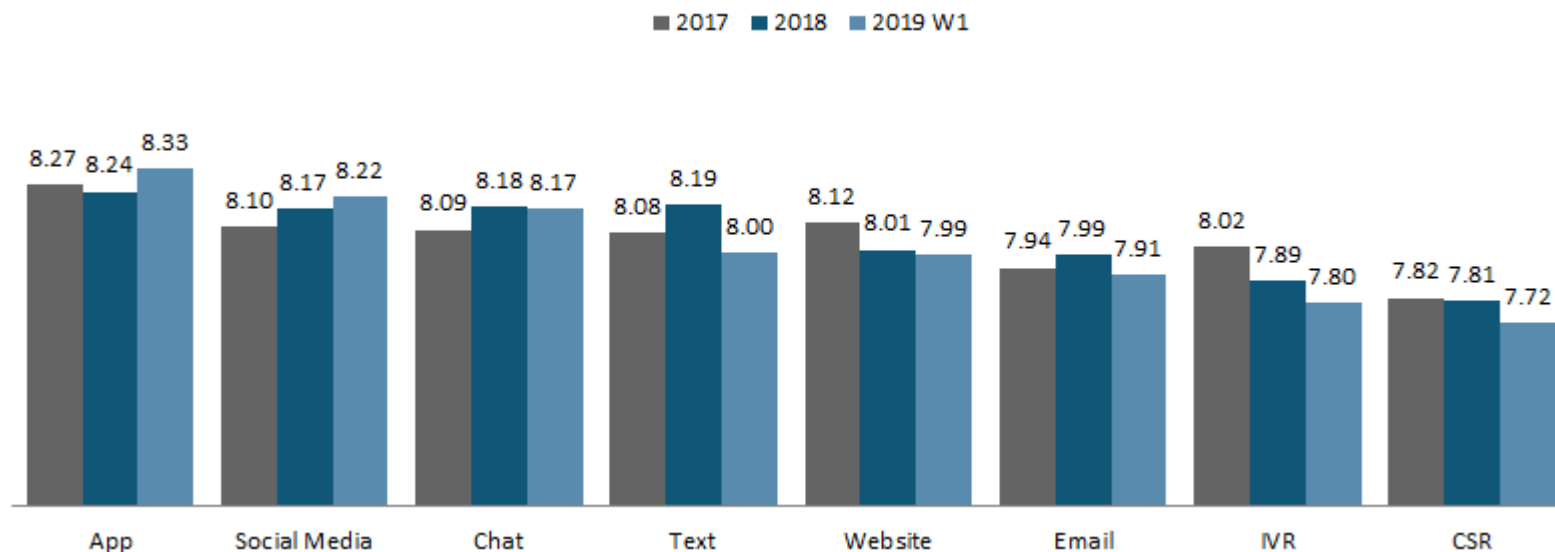
As a nominally non-competitive industry, many utilities have not recognized the inherent advantages of mobile apps.

- **Operational Efficiency**
 - Customer Service - Reduce call volume, related to outages, storms, and billpay
 - Billing - Smooths processes
- **Improve Customer Safety** - Anticipate and provide early warnings or action steps for storms, accidents, and worksites to reduce accidents and keep customers out of harm's way
- **Increase Data Collection** - More data is more knowledge. Apps provide a new channel to obtain data related to customers, outages, and more. This data can help make strategic decisions.
- **Address Rising Competition** - Despite being traditionally non competitive, technology startups are beginning to think about how to disrupt the utility industry. Digital and App competency are ways to head off the value these companies are providing to customers.
- **Increased Customer Engagement and Satisfaction** - According to AppAnnie, app users are 13x more likely to engage than mobile web users

Apps are a Key Customer Service Channel

Mobile apps drive better experiences compared to other service channels, while both IVR and CSR continue to lag (and are getting worse!)

