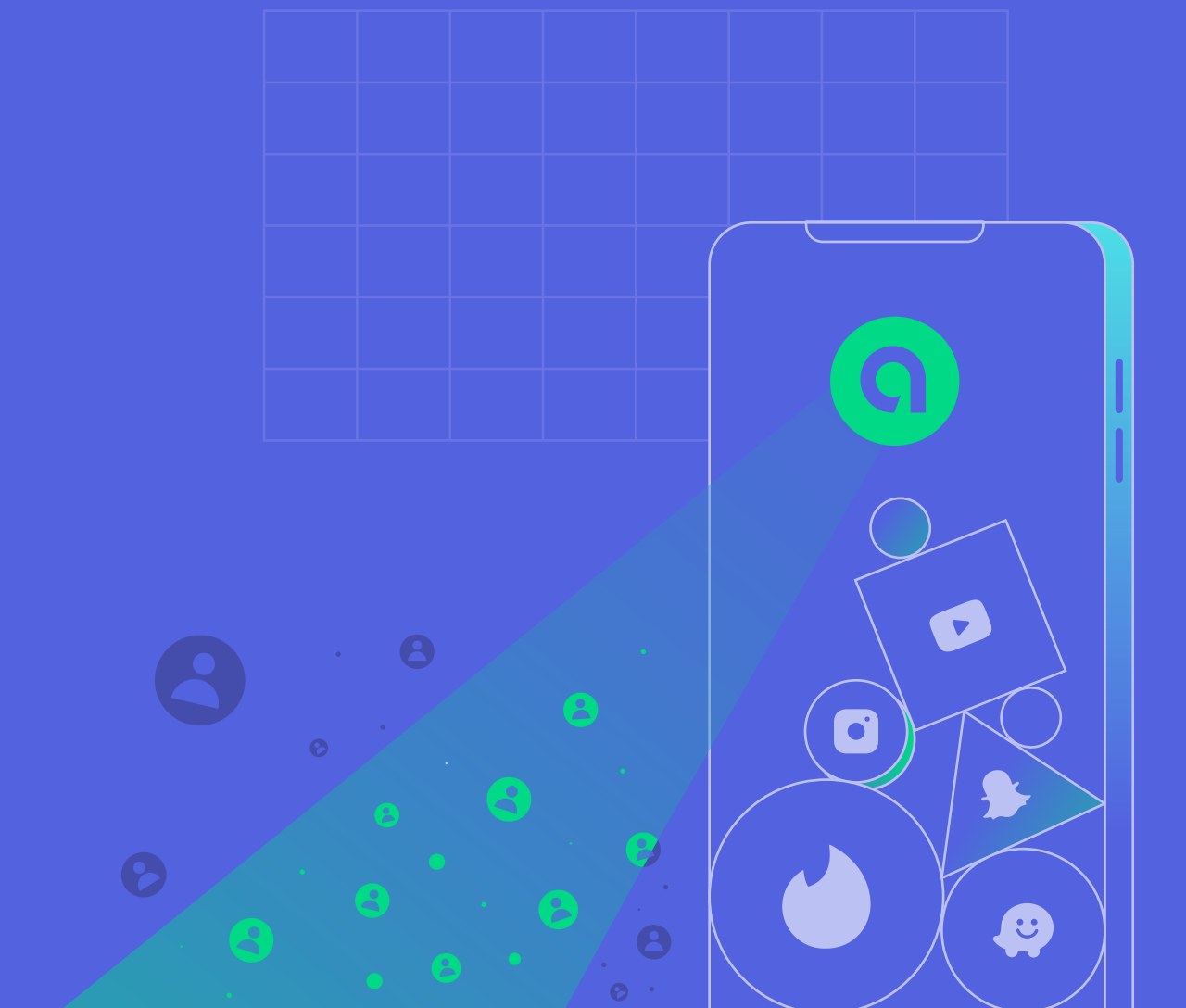


# 2025 Best Practices Guide to Mobile App Monetization

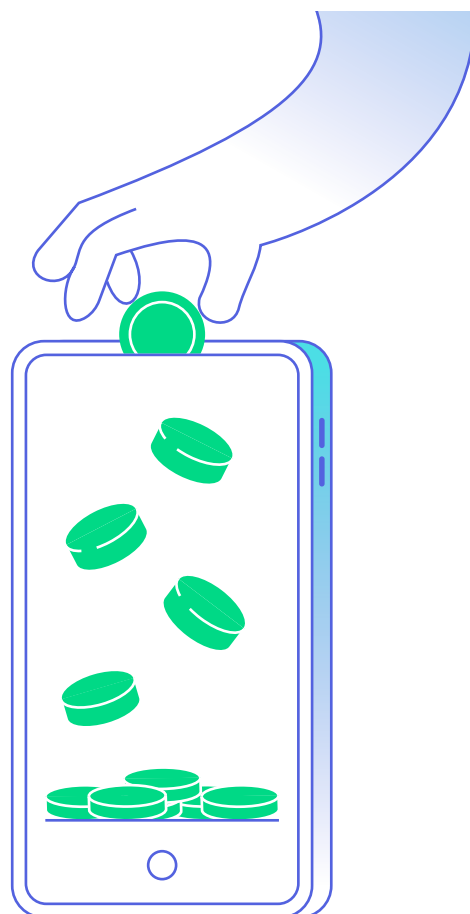


The mobile app monetization landscape is constantly evolving, and many of the monetization tactics and strategies that worked for app developers just a few years ago no longer work in 2025.

