Marketing your passenger APP:

Get more downloads, more installs & more bookings

BY JON SMITH

Taxi APP
ABC Taxis
"Taxis, anytime, anywhere"
★★★★★
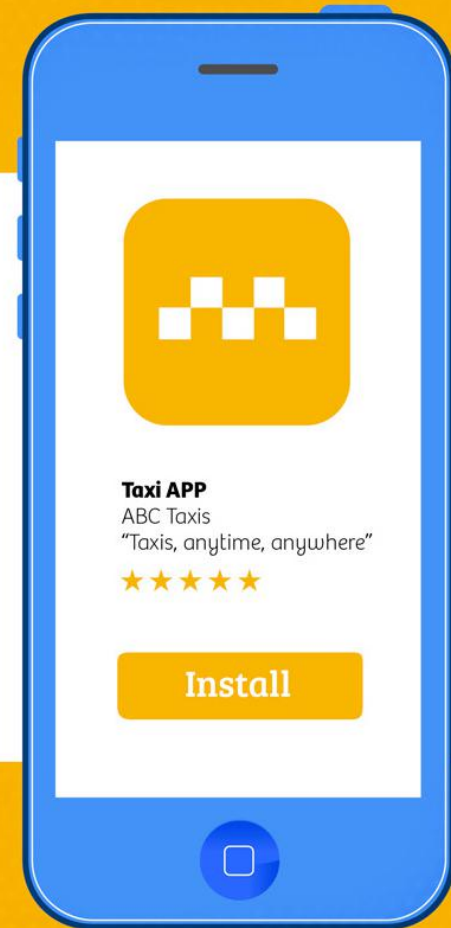
Install

DRIVING INNOVATION
E-BOOK SERIES

How to increase the number of downloads & installs of your passenger app – design best practice to ensure more users install, download & use your passenger app.

About the Author

Jon Smith joined Autocab's management team in 2016 with more than 17 years of experience marketing innovative enterprise and SaaS products and solutions, and having held leadership positions at a number of top global technology companies. Part of the launch team for Amazon.com in Europe, Jon is the internationally published best-selling author of twelve books including *Get into bed with Google, Adwords that work* and *Dominate your market with Twitter*.

Prior to Autocab Jon served as Vice President, Marketing at Whisbi in Barcelona, Spain.
Jon was awarded a BA (Hons.) from the University of Reading and a MA from Bournemouth University.

ENABLING GROWTH
WITH PASSENGER APPS

To grow your private hire or limo business it's no longer a luxury or a gimmick to offer a passenger app, it's now business critical

Booking a taxi used to be a simple affair. A customer would ring your office, a controller would take the booking and dispatch the job out to a driver... but as much as it was simple for the passenger (if they could actually get through at a busy time) it was a system fraught with complexities, it was labour intensive (for you) and was exposed to numerous possibilities for human error.

Fast forward to present day and 81% of the UK population (37 million people) now owns a smart phone – and they use them, every day for everything from playing games, to measuring their sleep, to listening to music, to online banking. We live in an 'instant gratification' age in which customers want everything right here, right now through whichever channel, or screen, they happen to be using at that moment – be it, smartphone, tablet, or desktop. The companies that have embraced these new channels and changed their offering to match this demand are succeeding. Those that refuse to innovate are under threat.

AUTOMATION
OR BUST

Advancements in technology have meant private hire taxi firms can automate more and more of the booking and dispatch process – although we, as an industry, may be some way away from achieving 100% automation – certainly it's our experience at Autocab that some of our customers are now achieving as much as 60-70% automation.

High levels of automation can be realised across the entire booking and dispatch process – via telephone, online and app – **but it is the combination of all of these channels, working together seamlessly, where automation really comes in to its own**. For example, with a well deployed IVR system passengers can self- book a car from one of their preferred pick-up locations. With Autocab

ABOP firms can automate responses to calls from passengers asking about the whereabouts of their car with accurate information. With online booking capabilities your passengers can book their pick up location and even pay for the journey in advance.