Customer Service Rating by Channel
(among 58 largest utilities)



Source: J.D. Power and Associates Electric Utility Residential Study (EURS)

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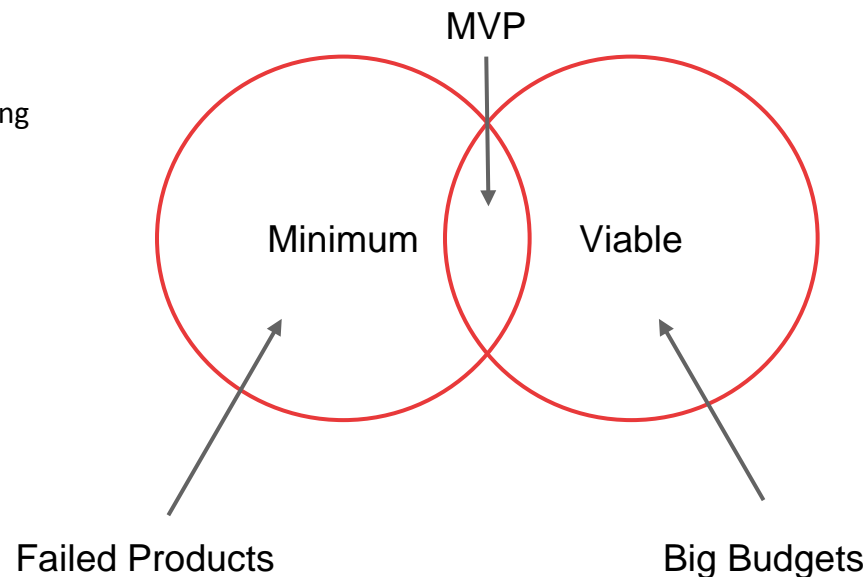
Building Your App

Research your Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

The MVP is the core of your future app, use it to develop and identify critical and non-critical pieces.

Research

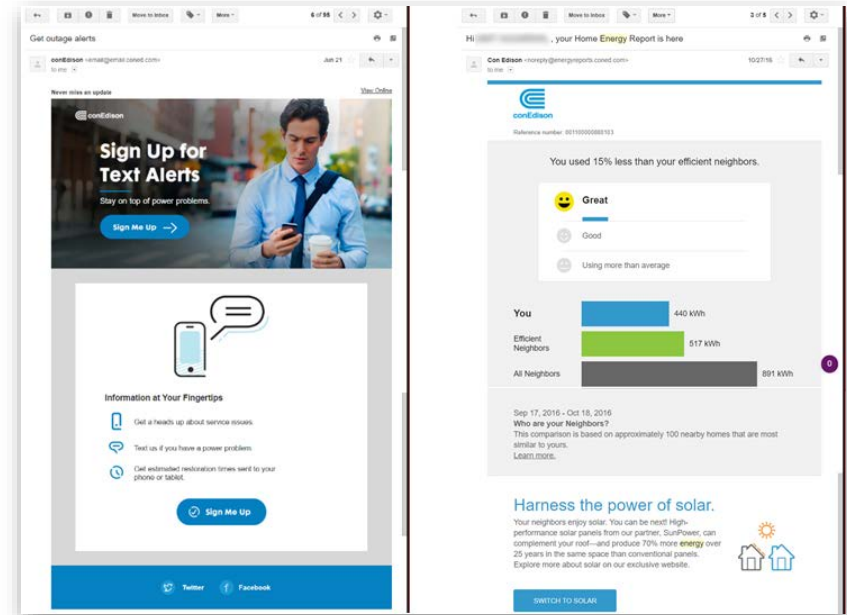
- **Understand your pie-in-the-sky mobile app:** What would it do? How would customers use it? Why would they want to use it?
- **Ask your customers** what they want, ensure that you are meeting the specific needs of your audience through research: focus groups, surveys, etc.
- **Assess your competitors** and see what they provide to their customers.
- **Understand your team's skill set** - Knowing what resources you already have is critical in making final decisions. Understanding what skills you have and what gaps you have is key



Get the Basics Right; Required Features for Utilities

Every utility has a different set of customers, with different needs and expectations, but there are fundamental features that any utility Mobile Application must have.