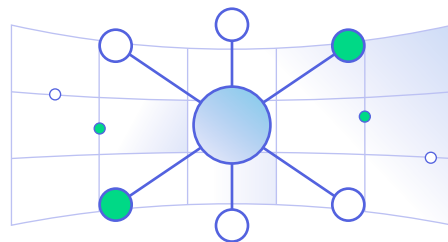
This year, a shifting regulatory and technology landscape will change the way developers monetize their apps.

This guide is designed to give you the **6 best tips** for mobile app monetization in 2025, focusing on advertising, in-app purchases, subscriptions, and other revenue sources.

**How many of these tips are you integrating into your apps?**



## #6: Build multiple monetization engines inside your app



In 2025, the industry's biggest mobile apps all rely on more than one income stream. The most successful apps include mobile ads and in-app purchases. Depending on the app, developers might also monetize through retail purchases, subscriptions, branded native content, affiliate revenue, and/or lead generation.

Your app's unique monetization strategy should flow through every conversation—during design, build, testing, user retention, feature updates, and maintenance.

Monetization requires a deep understanding of your users and their behavior inside the app. Unskippable video ads make sense for a freemium mobile game, but might be virtually impossible to introduce inside a free weather app.

Offering an annual subscription to an app might make sense for a Tier 1 news publisher, but might not work for a shopping app (Amazon Prime would disagree).

It's important to test new monetization streams with an eye toward UX and user retention. Every app has an ideal monetization mix, where developers make the most money possible, in a way that keeps user satisfaction high.

Consider Fortnite as an especially strong case study in hybrid monetization. This first-person online shooter offers in-game purchases of limited-edition skins and weapons, brand deals for items and in-game experiences, and user subscriptions.

Fortnite's monetization feels seamless and arguably enhances the user experience. And their hybrid strategy has paid off: At its peak, Fortnite was earning more than \$5 billion per year.

## #5: Optimize monetization without compromising UX

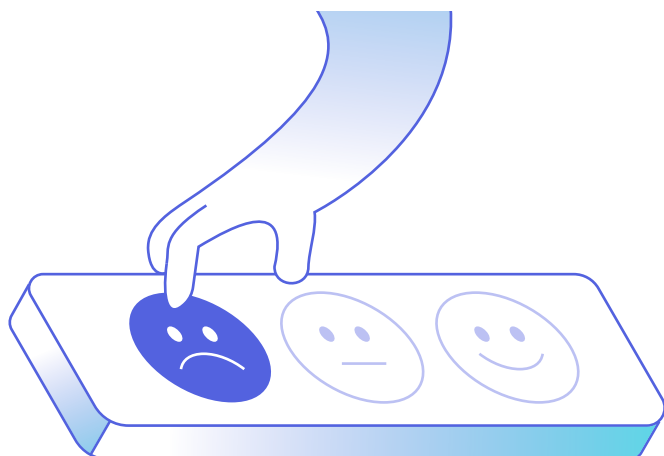
Mobile apps live and die by user retention. Also called churn, this is the rate at which users permanently abandon an app.

As a category, news and magazine apps have the highest retention rate in the industry. If 100 people download a news/magazine app, roughly 90 percent of them will abandon the app within 30 days—and that's a good churn rate!

Compare that to mobile games, which typically experience a 98 percent churn rate in their first month.

Given this dynamic, it's important for apps to monetize quickly, as most people will download an app, look at it briefly, and never open it again.

People want to open a new app and immediately begin consuming relevant content. Hard pay/sign-up walls and intrusive ads push people away, and can lead to a higher-than-average churn rate. Pick the monetization mix that feels most natural to the way that people are using your app. Ideally, your app is so delightful that it beats industry-average churn rates, and builds a devoted audience.