Each of these channels reduces the number of calls coming into the office and automates many of the booking and dispatch processes which are, ordinarily, so human intensive. However, it is the deployment of a passenger app that changes everything...

With technology comes choice.
And with choice comes the opportunity for increased automation...
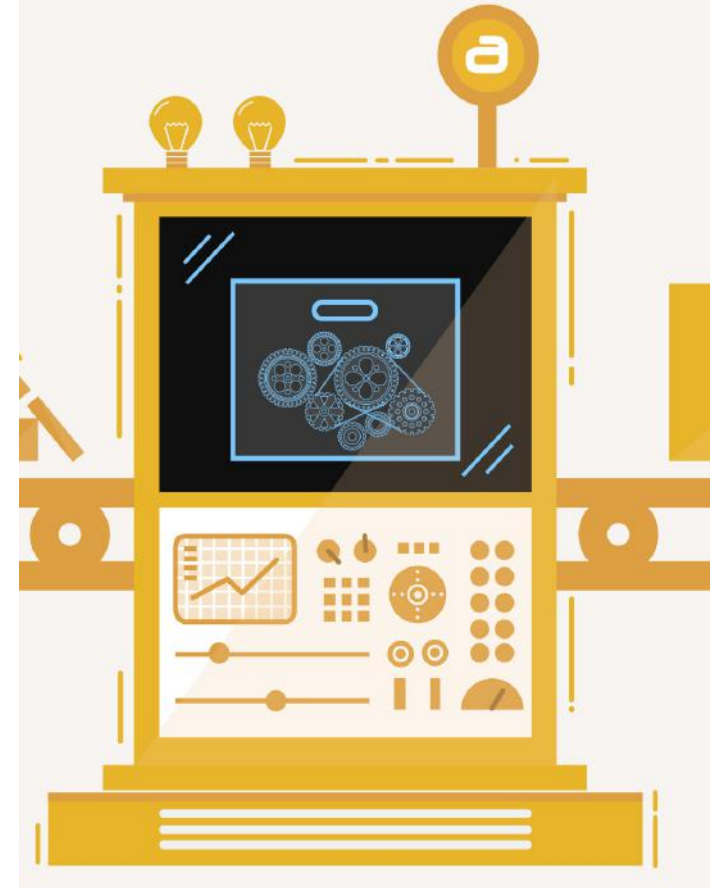
Passenger apps take automation to the *nth degree* and make the prospect of achieving almost 100% automation a possibility rather than just a pipe dream. **Passenger apps add a layer of control and visibility for the passenger which is missing from all other channels**, even online booking: Who is my driver? Where are they now? How long until they arrive? What's the estimated travel time? These questions are all answered just by glancing at the screen.

Passenger apps help you to build a relationship with your customer base by offering a true connection between your passenger and your fleet and this all adds to the improved customer experience.

Passenger apps help you to build trust

APP USAGE AND
DEMOGRAPHICS

In addition to map and fitness apps... there are two industries that really lend themselves to the location- specific on-demand service afforded by real-time GPS technology – Food delivery and Taxi booking.

Whilst conditions might be favourable, this doesn't mean getting passengers to install your app is in any way easy or guaranteed – there are lots of taxi apps out there, the key is to make yours the most appealing.

It's important to note that the vast majority of adult smartphone owners install twenty or less apps on to their phones, so it's really a big deal for your passengers to decide they want to install, and use, your passenger app.

Earning space on your passenger's phone should be regarded as a privilege, not a right, and although your initial goal should be the install, making sure that your app stays on their phone means encouraging those who have installed your app to want to use it and that you deliver an excellent service each and every journey.

According to Google a staggering 25% of all installed apps are never used and a further 26% of installed apps are abandoned after the first use, so the lesson here is that as much as you must provide a compelling reason for passengers to download your app... **you must also provide a compelling, and continuous reason for passengers to *use* your app...**

This following pages of this e-book will explain how you can do this:

PERFECTING YOUR GOOGLE PLAY & APP STORE LISTING

In most cases 20-40% of store listing visitors download your app. What if you could increase this number? Or what if you can't change this number but you can drive more visitors to your app's Play Store or App Store listing? And what if you can do both?

