

Bridging the Mobile App Gap

Off-the-shelf apps, custom development, and the third mobile application option you may not know about

When companies make the decision to go mobile, enlisting enterprise mobile apps for asset tracking, inventory management, or a host of other uses, the next step is researching options. This research often follows a well-worn path of discovery:

1. Identify the two major solutions: off-the-shelf apps and custom development
2. Learn both solutions offer major benefits
3. Realize both also have some serious limitations and risks



For many, comparing the pros and cons of these two mobile solution options can be frustrating. There's a gap between them filled with compromises and risks, one that seems difficult to bridge. And no other options seem available.

But there is a third option, developed to bridge that gap between off-the-shelf and custom apps.

In this article, we'll examine all the opportunities for your mobile solution, helping you make the best decision for your business now and in the future.

Off the Shelf

Simple and quick. That's what appeals to many when considering off-the-shelf mobile solutions, which are pre-developed and consumer-ready apps. The fact that these products are available as needed, and can help companies get started with mobile solutions relatively easily, is attractive.

Off-the-shelf apps do have many benefits. Most offer free trials, allowing organizations and individuals to test before buying. Once a decision to purchase is made, the pricing is often cost effective and the installation fast. The structure is simple, offering built-in processes that are especially helpful for those companies that are unfamiliar or uncertain of what they need. In addition, support is often included, allowing companies to get questions answered and find peers with whom to share experiences and best practices.

With these benefits, however, come some tradeoffs. Off-the-shelf solutions are developed for thousands of users, and a wide range of uses. This helps keep the price low, but means many other companies, even your competition, could be using the same solutions. It also means you may only use a small percentage of the app, while paying for the full menu.

Off-the-shelf solutions are developed for standard needs, like sales, inventory, and asset tracking. Other needs, or unique solutions, cannot usually be met. In fact, the process can be quite restrictive, with only certain accepted methods and products allowed. Finally, most of these systems are designed for a limited number of users and technology. They may not be able to scale with your business, expanding as you do.

Custom

After discovering the limitations of off-the-shelf solutions, companies often seek out the alternative: custom applications. The source of custom solutions can be varied—an internal resource, offshore talent, freelance developers, and others—but most share some key benefits.

Custom solutions can be developed to meet your exact needs. Rather than attempting to fit an existing tool to your specifications, your specifications will dictate how your tool is created. As such, your app can be unique in the marketplace, providing you a key branded tool that grows with you, expands features as needed, and effectively differentiates you from your competitors.

Because of these two big draws, custom solutions can often mean easier buy-in among your company. They also come with the added security of immediate access to developers for creation, support, and maintenance. You won't need to worry about manually updating software when OS updates are issued, for example.

All of the benefits of custom solutions do come with increased risk and cost, however. Development is more expensive than off-the-shelf solutions, and there is no free trial or return policy. Custom code takes much longer to create as well, commonly six months to a year for development and deployment. If the custom app is created well, its success is highly dependent on access to that developer, now and in the future. If a developer leaves the project or their company, your solution could be at risk. Finally, there are additional costs involved in technical support and OS changes; there are no user groups or free resources associated with this type of solution.

Another option

After comparing off-the-shelf with custom apps, companies can often feel stuck choosing between two mobile options that don't fully fit their needs.

But there is another option, one developed to bridge the gap between off-the-shelf and custom apps. TracerPlus offers customization, competitive advantage, scalability, and support, without the risk and high cost.

TracerPlus puts control more fully in your hands, empowering you to create a tool that will truly help

you build your business. You can get started quickly, creating an entirely unique application for your specific needs rapidly and at no cost. You only pay for what you deploy to your devices. The solution you create can integrate with most databases, including Microsoft Excel, Oracle, MySQL server, Microsoft Access, and [SQL Server](#), and allow you to extend these existing systems to your mobile devices in the field with minimal additional investment. Finally, the tools you have at your disposal are constantly being updated for new operating systems and devices, so you can scale as appropriate.

For those companies that want the ease and pre-made templates of off-the-shelf, TracerPlus offers applications that are ready to go when you need them. For those that want to customize but don't have time or lack familiarity with mobile apps, TracerPlus offers development services that are quick and responsive. For every option, there is a large library of self-help, robust user groups for learning from peers, and more formal support.

TracerPlus also comes with another significant benefit that other solutions don't have: a built-in partnership with Zebra Technologies. TracerPlus is validated on nearly all Zebra mobile devices and

<i>Benefits Comparison</i>	Off-the-shelf mobile apps	Custom-developed apps	TracerPlus
Free trial	✓		✓
Cost-effective pricing	✓		✓
Quick to set up and deploy	✓		✓
Built-in templates	✓		✓
Support/ user groups included	✓		✓
Unique design available		✓	✓
Scalable for users and technology		✓	✓
Solutions made for unique needs		✓	✓
Consistent access to support and developers			✓

printers, including RFID technologies. As a result, there is no need for additional custom development, saving you time and money.

Your Solution

TracerPlus combines the benefits of off-the-shelf and custom apps while removing the risks. To learn more, and to get started with your free trial, visit [TracerPlus.com](https://www.tracerplus.com).