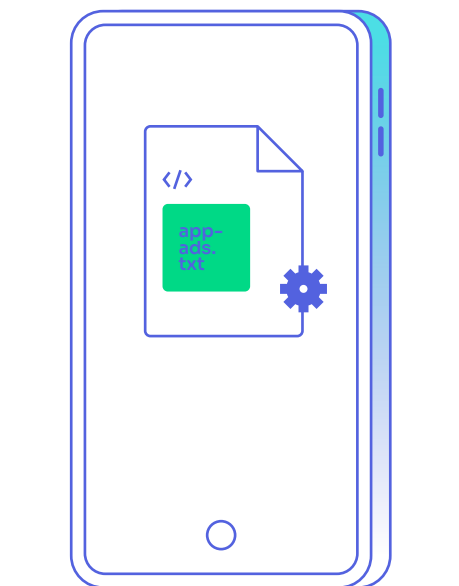


## #4: Don't forget app-ads.txt

In 2025, every mobile app should have—and maintain—an app-ads.txt file. It's estimated that roughly 3 out of 4 mobile apps currently live on the Google Play store don't support app-ads.txt.

This voluntary advertising standard is a text file that developers post in the root domain of their app's developer website. App-ads.txt files identify who is authorized to sell ads on behalf of the app. These files are publicly available, and get crawled by ad exchanges, supply-side platforms, and other third-party adtech vendors.

Apps that don't maintain an up-to-date app-ads.txt file typically see lower CPMs and can experience higher rates of ad fraud.



### It's easy to build an app-ads.txt file:

1. Create a website
2. Add your website's URL to your app store listing, either in "Store listing contact details" for Google Play, or "Developer website" in the Apple App Store
3. Create an app-ads.txt file and fill it out with your app's information; see online tutorials and tools
4. Publish your app-ads.txt file to the root directory of your website

## #3: Update apps, or kill them

Every month, tens of thousands of mobile apps get delisted from Google Play and the Apple App Store. Some of these apps are taken down by developers, but many are taken down by the app stores themselves, due to lack of updates.



An estimated 15 percent of mobile apps on the Google Play store can be classified as abandoned—because they’ve gone two or more years without an update.

Developers are typically good about issuing regular updates. Roughly half of mobile apps currently live on Google Play have been updated within the last 6 months, according to data from Pixalate.

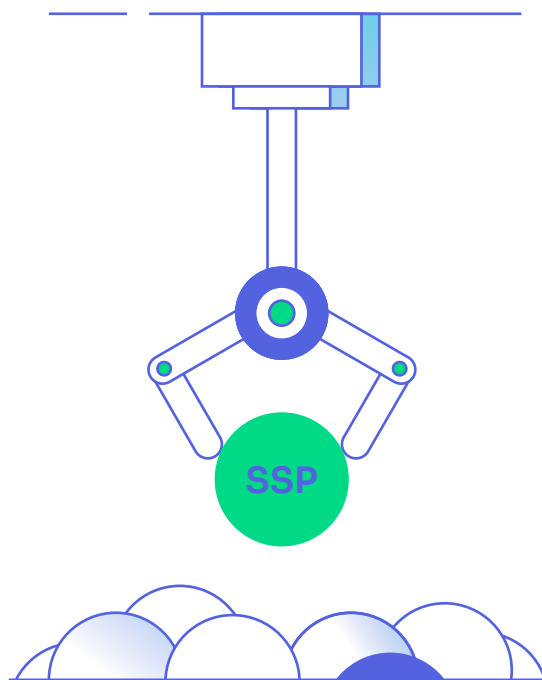
Brands spent an estimated \$6.6 million running open programmatic ads inside abandoned Android apps in Q3 2024. That’s a drop in the bucket compared to the \$3.1 billion they spent inside active apps during the same period.

This isn’t a true apples-to-apples comparison, because active mobile apps typically get more traffic than abandoned apps. If you’re planning to no longer support an app, it’s better to proactively delist it.

## #2: Use unique app IDs for each app

If you're maintaining several mobile apps, make sure each app has its own unique app ID set up inside your supply-side platform (SSP). Some developers skip this step, and lump all their apps under a single app ID.

Brands want to buy ads with a high degree of confidence that they're reaching their intended audience, so lumping multiple apps under a single app ID can impact CPMs. Similarly, match the exact app store URL to each app on your SSP's platform—package names should be aligned across the board.



# #1: Do your part to combat ad fraud



Most digital ads bought and sold each day are legitimate—they're from real advertisers, and they reach real audiences via real publishers.

The distributed nature of the adtech ecosystem means that a small percentage of ads each day are fraudulent. They either come from fraudulent advertisers, or they're being served to audiences that don't actually exist.

Mobile ad fraud is relatively rare, and detection tools are constantly improving how they identify and eliminate fraud. Avoid building made-for-advertising apps, and avoid misusing SDKs that might flag your app as fraudulent.

## Contact us to start monetizing today

In 2025, maximizing mobile app revenue requires a multi-faceted approach to monetization. Build the monetization mix that works for your users, test new concepts, and keep a keen eye on how they affect user retention. Set yourself up for mobile advertising success by adopting best practices like app-ads.txt, keeping apps updated, and doing your part to combat ad fraud.

Contact Start.io to begin monetizing your mobile app today.

Let's Talk