Practical Guide on How to Create and Maintain Your Fitness App

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The ein-des-ein team has been gathering expertise when it comes to fitness & wellness apps. This ebook is aimed to help those who think about building an app in that sector. It should allow you to better understand the market and the costs associated with mobile app development.

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If you'd like to read more, we regularly share our thoughts on mobile app development, web & mobile design, business optimization and solutions for startups on our blog.

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Introduction

If you're looking into creating a fitness app—whether it's an extension for your existing web app or virtual fitness studio you want to build from scratch,— you're in the right place.

Let's begin with a quick overview of the fitness application history. In the year 2008 when health-related topics were not so common, Google created its own Health service, but it was soon abandoned in 2011 due to low interest. But things dramatically changed in 2014 with the introduction of wearables that immediately became a trend. According to Statista, the wearables and health tracker business revenues steadily grow, so we can expect this industry to continue to pick up and expand.

Another game-changer is actually the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite its negative impact, there are a few positive moments for the mobile app industry. Global lockdown forced people to stay more in their homes and visit gyms much less, which in turn resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of subscriptions to existing online fitness apps. The apps successfully help to work out at home and schedule gym visits for periods when restrictions are lifted.

"This spike in interest towards health and wellness products creates plenty of opportunities for gym owners, startup enthusiasts, businessmen in the sports tech sphere, fitness industry entrepreneurs, and investors who are looking for their ideal target products with an active market. Now is the best time to invest in building a mobile app for your fitness, health or wellness idea." - **Michael Chepurniak, CEO at ein-des-ein.**

Types of health & wellness apps

Generally speaking, there are 5 main types of health & wellness applications.

- **Workout and exercise apps**
  - Gym/Personal trainer apps
  - Logbook apps (workout mobile diaries)
  - Workout fitness apps that pair with devices (smartphone + smartwatch)
- **Diet & Nutrition apps**
- **Meditation & Relaxation apps**
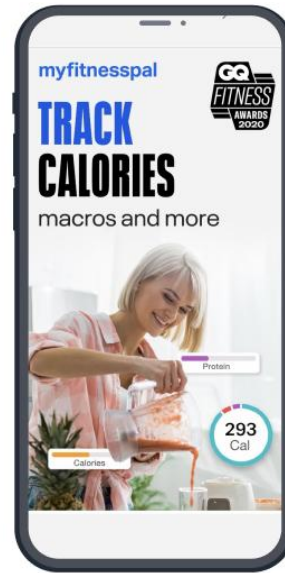- **Sleep apps**
- **Health services apps**

Some apps combine exercises, nutrition planning and health advice. There are nuances to each type and subtype, but the most important thing is to concentrate on building a mobile solution that keeps bringing people back to your app and offers great incentives to stay.
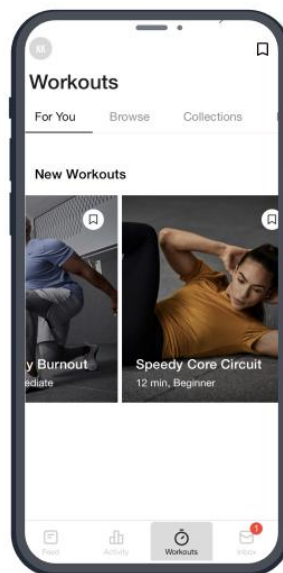
Freeletics   Nike Training   MyFitnessPal

Plan of action

Before you start developing a mobile app, you have to think of a basic app functionality, make sure you have an idea about how to monetize it, and budget for all the development costs and fees.

- **Carefully think features through**
- **Come up with a monetization strategy**
- **Assess development costs**