Getting people to download your passenger app starts with having a good app page. It doesn't matter how good your app technology is, if no one has it on their phone... Your Google Play and App Store listing is your showcase, your shop window and in a very limited amount of space you must convince browsers why they should download your app and not a competitors'.

YOUR APP ICON

Brand is important but you may need to compromise and create something new when it comes to defining your passenger app icon – this is the icon passengers will be adding to all the other apps they have on their phone so it needs to be unique enough to be recognisable and it must also stand out within the Play/App Store. Before you decide just to use a smaller version of your existing logo (or worse, a cropped version of your logo) – take a look at the apps installed on your phone – what do you like? What catches your eye? And if there are some of your competitors offering their apps on the Play/App store, what design choices have they made for their icons?

Keep the icon simple, clean, and consistent with your app imagery

Branding is partly psychological – little hints and reminders our sub-conscious picks up on such as the colours of your logo represented in your app and then again on the livery of your fleet. One message, one colour scheme, one company – scalable whether you have 20 or 2000 cars.

The app icon is the first image potential passengers will see before they decide to download your app, and it's what they will associate your application with once it's installed on their device. A badly designed, unprofessional logo will give off the impression that your app is of the same poor quality and will be a huge barrier to app downloads and installs.

As a rule, don't use words within the app logo – it's simply too small a space and therefore difficult to read; use the app description to explain who you are and what your business is called; a compelling image or icon design is the best way to first capture a user's attention in the App/Play Store.
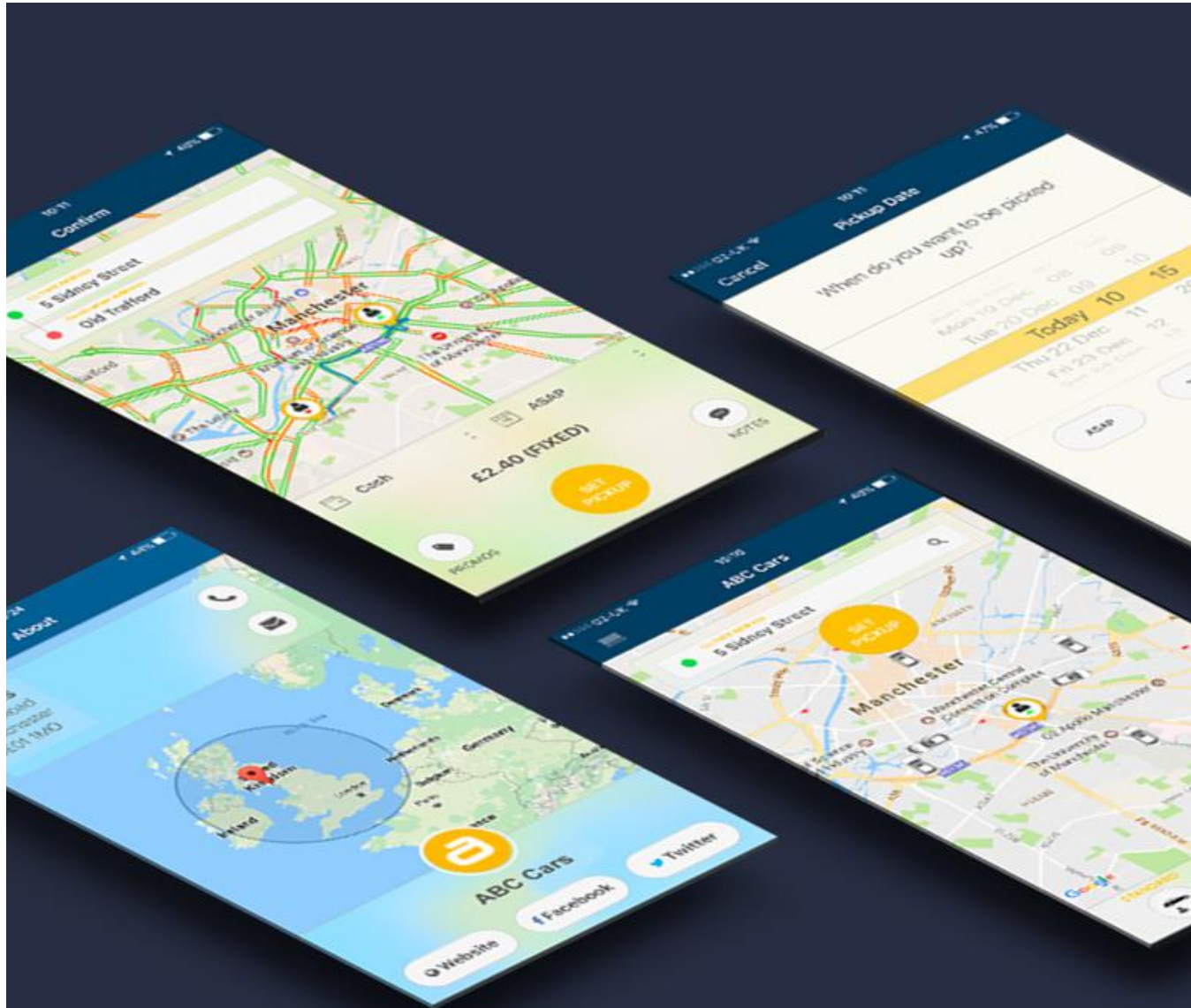
this is what our app looks like and this is how easy it is to book a car...