- **Bill Pay** - Banks have set the expectation that bill can be checked and paid via app.
- **Outage Updates** - This is a key service moment that mobile apps are uniquely suited to handle.
- **Outage Reporting** - A great way to help customers and have customers help you.
- **Alerts** - Alerts promote app engagement. For the utility industry, outages, road work, and storms are key.
- **Customer Service** - Help me connect, whether by phone, email, chat, etc.
- **Usage Data** - (Soon?!) A feature that represents clear, consistent value for customers will improve app stickiness. Value increases with smart meters.



Your Customers Will Tell You What They Want

No Touch ID/Face ID support, a p... Oct 6
 ★☆☆☆☆ Hckynck20

App has never been updated to support the iPhone X form factor, or Touch ID/Face ID, making it a pain to login every time.

Needs fingerprint log in Mar 23
 ★★★★★ mikestuc

The app does what it should. Access to your account. View your current and previous bills, etc. Fingerprint login would increase review to at least four stars.

Worst app ever Oct 29
 ★☆☆☆☆ my powerbill is too high

I log in to my account, it gives me all of my information and even a pdf file of my bill. The problem I have, when I click the "pay my bill" link, it asks me for all of my information, acct number and amount to be paid. Seems as if that information would be readily available, once I logged in my account. Also, you click payment type, and then get in to the payment information, it asks again, payment type. This app doesn't nothing to help or speed up my process for paying my bill. The website is just as bad, all terrible.

Just ok 2y ago
 ★★★★★ b2914

Great that you can pay your bills but currently it does not allow you to check your usage. That's the whole reason I would want this app downloaded to my phone vs. just going on the website.

Decent app, no usage info 1y ago
 ★★★★★ bahamutives22

I'm in love with this app but I don't love it. I'm in love with the fact that I can view and pay my bill in a moment's notice. I'm in love with the fact that I can view, report and receive notice of outages in my area. I'm in love with the fact that I can use my touch ID to sign in instead of having to remember my password every time. I don't love the fact that I can't see my usage. I've taken initiatives to make my residence more green and reduce my monthly bill costs. I can't do that with this app to see if my usage has indeed gone down. I have to sign in on the actual website.

Great app Dec 11
 ★★★★★ Porksoda505

This app works great! The only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is because it does not include the option to report Outdoor streetlight outages and repairs.

Does not send usage alerts Jul 9
 ★☆☆☆☆ Runs out of time

So the concept of the app is good. I want to be able to see my bill. That's fine. But what would be even better would be if it gave me notifications when my daily or monthly usage exceeded certain limits. Such as when you get bumped to the next tier of costs. It's a C+ effort. Could be better.

Helpful and easy to use Feb 5
 ★★★★★ kprez7

This app has helped so much to keep track of my usage and manage consumption of electricity. The convenience been able to pay my bill and look at an estimate of past consumption helps keep on point with my daily use.

Just Awesome!!! Jul 24
 ★★★★★ lakeview drive coral springs

The app interface is user friendly with easy navigation and simplicity when viewing a page. It is very convenient versus having to go through a browser. It is a pleasure when I want to check my bill or usage for the month. Awesome app!

Nice upgrade Jul 16
 ★★★★★ Kitkat315

There are many reasons why I love this app but the main one is that you can see exactly how much your bill will be and it's easy to pay your current bill. It just gives tons of information that's easy to access about your account.

Looks and works great 1y ago
 ★★★★★ Alestrya

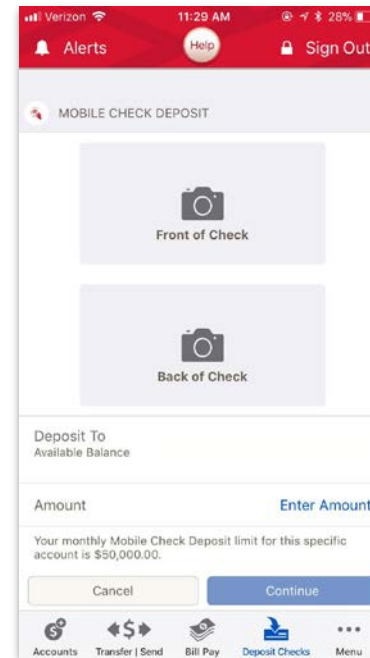
I am able to view my bill and usage via the app as well as local outages! I hope they add a longer history for the usage and a comparison between this year and last like they have on the desktop website.