Features   Monetization   Costs Assessment

Basic features

Together with certain specific features, apps from various categories have common basic features usually considered "must-have" ones:
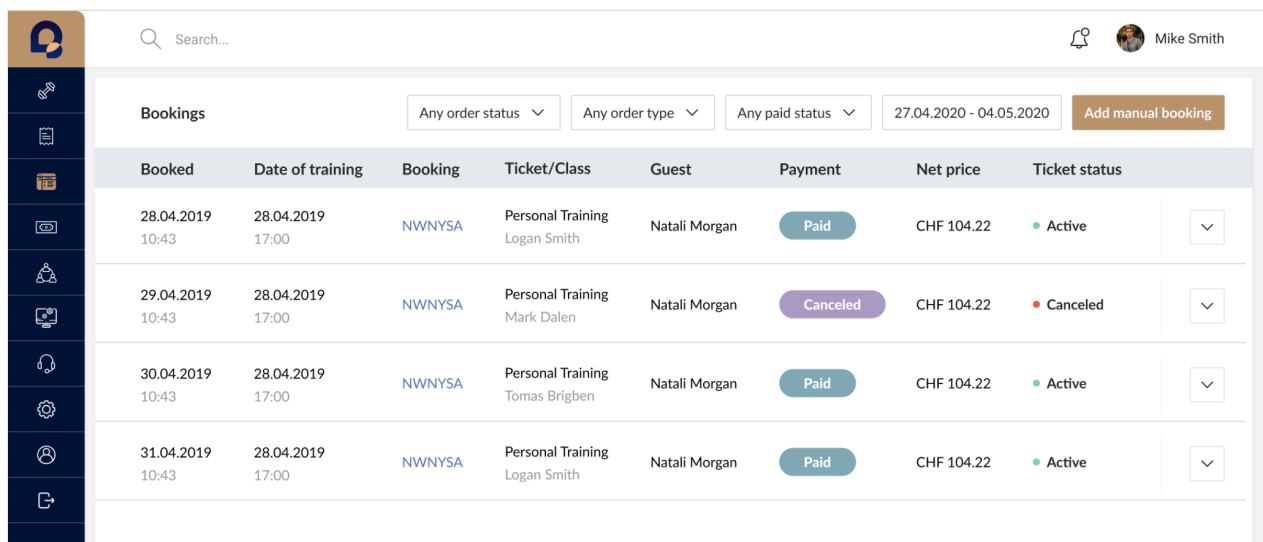
- **User personal account**: includes user info, activity log, individual settings, and goals.
- **Blog-like content**: opens access to educational content on health and fitness within your app.
- **Goal setting**: allows users to set fitness or health goals and plan ahead.
- **Subscription prompts**: can be used for suggesting tailored plans for users.
- **Personalized notifications**: serve as reminders or timely alerts for upcoming workouts.
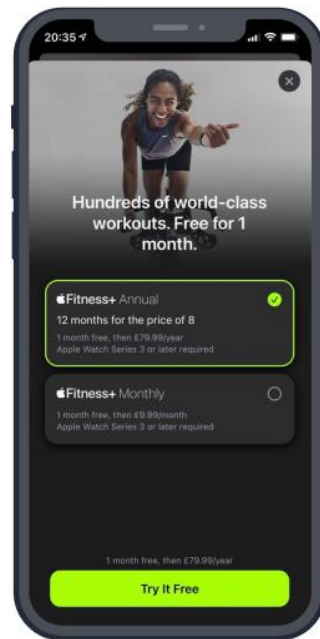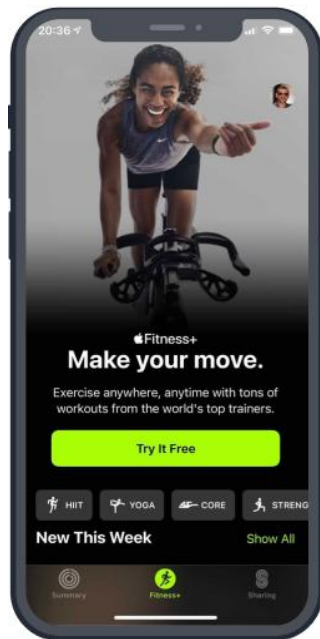
- **Health tracking and logging**: these are core elements of any fitness app, which allow users to track their workouts and log their diet data and results.

- **Integration with wearables**: you have to make sure your app works with popular fitness wearables.
- **Geolocation**: users can adjust their walking or running routes, as well as check their results within the map provided by the app.
- **Social apps integration**: helps users share their achievements with other people using your app. Social media integration also simplifies signing up for your app.
- **Barcode scanning**: users can get info about products they would like to buy from the store.
- **Favorites**: Users should be able to like or bookmark their favorite sessions, exercises, materials, etc. That way they can always come back to what is valuable for them.
- **Dashboard with analytics**: It's important for users to see all the data associated with their progress in a visual form. Users have to be able monitor their activity and optimize for better results.

Apart from user-facing features, it is important to build a convenient web admin panel for app owners and users who are in the role of gym administrators, coaches, nutrition or workout consultants, etc.

Example of a fitness app admin panel, Boddy

Monetization strategy

Subscriptions

Subscription-based apps usually allow users to download an app for free, but the free version only has a limited set of features for a limited period of time. If users want more of what is proposed with the basic version, they need to pay for the premium feature set.