SCREENSHOTS

Google lets you add multiple screenshots to your app page. Getting the first, visible, image right is the most critical aspect in improving your page conversion. Choose your screenshot wisely – if it's a 'set pick up page' screenshot – make sure that there are cars available in the vicinity and the estimated time to pick up is single digit minutes when you take the screenshot!

Walk customers through the simple booking process in a 'visual story' through screenshots – no explanation needed – this is what our app looks like and this is how easy it is to book a car...

The "Feature graphic" is Google's term for the "cover" of your mobile Google Play page. Make sure you add a slogan to the feature graphic. Maybe a customer promise about service quality.

YOUR APP DESCRIPTION

Of course you must cover the basics – your company or fleet name, how long you have been operating and confirmation that your app enables users to book a taxi, but beyond this there are some points which will help differentiate your app from your competitors:

Location, location, location – you provide a service to a specific area – shout about it in your listing. You're competing with global tech companies who can offer cars almost everywhere... but **your strength is that you concentrate all of your efforts, knowledge and drivers in one specific area.**

Your app should be the app of choice for local residents

What works:

• The first letters of all the words in the title should be capitalised to be more eye-catching.

• Let passengers know how big your fleet is – reassure them that you have a car for them.

• Include the words 'Taxi', 'Car', 'Pre-book' and 'Airport' in your description because they help with Search

• Include the words 'Free Taxi App' at the beginning of the description

It might seem obvious, but check and double-check the grammar and spelling contained within your short description. Any errors here can lead potential users to change their mind about downloading your app.

RATINGS & REVIEWS

Your app could have thousands or even tens of thousands of users. But in a competitive market, every user must be treated with care. **Remember you're only ever one bad experience away from a customer uninstalling your app**. Word of mouth is a powerful tool for your business when the message from customers is positive – but it can be even more powerful when they message is negative. It's imperative you pay attention to your app users.