Build your Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

The MVP is the core of your future app, use it to develop and identify critical and non-critical pieces.

Plan & Build

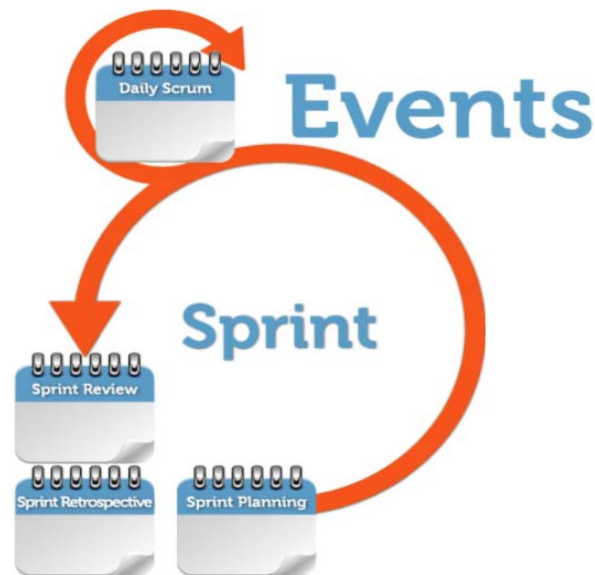
- **Identify your build team** - Will you be using in house or third party? What is the team's budget? How will it be determined?
- **Prune the pie-in-the-sky** - Distill your research to the fundamental items you must have to meet expectations, and what fits into your budget.
- **Develop a roadmap** - Create a detailed timeline for your product launch, be sure to incorporate relevant milestones from associated dependencies (hires, technology integrations, etc) in this process.
- **Build the MVP and launch!**



That is Just the First Stage - Now Iterate!

Launching the MVP is a critical first step, but iterating and improving is the most important aspect of building any product. Without proper maintenance your app will deteriorate and shed users .

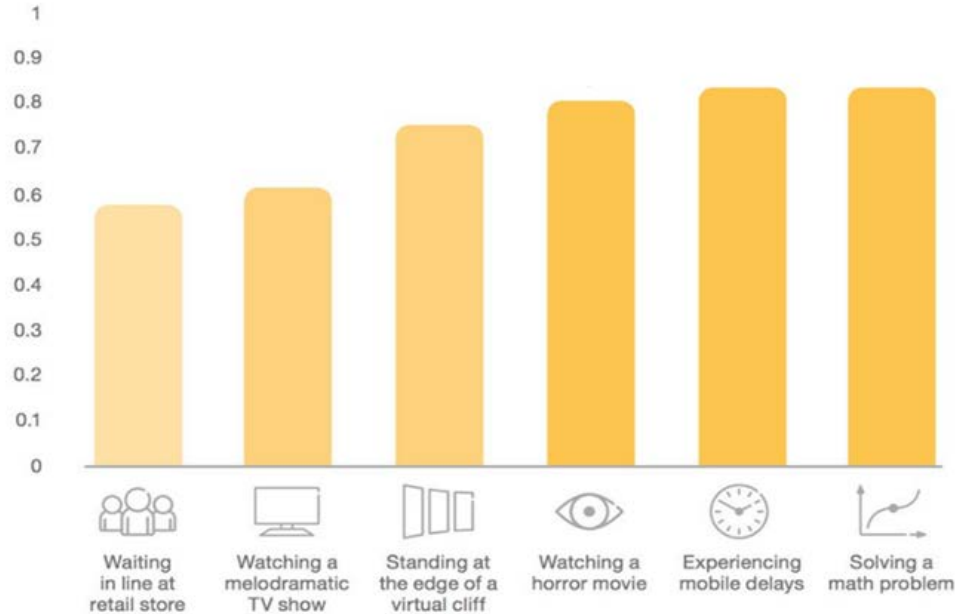
- **Choose your technology development model** - Agile is the most common method, but pick what works for your team and skill set.
- **Update Methodically** - Try to push out an update at least 1 time every 6 weeks. Digitally mature companies do it every two weeks.
- **Incorporate analytics** - Have a way to funnel data to your teams and clear levers to determine what actions to take.
- **Watch what early adopters do** - Pay close attention to early adopters of the app and assess what they do.
- **Test** - Implement consistent testing, both of upcoming builds and existing builds, do not rely solely on user input.



