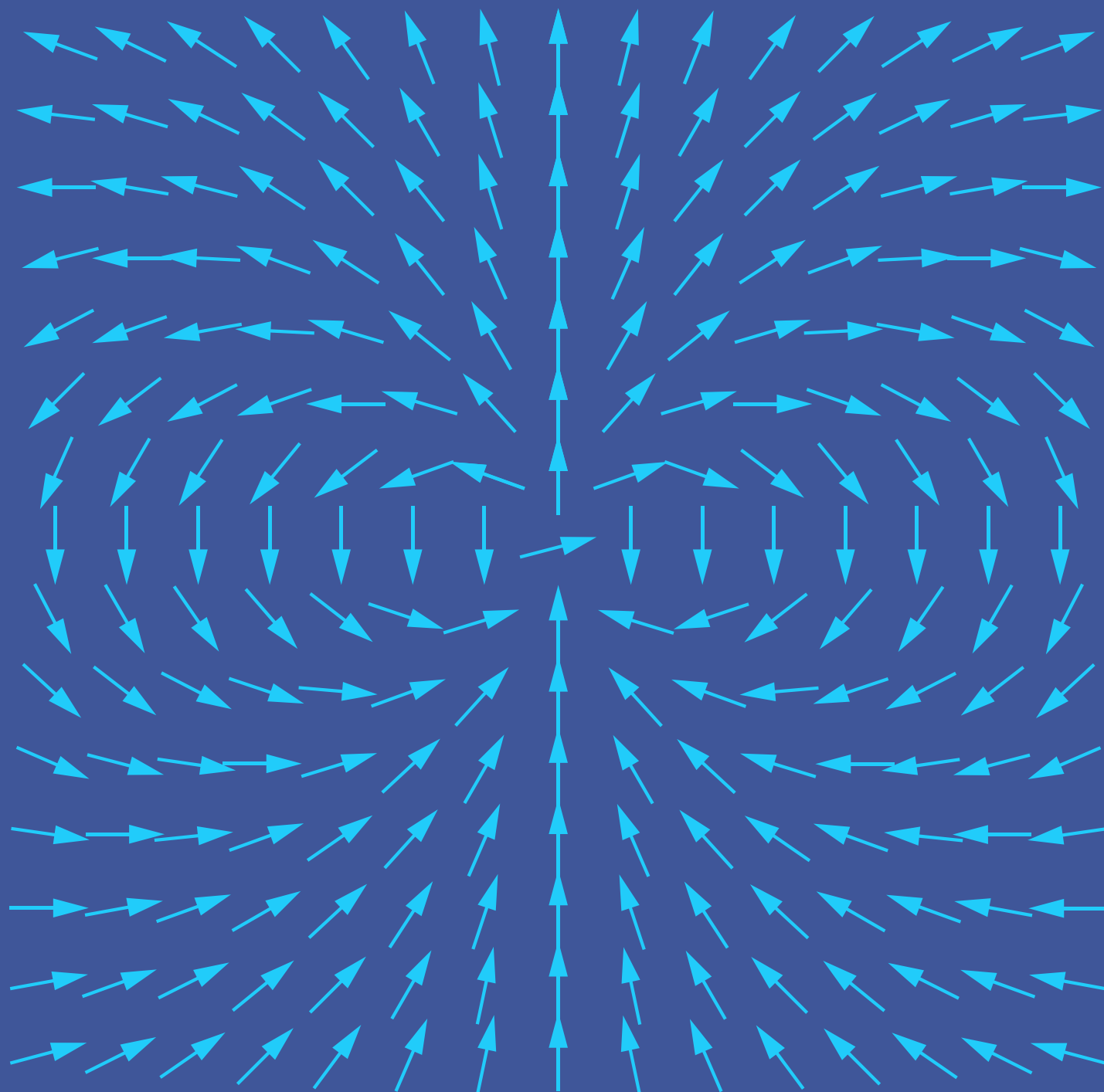


# Mobile App User Acquisition Tactics That Actually Work



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# 1. Introduction

One of the biggest challenges mobile app creators face is actually getting people to download their app, and making sure that those people keep using it.

