How to Optimize Your App Store: Your Complete ASO Guide by @LWilson1980

App store optimization (ASO) has been somewhat overlooked of late with the growth of machine learning and AI, Google's mobile-first index progression, and other noticeable industry changes commanding every marketer's attention.

Whether you are new to app store optimization, or keen to refine your approach to ASO, this post will shed some practical insights which are proven to maximize app store success.

What is App Store Optimization?

App Store Optimization (ASO) is known by a few names, including App Store Marketing and Mobile App SEO.

The focus of ASO is expert resource application related to improving the ranking of mobile applications (apps) directly within app stores (like iTunes, Google Play, and Windows Store). The main mobile phones that apps are created for iPhone/iPad, Android and Windows Phone.

The goal of ASO is nearly always app downloads, but supplemental goals can include:

- Increased brand exposure.
- Positive app reviews and ratings.
- Audience engagement.
- Additional marketing channel diversification.

Are you considering how to justify an investment in ASO?

Well, you should know that app store users and app downloads

are growing fast!

According to Statista.com, 270 billion apps were anticipated to be downloaded in 2017, this is a substantial increase from an estimated 224.8 billion app downloads back in in 2016.

When compared to the decline of social media growth over the past few months, plus the increase in mobile device use globally, ASO may be *the tactic* you need to prioritize.

Understanding ASO

If you are new to app store optimization, it is actually likely to be a more familiar approach to your businesses

online marketing than you may initially think.

There are in fact quite a few overlaps in approach between traditional search engine optimization (SEO) and ASO – something I'll cover in more detail in the next section.

When you think about it, this makes perfect sense.

App stores are, in effect, a closed site search engine, which in turn rely on:

- **Easy content (app content) discovery**
- **Indexation**
- *Plus*, **app ranking algorithms** tied to:
    - Perceived app quality
    - Freshness
    - Brand scale
    - User value signals (e.g., reviews, ratings, engagement)

Sound familiar? It should. These factors are all important organic search ranking signals too.

Marketing experts focusing on generating increased ROI from app stores are primarily targeting key performance indicators tied to increasing app visibility:

- Ranking.
- Impressions.
- Shares.
- Engagement (reviews/ratings)
- Downloads.

Just like SEO, optimizing for your app's visibility is a constantly evolving and ongoing process. When you build an app, your goal is to drive traffic. With a commitment to ASO, consistently tracking and measuring performance and results, you can stand out in the App Store and Play Store where your reach is limitless.

Organic Optimization: Your ASO Foundation

The key ingredient missing from many ASO marketing delivery approaches is organic search optimization and integration of app stores within the broader marketing mix.

There is more overlap with ASO and SEO than there is direct competition between the two.

Lots of the traditional search engine optimization tactics that work for SEO gains can also be directly applied to ASO.

Examples of this include:

- App name, title, and URL optimization.
- Keyword research for ASO.
- App rating and reviews generation and handling.
- Deep linking within a mobile apps.
- Indexation of Apps in Google SERPS (search engine results pages).
- Click through rate (CTR) optimization.
- And more!

The biggest marketing mistake, however, when it comes to integrating SEO and ASO is overlooking the role of the website for driving volumes of referral visits directly to your store page, and app downloads section.

Your website should be seen as *the driving force* behind leading people throughout the information seeking and buying funnel from your main online entity (your website) through to an engaged, ready to buy/download audience (your app store).

As content levels are limited within the app stores themselves, the more that you can leverage your website content to increase app awareness and discovery to build external app authority and visibility, the greater the wider

value, traffic and downloads your app will receive.

In-App Store Tactics

There are a number of specific optimization areas within app stores, including Google Play and other app promotion platforms, which can be targeted for updates, refinement, and ongoing optimization.

As 63 percent of all app downloads are directly attributed to app stores, you cannot over-estimate the value of in-app store maximization.

While app store features and available fields will vary, the

following are the core optimization items you will need to focus on and improve:

- **App name, URL, and subtitle**: Ensuring they reflect the core keywords describing your app as well as reinforcing value, differentiation and other perceived value signals. It is important that these areas reflect the highest value keywords and user search behavior.
- **App keyword field(s)**: These are imperative to get right and to update to show latest and changing user search queries. Traditional keyword research is required for optimizing this.
- **App ratings and reviews**: A core trust area for users as well as a ranking signal for app stores. Volume, freshness, and rating all matter. You will need to have a framework in place for generating regular reviews as well as for replying to and engaging with reviews.
- **App downloads:** As you would expect the more downloads your app receives, the higher the perceived buzz, demand, and user value associated with the app. Increasing the volumes of downloads will support increased prominence within the app store organic ranking.

App Updates: Downloads Deserve Freshness

The top-performing apps in app stores are those that are ever evolving (reflecting user feedback, technology changes, feature additions and improvements) and are constantly being updated.

Apps that get updated more frequently tend to derive more positive and more frequent reviews.

Updating your app at regular intervals can bring with it added relevance for your product to your audience and enable your

brand to react to changing audience needs and competition changes with app refinement and improvement.

Both the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store take into account the regularity of app updates as part of the ranking algorithm.

This means that the more your brand is dedicated to progressing your app product offering, the greater your likely app ranking and in-store performance will be.

5 Extra App Store Optimization Tips

Here are a final few more tactics that you can deploy for app store gains.

1. App stores use keyword triggers in your app name, title, description and associated fields, so ensure that you spend time researching the best keywords to use and that you revisit them at regular intervals for optimization opportunities
2. How you present your app store product page will have a big impact on the conversion rate value (downloads) you get from the page. Product page CRO should be an ongoing focus area for generating downloads.
3. Thumbnail images and screenshots used to promote your app in app stores will directly impact the click-through rates (CTR) of impressions compared to clicks to extra app pages.
4. A/B test each of your app store fields for continually improving key metrics associated with the field (CTR, CRO etc.). This type of experimentation and hypothesis testing is critical for getting every ounce of value from the available optimization areas within app stores.
5. Consider using Apple’s Spotlight Search. By using this app store users can search the apps that they have already installed on their mobile phones. When you enable Apple’s Spotlight Search you can also impact app

use and engagement levels as people are going to be exposed to your app more frequently.

More Mobile SEO Resources:

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