Don't Forget Usability

If It's Slow, They Won't Use It

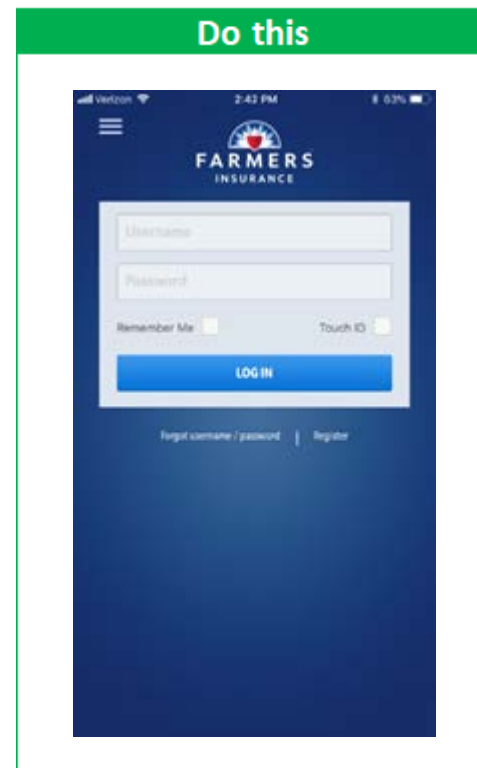
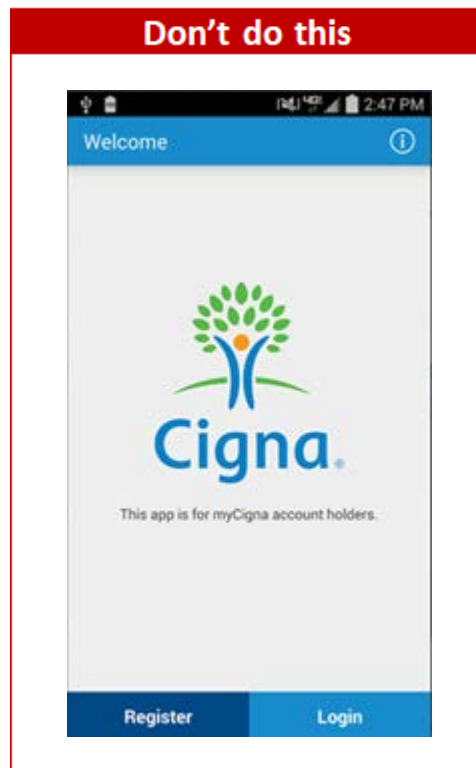
Cognitive load associated with stressful situations



