Maximizing your mediation:

Top tips for evaluating a monetization solution

As a gaming app developer with specific needs, what are the different elements you need to take into consideration when picking a monetization platform? Should you look for a gaming-specific solution? Is it best to have all demand flowing through one platform, or to diversify? CPA or CPM?

This guide provides practical advice on the key criteria that all mobile app publishers should evaluate when choosing a monetization platform.
For gaming app developers relying on ads, choosing a monetization platform is the most important decision you will make for the coming three to five years. If advertising is a source of revenue for your business, this choice will essentially impact every single part of it. Put differently, the 10% revenue uplift you could generate based on your decision might actually be that small difference that will allow you to develop the next world-wide hit and become a major player in the mobile gaming ecosystem.

But the ecosystem is crowded: app developers have many platforms to consider. A crowded ecosystem is something very healthy and encouraging as it gives alternatives to publishers and pushes the platforms to continuously innovate in order to remain relevant — but it can also be confusing. So how can you make a smart and informed choice on the road to maximum mobile game monetization? It boils down to asking the right questions in three essential areas:

**The commercial aspect of the relationship between you and the platform.**

**The platform robustness and capabilities.**

**The long-term vision of the team behind the platform.**

Read on for key considerations for each area.
1 Commercial

Terms
What’s the business model of the platform, and will it incentivize a certain behaviour? In other words, does the platform also sell media? If so, are you comfortable working with a platform that may have conflicting goals?

Service
Get to know the team that will work alongside you. Do you have a dedicated resource to walk you through the key features of the platform and throughout the on boarding process, or will you have to deal with an email alias? Where is the team located? What is their SLA? What does technical support look like?

Demand
What partners will you be able to work with and how easy will it be? You probably want a platform with the ability to support all the major mobile ad networks out-of-the-box. But that’s not all: chances are that you’ll have traffic in markets that only local ad networks will be able to serve, and you’ll want to be able to also plug them seamlessly into your mediation through an SDK or JavaScript integration.

Direct deals
While networks will comfortably fill 70% to 80% of your inventory, depending on your commercial appetite or strategy, there are instances where you will want to execute commercial partnerships. Whether that’s direct sold campaigns or cross promotions, you will need a fully-fledged ad-server that you can rely on.
Infrastructure
MoPub is lucky to rely on one of the most robust infrastructures in the world, thanks to Twitter. We tend to take this for granted, but really there’s a massive human and financial cost associated with this. Rock-solid infrastructure should be a key consideration, particularly when evaluating privately held, independent players. Does the platform have a backbone solid enough to scale without downtime? If your monetization platform’s servers go down, your business goes down — how confident are you in the platform’s ability to support your business?

SDK
Your first interaction with the platform will be through the SDK. Beyond the obvious “How easy is it to integrate this SDK?”, ask yourself the following questions: Is it open-source? If needed, would it be possible to make some modifications and alterations to make it fit my needs? How often is it updated? What does the documentation look like? Is it modular and can I strip off the pieces that I don’t use, to make it lighter? Is it compatible out of the box with the platform I use to develop my games?

Ad formats
Once your team has tackled the SDK, the next step will be to set up apps and start creating corresponding ad formats. In a mobile gaming environment, you’ll likely focus on rewarded video, interstitials, and banners. But what is true for one game might not be true for future games. Other formats such as MREC or banners could become relevant depending on the gameplay and become an additional source of income. Beyond the formats themselves, you want to evaluate how the platform handles those formats when it comes to ease of integration, latency, and control around showing either a video, a playable ad, or a static creative depending on the profile of user.

Flexibility
When they’re on the lookout for a new platform or service, people always look for the perfect solution that will fit their needs. The reality is that this product doesn’t exist and never will. As you scale your business and operations, your needs and expectations change — so when choosing a monetization partner, you must force yourself to look beyond the fancy-looking dashboard the sales people will put in front of you.

When we look at MoPub’s top customers — some of the world’s leading gaming app publishers — we notice that they all have their own way of using our platform. Think about it as a blank canvas, which they’ve then modeled to fit their specific needs. Most of our top clients have even gone a step further and built their own stack on top of the MoPub platform, because only they know what they really need and how they want to run their operations. Having a long-term vision in this instance is critical, because you don’t want to be stuck with a platform that won’t allow you to grow at the same pace as your business. By picking a flexible platform, you might spend a bit more time to set it up at the beginning, but it will pay dividends long term.
Innovation

The last theme you really need to consider when choosing a monetization platform is innovation. Is the platform forward-looking and on top of new industry trends? Does the team have a long-term vision that you can trust? There are many examples of ways to be innovative, so to bring this to life, here are three key examples highlighting MoPub’s approach and mindset when it comes to innovation.

Unity support

The Unity Engine has become the platform of choice for developers creating mobile games. At MoPub we committed to making it easier for game developers to get started. That’s why we’ve extended the capabilities of the MoPub plugin for the Unity Editor, making it easier than ever to integrate the MoPub SDK and MoPub supported networks into apps built on Unity. This dramatically reduces the amount of time developers need to spend integrating ads into their apps — so they can spend more time building games.

Impression-level revenue data

Impression-level revenue data has been one of the major themes in the industry for the past 12 months. For those not familiar with the concept, it basically helps to bridge the gap between ad monetization and user acquisition. Instead of releasing a version of the product that just provides averages like many platforms do today, MoPub listened to customer feedback and went a step further, and after listening to customer feedback, we released a solution that gives a revenue value at the impression level. It gives publishers the flexibility to have the data delivered to their own business intelligence stack or to one of their attribution partners. We believe this level of granularity will play a major role in helping our clients to make better UA decisions and ultimately grow their revenue.

Advanced Bidding

MoPub’s in-app header bidding product, Advanced Bidding, is the complete reimagination of header bidding for the mobile app environment. It’s designed to help publishers more efficiently monetize their inventory by replacing the traditional ad waterfall with simultaneous real-time bidding (RTB) from ad networks and DSPs. MoPub’s unique position as the ad platform of choice for top app publishers, and as a leading in-app RTB exchange with over 180 demand sources, gives us the distinctive ability to run a true unified auction and accelerate the adoption of app bidding at scale. Check out our whitepaper to learn what results publishers are seeing.
Next steps

With the three themes above as your guide to choosing a mobile game monetization platform, what comes next? It’s time to put it into practice. Once you are done with your due diligence, shortlist two to three monetization platforms and start testing.

Take some time to set your KPIs in advance and clearly communicate them to the platforms. The most common measure of success for in app advertisements these days is average revenue per daily active user (ARPDAU), but many other factors should be taken into consideration; remember, it’s a long-term decision. Latency, crashes, technical support, and demand access are a few equally important parameters to look at.

Make sure your test is as fair and measurable as possible. Aim to compare apples to apples. Comparing two different apps with a different ad format mix won’t be conclusive. Last but not least, remember that the reality of today is not the reality of tomorrow. Keep an open mind, challenge your platform of choice when you have new needs, and keep an eye on the rest of the ecosystem.
Looking for more advice when it comes to your app monetization needs?

Contact us to get in touch with our team of experts today.

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