Google Play and Apple's App Store offer the opportunity for app owners to respond to user reviews. Even though this feature is now available to all app creators, not everyone is using it to provide timely support to customers. Although it's always nice to receive five-star ratings and reviews, you should be prepared for and welcome, negative ratings and reviews. Even if the comments are not 100% positive, this is valuable feedback about your service. Remember that these comments and reviews are public and visible to potential customers considering downloading your app – those comments are right there in your shop window. Respond quickly, thank customers for positive reviews and offer to solve any issues existing customers may have experienced with you app – invite passengers to write to your customer service email address so that you can resolve any issues privately.
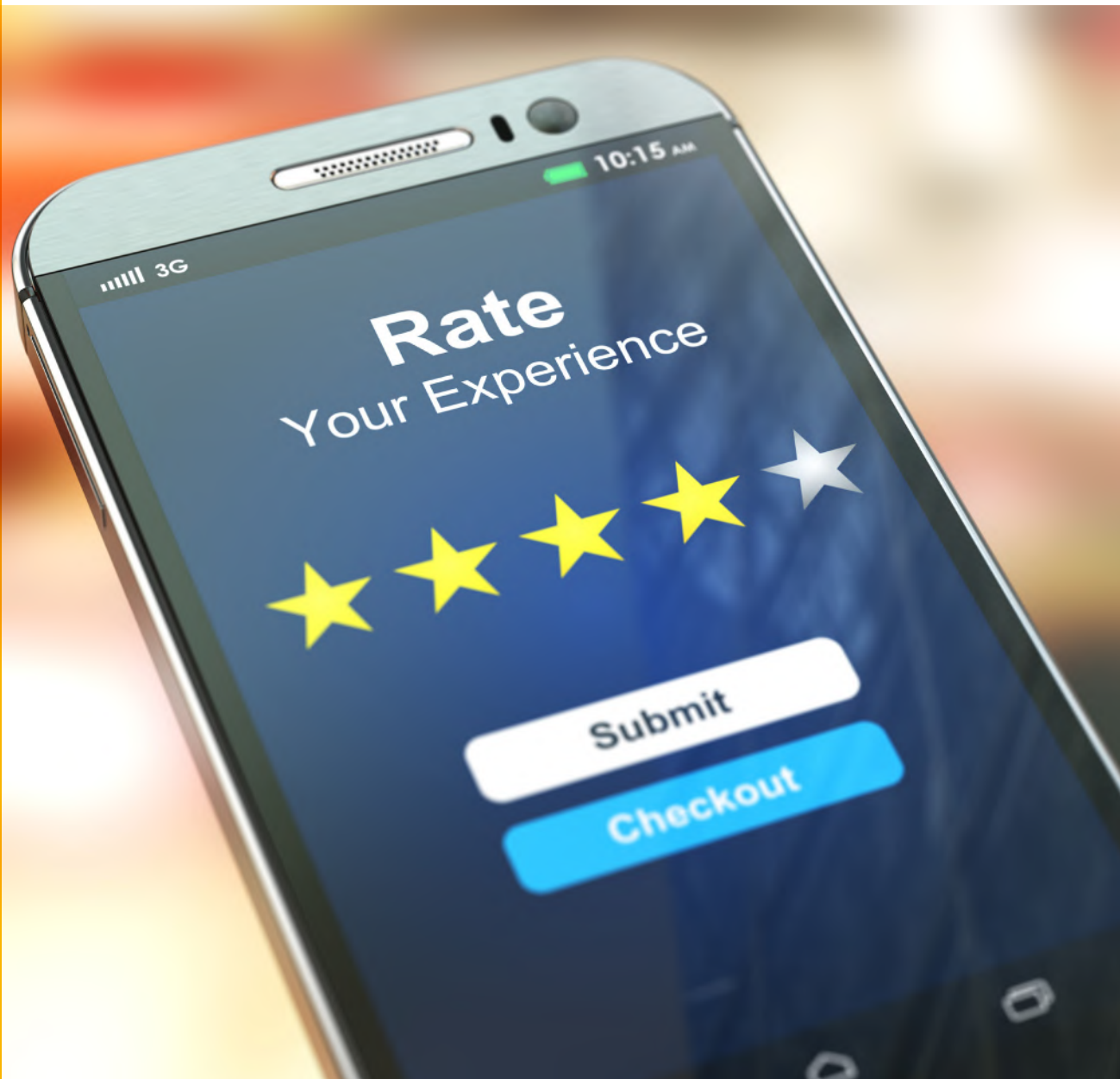
Ratings, which are seen by Play and App Store searchers, are critical indicators of your app's quality and act as social proof that can sway users to download. The more ratings, the better for your store rankings and visibility. Potential customers will be more willing to download an app which has already received ratings and reviews from other users and from a company that responds to criticism and clearly cares about customer service.