Source: Ericsson ConsumerLab, Neurons Inc., 2015

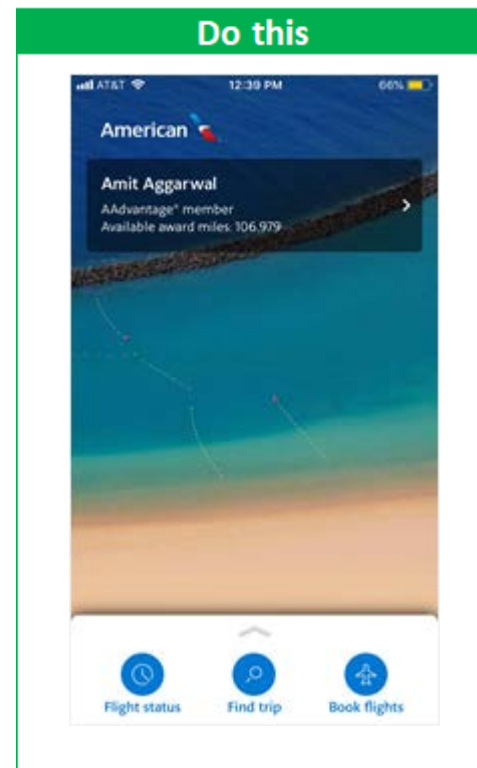
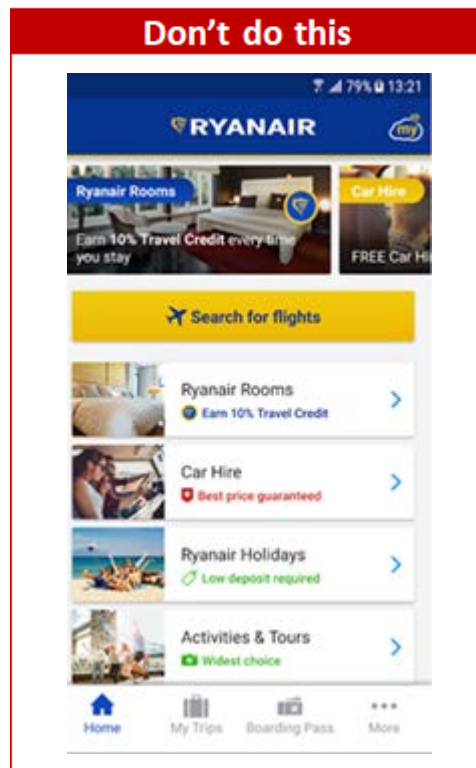
Make Login as Easy as Possible

- Show everything above fold
- Use well-defined fields
- Offer links to recover or register below login area
- Remove anything that's not needed



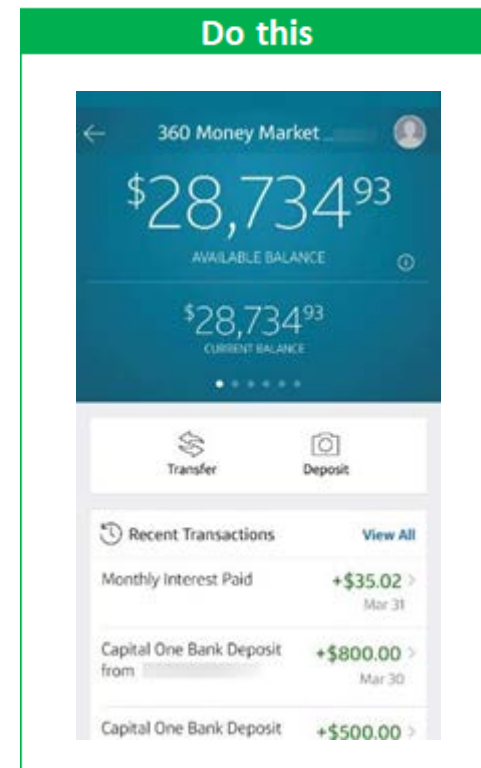
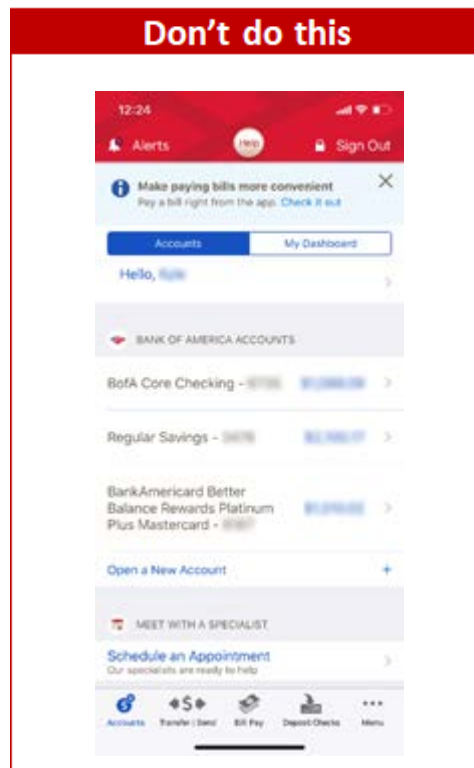
Focus on Key Information