The reason so many developers fail to get the users they want is because many of them simply don't know the tools, tips, and tricks professionals use to craft a successful outreach strategy.

That's why we've put together this ebook.

We wanted to share with you how you can lay the promotional groundwork of your app, give you various techniques to reach out to various audiences, and provide the tools that help you understand your users and keep them coming back for more.

So, what are you waiting for? Your users are out there. Let's go get them!



## 2. Getting Started

Before you start trying to go out and get users for your app you need to get yourself organized.

(Also, having a mobile app is pretty important. If you want to learn how to make one, there are plenty of great examples of how.)

But, now that you have your app, how are you going to let people know about it? How are you going to tell them it will change their lives and make all their dreams come true? More importantly, how are you going to engage and financially benefit from this relationship?

The way you do that is by organizing your assets, creating a plan, and understanding your audience so that you can maximize your profits and minimize your expenses.

### 2.1. Make a Plan

Planning is one of the most critical, if not THE most critical parts of any mobile app user acquisition strategy. Plans give you structure, demand accountability, demonstrate responsibility, and determine a goal.

Plus, when constructing a plan, you have to identify individual elements of your strategy, which will allow you to improve your successes or correct your failures.

Having a plan can also demonstrate to potential investors that you take your promotional strategy seriously, and may encourage them to contribute or participate.

Even though you might have a plan, you cannot be beholden to it. You HAVE to be flexible with your plan and give yourself room to adapt, but simultaneously never be so loose you lose track of your goal.

Once you have your plan, you need to hire the team of people to turn it into reality. This team needs to include writers, designers, engineers, and promoters who each have a different role, but are all working towards the same goal.

## **2.2. Estimate the Cost of Customer Acquisition**

Your business model probably depends on your customers; they are the ones giving you their money, or information, or other commodity so that you can profit from them.

They, in turn, expect that you are going to provide them with a product or experience that improves their lives or that they enjoy. Basic business.

What you need to do before you start trying to go out and acquire new users is estimate the cost of what getting each one of those users is going to cost. Every part of your business plan has a cost associated with it, and the cost of customer acquisition (CAC) is no different.

The CAC is calculated by taking the amount of expenses your business incurs over a certain time, and then dividing it by the number of customers acquired during that time.

Here's the problem: until you actually have any customers it will be impossible to calculate a true CAC.

Just give it a try though. Getting ahead of the curve and having an estimate of these costs will benefit you immensely.

## 2.3. Identify Your Audience

**WHO** are your users? Who are these wonderful people that will become your customers? In order to acquire users for your mobile app, you first need to know who they are and then where they gather.

**ONLY** then can you know how to approach them to entice them into engaging with you so that you can promote your app to them.

Research your ideal user's interests, their social media conversations, Google searches, Facebook likes, and you will know how to appeal to their desires and provide a mobile app that meets their needs. Later on we'll go into great detail in the tools and tricks to do that, so be patient!



## 2.4. Identify Your Metrics

You won't know what your app is doing, good or bad, if you don't pick out from the beginning what things you are going to track. Even though there are many metrics to track, the most successful mobile apps track at least two critical metrics: install rate and install volume. Install rate measures the number of times an app has been installed

These two are by all means not the only apps to track. Having accurate numbers of install rates and volume will help you have a better understanding of your customer acquisition cost, so you can then revise and update your estimates. With that new number, you'll have a more accurate base number to plug into other formulas that track other metrics like:

- **Conversion rate** - the ratio of users/people who become customers.
- **Customer acquisition cost (CAC)** - Total costs divided by total customers.
- **Cost per install** - As the mobile app space becomes more crowded, it's hard for developers to stand out, and makes finding new users much more expensive.
- **Cost per action (CPA)** - How much it takes to convert a user into a customer.

- **ROI** - Is the amount you make equal to the amount you spent?
- **Cost per 1000 impressions (CPM)** - the amount it takes to display an ad for your app 1,000 times.
- **Lifetime Value (LTV)** - The profit a customer provides to your company.

With your plan now firmly in hand, you're ready to get out there and get users for your app!