However, you should carefully think over the features that you'd like users to upgrade to. The main rule is to always remember that **basic free features should give users a good idea of what your app can do**. While premium features should complement the experience that is worth customers' money.

Today subscription-based apps are very popular. According to [AppsFlyer](#), the developers prefer this model because "they typically see a higher revenue than pay-to-download, in-app purchase, and ad revenue models, but more importantly, this revenue is more reliable than other models, which allows for greater confidence in your marketing efforts and in planning major feature upgrades."

It's hard to disagree with this since pay-to-download is only a viable option for established brands with a worldwide reputation. In-app purchases are not always convincing enough and ads that are implemented poorly can be a major reason for app uninstalls.

In-app purchases (IAPs)

As many of Google Play Store apps today are free, users are spending [$380 billion worldwide on in-app purchases](#). Therefore, this strategy is one of the most lucrative for publishers. In-app purchases are a one-time only charge.

Under in-app purchases, we usually understand some premium features that can be provided for an extra payment. This can be anything from training plans to personal support, etc. Your users, for instance, can get some extra health or routine exercise tips recorded via audio or video.

In general, there are plenty of perks that can make your application more appealing and valuable to users. This fitness app monetization model can be combined with other models, for example, banner ads. Both Apple Store and Google Play Store offer in-app purchases and in-app billing.

In-app advertising

In-app advertising is a good way to attract additional earnings with your app. Ads are not necessarily casino ads and annoying banners. Ads can easily complement your app services and improve user experience. For instance, rewarded videos allow users to continue using the app for free so they get used to them.

Popular in-app ad formats

Native ads may be considered the least irritating ad format. Usually, they appear in threads as banners with text, and users don't always perceive them as ads. They camouflage as native app content.

Banners are one of the oldest ad formats. They can be of different sizes, and clients can keep using your app even with a banner on the screen. You have to be careful of introducing banners UX/UI design customers become, the less useful this kind of ad is.

Rewarded videos reward users for watching a video with access to certain features or virtual currency. This strategy allows for better app engagement—most people interacting with this kind of ads pay attention since they want to legitimize the reward. Rewarded videos are typically the most profitable ad format due to the fact that they equally benefit advertisers, app publishers, and users.

Video interstitials usually last about 15-30 seconds and play automatically in designated app locations. Videos are something most users are used to.

Static interstitials pop up as a wide-screen size ad. Users can close it by tapping the "close" button, or click on it and open the promoted page.

Playable ads gain more and more popularity, but mostly with game apps where they are quite a natural occurrence.

Regarding app revenue coming from ads, the most effective business models are **CPM** (Cost Per Mille), **CPC** (Cost Per Click) and **CPA** (Cost Per Action). The first one (CPM) is the most lucrative model because of its independence of whether users interact with ads or not. With CPC the ad mediation platform or mobile advertising company will pay a fee to a publisher only if a user tapped on the ad. CPA demands that users make an action (install something, subscribe to a service, etc.).

According to [Global App Trends report](#) from Adjust, fitness apps **have a 2.13% conversion rate from click to install and a cost per mille (CPM) of $3.51**. But you have to **monitor the latest data sets and reports** to get the most accurate numbers. You also have to look out for the best retention tactics. For example, the 2019 report shows that health and fitness apps retained 21% of users 7 days after install. These

are important numbers to keep in mind when you calculate your user **LTV** (Life-time Value).

It should be pointed out that ad monetization might be one of the simplest monetization ways. At the same time, repetitive or disruptive ads can seriously irritate users, so we advise hiring an ad monetization specialist who could handle everything and the growing amount of tasks.

Cross-promotion and influencer marketing

Cross-promotion isn't the most obvious fitness app monetization method, but at the same time, **it can become one of the most productive if used properly**. If your app is already very popular among people in a certain location and has a growing user base, you can look for another company in the region that can benefit from offering its products to your users. This method means that your app will promote another business, while that business in turn talks about your app.

Influencer marketing is on the rise since **people spend increasingly more time on social media apps and websites**. Finding the right influencer can give your app a boost—new users who received a recommendation from someone they trust. Cooperating with an influencer is not necessarily an expensive act. You need to study the market and regional opinion leaders. Pitch your fitness app to bloggers whose target audience is sports junkies.

Development costs

It can be difficult to give an exact estimation of costs for fitness app development, especially when not all the features and app envisioning is clear from the start.