- Think about what your customer wants to accomplish
- Make that front and center
- Push everything else to the background
- Limit marketing or anything that feels like marketing within the account experience



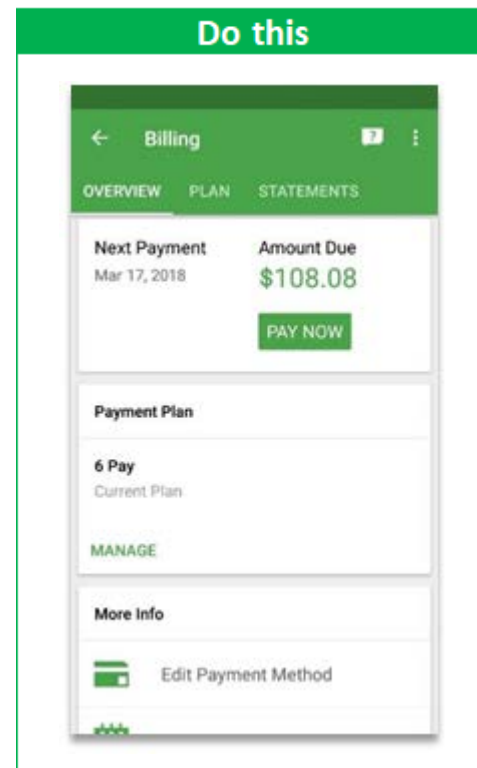
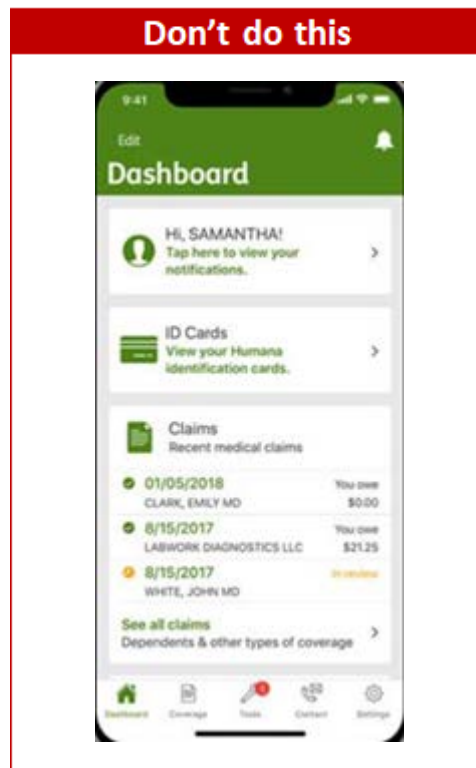
Use Highly Legible Text

- Use large text, particularly for key details
- Make the text high contrast against the background (avoid grey on grey!)



Use Color Appropriately

- White space is your friend
- Use a consistent accent color for key information and calls-to-action
- Don't overuse that color!
- Most text should be black



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Final Thoughts

Pitfalls that Waste Money

Below are common mistakes small teams make that end up creating apps that use resources inefficiently and produce low value for customers

- **Not defining your KPIs** ahead of time:
 - Know what success will mean for your app or features of your app
 - Know what constitutes a failure and what actions to take
- **Jumping too early on new tech trends** - Ensure you understand the value you will get from new trends before guessing on them. If you are on a budget app, the reality is that many techs may be outside of your scope.
- **Rushing the foundation** - A huge problem can come from building a weak initial foundation that needs to be totally rebuilt too soon. Eventually, every app will need a v2, but you want that far down your roadmap
- **Letting existing features languish** - Ensure that core features are kept up to date and modern.
- **Lack of consistent data collection** - Oftentimes companies will do “one journey set” or “one customer survey” at the start and then rely on that data for a long time. Companies should set a regular schedules for insight collection.

- **The next Utility Digital Experience Study (UDES) releases February 27, 2019**
 - Measures experience on your digital channels, including website, app, and social media
- **J.D. Power and Centric Digital can help utilities deliver an effective app on a limited budget**
 - Combined perspectives from Voice of the Customer and cross-industry digital best practices
- **Contact Us**
 - Learn how we can help review or develop your app strategy

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Thank You

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