## 3. Use the Right Tactics

There are two sets of tactics that should be part of your strategy to acquire more users for your mobile app: Social and Technical.

### 3.1. Social Tactics

Social tactics are the types of things you can do without having a great deal of technical knowledge. They involve talking to people, engaging users, and communicating, applying classic marketing and promotional techniques to a new medium.

#### 3.1.1. Email Marketing

Email marketing is one of the most cost-effective ways of acquiring new users for your app. Everyone has an email address (or two, or three) and thanks to smartphones we have instant access to email wherever we go, whenever we choose. In fact, some experts estimate that email marketing can return **\$44 for every \$1 spent.**

You can email your mailing list, or produce a webinar or ebook to gather new email contacts. It really works but you have to spend significant time to do it right.

#### 3.1.2. Public Relations

Public relations (PR) is closely related to marketing, but differs

in a few critical ways. Marketing involves directly (or indirectly) promoting a product to generate revenue. Things like buying advertising, creating promotional sales copy, and creating websites.

Public relations, on the other hand, is building and maintaining relationships that present an favorable image of an organization or product. Pitching stories to the media, crafting press releases, or responding to informational inquiries.

There's a lot of overlap, but what it boils down to is that PR is a less salesy way to share your message with the world. It takes a good subtle hand to master the line between promoting a product and selling it, but once you do, you will have two different yet complementary tactics to acquire new users.

Here are some basic pointers to good public relations  
Know the tools - use wire services like PRWeb to put out your press releases, which also has a side benefit of increasing rankings in Google and other search engines.

- **Make friends** - build genuine relationships with influencers, instead of using them as just contacts for when you need something. Pick movers and shakers in industries your app is going to be in, and start dialogues early.
- **Think ahead** - get your press kits, informational materials, and other assets together before you need them, so you're not scrambling to put something together at the last

minute when things go your way (or if they go bad). Being ready means having your measurables set up, your communication channels ready, and your tech stack of your app ready to support increased user load.

- **Know when to talk and know when to be quiet** - just because you CAN promote your app doesn't mean you SHOULD. If it's not ready, it's usually best to be patient instead of drawing attention to an unfinished or broken product.
- **Keep moving** - always be hustling, just don't be obnoxious about it. Look around for opportunities to promote your app, to get it directly in the hands of influencers, partner with organizations who would want to use it.
- **Keep your eyes and ears open** - Stay humble. You don't know everything. When you see something that's working in your app metrics, don't automatically think you know why. Research and investigate so you can replicate and scale it up. Additionally, if your app isn't performing as you'd like, compare your metrics to your goals, and try to identify the deficiencies so you can correct them.

Most importantly, always keep your mind open to new possibilities. Opportunity might knock only once, so keep your eyes and your ears open

But... sometimes you gotta go out and make your own. Get out there and stay moving!

### 3.1.3. Social Media Marketing

Before you decide on which social networks to use to build your app's public persona, you have to decide what angle to start from. This means your social media voice must match your app's personality.

Who is your app? If it were a person, what would it sound and act like?

When posting, use that voice consistently. If your app is edgy and “cool,” don't bore your fans with bland business language. But if your app is geared towards young professionals, that business speak might suit your audience well.

The social media platforms where apps tend to get the most attention are:

- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **Youtube**
- **Pinterest**
- **LinkedIn**
- **FourSquare**

But don't just post information and promotions concerning your app to these platforms. Create conversations and engage with your fans. Reply to comments in your app's voice to



increase engagement. Such a relationship will increase word-of-mouth praise of your commitment to users, and increase downloads as a result.

One word of caution: each social media platform has its own terms of service regarding contests, giveaways, and advertising. Be sure you're never in violation of them while you draw attention to and build loyalty for your app.

### **3.1.4. Content Marketing**

Content marketing differs from traditional marketing is that instead of just advertising a product or promoting an app, it provides actual value to the person: blogs, ebooks, webinars, and videos can bring new awareness of your app, establish you as a thought leader, and demonstrate your success to new audiences.

The only trick is you'll need to create good, compelling, actionable content. Find the right team of designers, writers, and promoters, and you will make money hand over fist.

