RATINGS AND REVIEWS CHECKLIST

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How to work with app reviews checklist.

Stats show that 79% of users check reviews before downloading an app. This means if you want to win a customer, you need to keep a close eye on reviews, no matter the stage your company is at right now.

Besides the app rating, app reviews also affect the app's overall store performance. This means that your app visibility and position in charts (read how many users will see you in app stores) depends on app reviews. As you can see, it's a great leverage tool that should be incorporated not only in community or customer support routine but also in the tasks of marketing and product teams.

Below we have gathered a checklist for you to use when managing reviews; it will be useful both for beginners and everyone who's looking to step their review management game up.

Part 1. Get insights from user feedback:

The work with ratings and reviews may benefit the whole team — from the product owner to the marketing team members. The following points will tell you how.

Get feature requests and insights from the user's suggestions

Sometimes the product team's attention may be focused on something else and it's definitely worth paying attention to the ideas of your loyal users. It's not a rare case when the users may suggest you improve or add some new features that will enhance the user experience.

Check out your competitors feedback

When we are speaking about marketing, one of the good tactics is to monitor the market, track the competitor performance and changes. The same thing we can say about user's feedback. Monitoring the reviews of the competitor's core audience may bring you the fresh ideas and understanding of what the core audience cares about.

Analyze the text reviews to find and solve critical issues and minor bugs you may miss

Even the best QA managers can not test every possible scenario given the variety of available devices. We recommend to pay attention to bug reports in reviews, you may find rare and unexpected cases there.

Use the sentiment score to measure the overall user mood

Sometimes there are reviews with a high rating (4-5 starts), but the user's mood in the text part of the review is different: for instance, they may be upset with the last update or some UX changes. The AppFollow Sentiment score may help you to understand the overall user's mood and show you the red flags if something is changing.

Analyse the success of the update

It is important to remember that you create the product for your customers. When you add new features or remove some, offer the content, fix the issues, all updates are important to be analysed also via user's feedback.

Identify useful and useless reviews (spam vs valuable reviews from real users)

For many types of products (ex. Ecom, Food tech industries), lots of reviews may be irrelevant to the product and discuss issues outside the app's scope.

Part 2. Increase your average rating:

We collect best practices and tactics that will positively affect the average rating of the product. Go through the following steps to influence the product's rating:

Use Apple/Google native API to request the rating prompt

Both app stores have their own in-app API review requests: Google / Apple. It is allowed to use only native API requests to trigger user reviews.

Follow app stores' guidelines when asking for information in your response.

In Google Play, it is prohibited to include: emails, links to websites, and to other apps. It's allowed to include: support email, links to FAQs. In the App Store links and emails are allowed.

Conduct the experiments with the place and time of the rating request

To gather more positive feedback, the developers should analyze the internal CJM and show the reviews prompt at the moment when the user is most satisfied with the use of the application. Here is Google's description of the necessity of these tests.

Respond to critical (featured, long, and negative) reviews first

Critical reviews are the most important in terms of potential positive updates. Featured reviews are visible on the product page, so they have a direct effect on the Conversion rate; Long reviews — usually provided by the most loyal users who try to give you the most valuable feedback; Negative reviews may vary in content, but working with them may significantly and positively affect the average rating.

Respond as many reviews as you receive

Increasing your team reply rate will help faster affect the average rating and motivate users not to change their positive opinion. Apple also recommends to answer all reviews - this is the way to communicate with your core audience and expand their user's experience.

Give expanded answers, try to solve users problems directly in the answer

Using the basic templates with standard/non-personal answers won't help the user with the issue. Critical reviews need a personalized approach. Try to communicate with your audience and give relevant answers to each issue. Solving the user's issue right in the reply may motivate the user to positively update the review.

Don't transfer the conversation over to your support ticket system (unless absolutely necessary)

Playing ping pong with the points of contact such as the responses like: "Thank you for your feedback, please write us to our support email", may demotivate and irritate users.

Please your customers with 'thank you' reply to positive reviews

Based on AppFollow research, some users that leave positive (4-5 stars) feedback tend to downgrade their reviews if they do not get a reply to it. Try not to ignore the positive feedback as well. A kind word goes a long way.

Update your response once the mentioned issue is fixed

Often negative reviews may be connected with some unsuccessful updates or spontaneous tech issues. Tag these kinds of reviews and inform the users once you fix the issue. It's always nice to get a personal update on the matter. Sometimes it's worth asking the user to update his/her rating, if the issue is solved.

Update your reply to a feature request after releasing it

This case is the same as with fixed issues. Please your customers by notifying them that the feature they requested is live now.

Report to offensive/spam reviews via "report a concern"

If you spot inappropriate and offensive reviews, (containing curse words, for instance) you may immediately report such cases to Apple/Google. 'Report a concern' feature is available in AppFollow and may help you to easily clear such feedback.

Answer in the users' language

Do not try to load users with tech terms they definitely do not know. Try to explain the answer using common concepts or layman's terms.

Part 3. Increase your review management team efficiency with automation:

'More replies' does not always mean 'more work'. A correctly built workflow may not only save time for your internal team but can also increase their effectiveness. Check out the practical recommendations for your support/community management team.

Integrate your app reviews to your support or community management routine

For many big brands, the app markets are not the only source of user feedback. Even if app stores are not the main community place for your product customers, do not avoid supporting mobile users as well.

Prioritize responding to critical reviews

To get the results faster, start the replying-to-reviews process with the critical ones first. More details in Part 2, point 4.

Create templates to answer common reviews faster

Despite the fact that the template answers usually perform worse compared to the personal touch, there are some review categories where you may successfully implement the template sequences. Test different templates to find the best one.

Use auto-replies to respond to repetitive reviews

Auto-replies is definitely a feature that may save time for your customer support team. Common occasions such as the tech issue/bug, connection error, UX problem, or a "Thank you" review — the scenarios may vary. Create necessary rules/tags (see the following point) for the review categories and use auto-replies.

Create custom tags for reviews to divide all of them into groups

Create custom tags to divide the reviews into groups to make the work process more efficient. The working model with these groups may completely differ: for "thank you" reviews use auto-replies with certain templates, for specific bug issues — give practical advice, etc.

List the details you'd like the user to tell you

If the described problem is not clear, do not send this user to the support desk. Ask all necessary clarification to save time for your colleagues, get the details that may give you the full picture and understanding of how to solve the problem.

Don't remove your answers after the review update.

Keep the history of communication. Sometimes users tend to change their review several times. Keeping history will allow you to be up-to-date with the whole situation.

Track the dynamic of review updates to adapt replying strategy

Speaking about templates, auto-replies, or any other replying strategies, the perfect way to understand how it's working and its effect is to track the review updates dynamic. If you spot that reviews are receiving negative updates, double-check the method, and test a new approach.

Track the average response time and keep it above the benchmark

Based on our expertise, the recommended response time in the App Store is about 1-3 hours, and in Google Play — about 1 hour. According to research, during this time there is a chance to start a dialogue with the user and influence the review's rating.

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