Don't be shy – ask for reviews and ratings of your app from your passengers – this is standard practice from app owners and passengers won't be surprised if you're seeking feedback. Not only might this approach get you a positive review, but making your brand visible again in the eyes of your customer could also result in another passenger booking.

MARKETING YOUR PASSENGER APP

The good news - **You don't need a big budget or a dedicated marketing team to successfully market your app.**

New Customer Acquisition is key– the more downloads of your app, the more taxis booked... which means more jobs for drivers... which means higher driver earnings and better driver retention. The more recurring customers booking through your app, the greater your percentage of automation... which in turn leads to costs reduction and greater efficiency.

It can't be stressed enough – once a customer has your app on their phone, and they start using it, as long as the service your drivers provides is always excellent, they'll keep using you again and again. An app customer is a repeat customer and, as such, should be treated by your firm and your drivers as a VIP.

Even with a very limited marketing budget it's possible to be smart about where to find additional passenger app customers. With tools like **Autocab Analytics** you can see at a glance all of the passengers who have used you, this week, this month or even this year, who have not yet booked through your passenger app... a simple SMS to each of these customers with a link to the app on the Play Store and the App Store will reap rewards – you're targeting a captive audience who already have a positive experience of your service. If you're able to offer an incentive such as £3 off your first journey booked by

And you're one step closer to having your entire fleet in your customer's pocket...

MEASURING SUCCESS

Although the number of downloads is an important metric, and a great indicator of success, it's not the only number you should be keeping a close eye on. It's one thing getting downloads and having the app installed on customer's phones, but it's another getting them to actually use the app. If they are using it, how often do they use it? Are they using it more or less than last month?

That said, don't get too obsessed with numbers, which can fluctuate wildly week to week. **Figure out the metrics that are important for the success of your business and work toward improving them to define the long-term success of your app.**

OFFERING A
GREAT SERVICE

Your app customers will remain very loyal up until the moment they have a bad experience – this could be waiting too long for the app to assign a driver, too long for the driver to arrive at the pick-up location, a bad experience during the journey, which your company and your driver may or may not have control over, and, of course, how your driver interacts with the passenger.

There's a lot that can go wrong...
Good news. There's a lot you can do to minimise the risk of a bad experience.

Send your best drivers – those drivers who provide a consistently good service to passengers build their own 5-star profile – you can set a rule that app jobs only go to drivers with a 4-star or better rating.

Send your most loyal drivers – those drivers who don't reject jobs are reliable and keen for work – send app jobs only to the drivers who don't let you, or their passengers, down.

The five-star rating of your driver is an incredibly important metric – this is something that can be nurtured and improved. It's always been important for your drivers to arrive on time, be polite and get their passengers to their destination safely and securely – but now passengers have the ability to let you, and their driver know how good a service they received.

WIN THEM BACK, BEFORE THEY LEAVE

Customers have become very used to, and even expectant of, discounts, vouchers and claim codes that go some way to reduce the cost of a service. Of those who stop using apps, a Google survey revealed that 30% would use an app again if offered a discount.

We advise our customers to issue discount codes regularly but to limit the expiry date – and to focus on the 'ticking clock' message in the promotion – for example issuing a "£5 off your next journey" code to customers who have not used you this month. Send out the code on a Friday afternoon but with the rule that it must be claimed before midnight Sunday. Force your app users to take action that weekend to benefit from the promotion.

GETTING USERS TO SPREAD THE WORD

Provide your app customers with incentives to encourage them to share the app or perform an action such as leaving a rating or review. A quick win is to offer discount vouchers to existing users if they refer your app to their friends and wider network – you only pay out when another customer downloads the app – you can even make sure that the new customer books at least one journey before rewarding the referrer.

Promoting your app through your social media channels is a great way to get news of your app out to a wider audience.

At Autocab we're obsessed with automation and helping our customers work smarter.

If you'd like to learn more about Autocab and how we can help you launch your passenger app, we'd be delighted to hear from you:

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More customers, more bookings and more automation with Autocab's white label Passenger App.

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