However, in our experience the robust MVP version of the app can cost anywhere from $30,000 to 50,000. There are often discounts and special offers for startups that cannot afford all the costs upfront.

You can see how many hours are spent on each stage and the average rates for middle specialists:

Project stage	Estimation in hours	Average rate
Project management	200-240+ hours	$30-50/hour
Design	160-180+ hours	$30-50/hour
Technical documentation	80+ hours	$30-50/hour
Development	160+ hours	$30-50/hour
Product testing & QA	150+ hours	$30-50/hour

But please note, that it is only an approximate evaluation. Each project is unique and the specific estimation in hours appears after the initial evaluation and business analysis. Sometimes if you want to stand out from the crowd, the design costs can rise up to 50% or even more. Thoughtful, user-oriented design is often the crucial part of the development process. If you want to estimate your project with us, reach out to us through the web form here.

Engagement & Retention

Produce more relevant content

Fitness app engagement is no easy feat. However, with today's technology, it is possible to afford to **create your own content**. For example, by recording any courses or classes and then offering them to users. It can have a great impact on your company's ROI (return on investment), especially in comparison to offline metrics.

For instance, you can propose different pre-recorded programs to your users, such as weight loss, endurance improvement, full-body workouts, specific muscle group training. It is also a good idea to offer various duration and intensity as well as with/without equipment options for fitness programs.

Moreover, users vary when it comes to health and fitness goals. There is something specialists call **behavioral segmentation**. It is a smart segmentation of your clients based on their interests and preferences so that it becomes possible to personalize the content and experience they receive.

You can segment your clients into different groups according to users' age and occupation and target them with offers for an appropriate exercise level. Here's an example:

Beginners – basic workouts, not too challenging ones;

Pro fitness goers – intensive workouts;

People over 60 – yoga-oriented programs;

Children – exercises with game elements;

Pregnant women – special programs;

Young professionals – exercises designed for shorter time periods;

Families – collaborative programs available for groups consisting of young children and adults.

The most important benefit of user segmentation and personalized content is that it gives your users an impression of an individual approach from the very start. This is a strategic move that can greatly influence your fitness app engagement metrics and keep them healthy.

Tip: **Make sure to regularly update your content and be aware of what your competition puts out.**

Balance online and offline clients

It is vital to keep your users engaged through personalized timely messages and notifications. There are two main notification channels: in-app messages and push notifications.

In-app messaging allows you to reach users when they are online. Remember, that it is you who should encourage and motivate them: sending a message just after workout completion may be the best way to propose a new or additional app feature. If users feel your active role in the improvement of their body condition and health, they will definitely come back to your app and even increase the range of services they buy.

Push notifications are another way to communicate with your clients who have already installed your app. The main difference between push notifications and in-app messaging is that users can receive push notifications anytime, not just when they are online and the app is open.

It is important to optimize the scheduling: machine learning instruments may help you better understand when your users are most receptive to notifications.

There are a few good things to keep in mind in this respect:

- Notifications regarding new goals get better feedback at the start of a new year, new month, or at least a new week – this is the time when users usually decide to change their habits and try something new.
- Evening notifications work as a reminder to the user to log his/her progress or make updates.
- In case you manage a yoga app, early morning reminders will surely serve its purpose.

Tip: **Remember that too much of anything is bad. Sending too much content and notifications can be tiresome and annoying.**

Launch regular special offers

Fitness app engagement and retention are all about regularity. Special offers are a great way to keep current users engaged and attract new clients, as well as keep paying and non-paying users happy.

Welcoming and rewarding new subscribers

Of course, practically all of your users usually start with free trials, and only when they've experienced enough benefits, they consider paying for the premium plan. So, your role here is to **thank those users who turned into subscribers and make them feel welcome**. The best step can be giving a discount for the next subscription renewal or a discount with a partner. Regularly surprising your premium users with offers can lead to potentially long-lasting customer relationships.

It is also worth it to explore the referral program opportunities. For example, if your current client invites their friend to the app, both receive a one-time discount. Once people come to the app, it's your job to help them take advantage of your services so that they don't stay only for the time the discount is extended to.

Sharing information about new app features

Special offers should be extended to non-paying uses as well. This can serve as showing your users the full seriousness with which you are there to help them achieve their fitness/diet goals. A practical approach and timely actions from your side will make your app more than just a regular health/fitness app.

Personalize app communications

Each communication you send via push notifications has to be individualized and relevant to each user's needs. At first, **it is vital to send timely notifications** for users to log their results. It's a good idea to send them reminders about how close they are to reaching their goals (how many calories they have already burnt during the week and encourage them by saying that "just a bit is left").
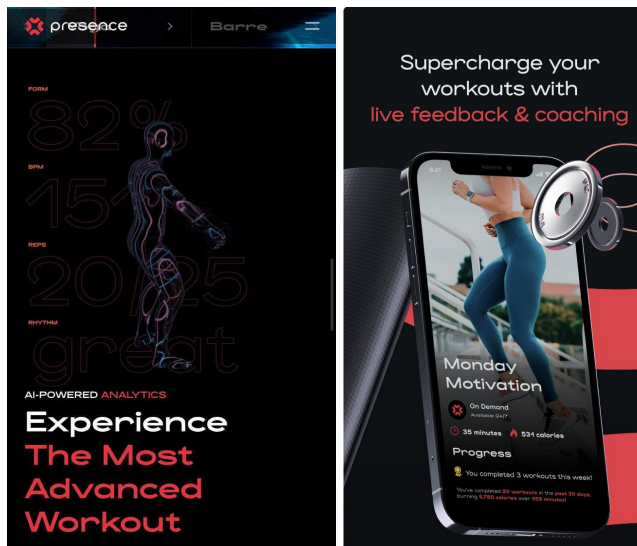
AI in fitness apps

Even though introducing AI to an app can be quite daunting, there are some core benefits that can help your app stand out.

More personalized approach

The AI-driven app can **provide personalized workout plans or diet recommendations based on data entered by users** (their height, weight, goals, etc.). Usually, after users enter their basic personal data, the algorithm chooses the best-suited plan for them. Moreover, such apps can also consider users' current fitness levels, food habits as well as sync data from external devices (fitness trackers, smartwatches), etc.

AI-driven apps can not only predict exercises users are able to perform, but also compare them to other users' experiences and make relevant conclusions. AI helps to better adjust workouts and push users to achieve their goals more accurately.

Presence.fit: One of the examples of AI in a fitness app.

AI vs Human fitness coach

There are several big advantages that cannot be argued against. In some cases AI-driven fitness apps can be better than a human fitness coach.

First and very important argument is **the app's 24/7 availability**, as it works round the clock in order to please all users' demands and requests. Secondly, it obviously has access to more data, more exercises, and can track client's progress more accurately. Finally, it is much easier for AI-driven fitness apps to adapt to any changes users decide to make: training intensity, equipment availability, state of health, etc.

Higher user engagement

Whatever you do for your health, **consistency is the main key to success**. And the last year in particular showed that many people stick to their fitness routine with more engagement and results, working with an AI coach rather than buying a gym membership.

It is interesting that Covid-19 changed the typical behaviors of those who previously disliked the idea of going to the gym. Thanks to Coronavirus, many people started working out at home. Feeling comfortable at home brought confidence and became a well-being booster for some.

Motivation and assistance

It is very common for people to drop out of the gym due to inconsistency. Of course, staying fit takes dedication. And an AI-powered app can help users **stay motivated and stick to their fitness plan**.

One of the solutions that works is sending individual reminders to clients beforehand in order to get them ready. An app can inspire users with a level of personalization, analyzing their current results, goals and type of character. It is possible to provide different challenge opportunities and build a system of rewards to keep users engaged.

Final thoughts on AI

In order to create a unique AI-based fitness app, **it is vital to already have a big user base**, for the algorithm to be able to gather data, analyze it, train, and develop many different options for every individual case. Your app should not pretend to be better than a human coach, but it is important to be highly rated by users.

On top of that, advanced data can generate added value for both customers and companies, from customer engagement to internal operations.

The real issue that has not been resolved yet is that human coaches still have advantages over AI-driven fitness coaches. For example, there is a psychological moment—some people are motivated to impress their coach. They don't want to upset them or leave them waiting if they miss a session. All of this is almost impossible with an AI coach. Also, if a person has some injuries or just doesn't feel like doing this or that type of exercise—these things are really difficult or even impossible to predict for an AI coach.

Nonetheless, the best solution is the combination of two types of these interactions: AI-based and human.

About us

This guide is created by the ein-des-ein team. We have vast experience in building fitness and wellness solutions.

Ein-des-ein is a development agency with a design-driven approach that helps companies build great digital products. We specialize in mobile and web app development, complex UX/UI design and brand identity. With our design & tech expertise and a business analysis team, we ensure that your business and revenues grow.

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