### **3.1.5. Offline Promotions**

Just because your app only exists in the electronic world doesn't mean that your promotion should.

### **3.1.6. Organic Reviews**

Organic reviews on app stores are one of the best ways to



acquire users. Positive word of mouth is perhaps the oldest way of spreading the benefits of a product, and your app is no different.

As app stores began to incorporate these metrics into their ranking algorithms, they just became even more crucial. Just from a mechanical point of view, every time you receive a positive mention, every time a user shares a good story of your app, the app store algorithm bumps your ranking higher than a competitor.

From a psychological standpoint, when a potential user sees that you have many good reviews they will be more apt to download your app. Even better, they might be emboldened to write their own review.

## **3.2. Technical Tactics**

Technical strategies are the harder side of things, things that involve using technology to maximize the number of users your app can acquire.

### **3.2.1. App Store Optimization**

Simply put, app store optimization (ASO) is increase your app store ranking to make it more visible to users and drive them to download your app. It's very similar to SEO for websites, and although the general idea is the same, the tactics are somewhat different.

ASO requires a good understanding of your ideal user persona; it will shape your keyword strategy. Keywords matter just as much for ASO as they do for SEO, perhaps even more so, since you're working with smaller, more tightly focused fields.

Highly researched and targeted keywords will enable users to find your app instead of a competitor's, and combined with your clever and catchy description, you'll make them think they won't be able to live without your app! So, just be sure to choose them wisely...

Basically, app store optimization is one of the most crucial components of your overall mobile app marketing plan. Let's go over the basics.

### 3.2.1.1. The Eight Basic Parts of App Store Optimization

While there are a few variations between optimizing between the two major app stores, the process for both rests on eight basic elements. For simplicity's sake, you can break them out into three main categories, but [you can discover more specifics right here](#):

#### **Optimize Your Keywords**

- **Choose the right title** - what's in a name? Everything, if you want your app to be successful. Keep it short, sweet (but not too sweet), and descriptive.
- **Write an optimized description** - be sure to describe your app carefully, and make sure that it doesn't take up too much real estate on a user's smartphone screen.

- **Localize keywords where appropriate** - think of different markets beyond just English-speaking ones, and you could have additional sources of users.

## **App Store Visuals**

- **App icon** - make it simple, clean, and avoid words. Let people see, not read.
- **Screenshots you use** - concentrate on the first two shots, and make sure they show a clear benefit, avoid boring menus and splash screens, and don't make them text-heavy.
- **Promotional or preview video** - videos are a great way to show cool transitions and give a feel for benefits, but keep it short and focused.

## **Offsite Factors that Affect ASO**

- Number of downloads (and uninstalls)
- Number and quality of your app ratings and reviews

## **ASO Best Practices:**

- Keep titles short, memorable, and under 25 characters while using an embedded keyword
- Make sure to have a preview video uploaded
- Check to make sure your app icon looks good and is clearly visible and eye-catching
- Make sure your screenshots are scaled for mobile
- Have a good detailed description of what the app does
- Translate listings into other languages if you want an international market

### 3.2.2. Asset Optimization

Asset optimization for apps is simply making sure that everything in your app's layout is giving the best possible impression to potential downloaders. Another way of thinking about this is sales optimization. Ask yourself:

- Do your screenshots look good, especially on mobile devices?
- Do you have an excellent icon that is clear and distinctive?
- How does your video preview look to potential buyers?
- Does your setup look good on both computers and mobile devices?

You want everything looking as professional and appealing as possible so that anyone who finds your app is much more likely to download it or buy it.

### 3.2.3. Search Engine Optimization

Like App Store Optimization, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a critical mobile app user acquisition tactic.

When choosing your keywords for your text, include copy or descriptions relevant to the subject so it can easily found and indexed by search engines.

Once you determine a baseline for the type of terms you want to use, do some research to investigate if there are similar words or phrases that generate similar levels of traffic.

Google's Adwords Keyword Tool is an invaluable tool to search for lateral keywords, which are the ones suggested by Google after you've found your app in search.

But remember – don't just pick any keyword because it has high search volume. Any keyword should accurately describe your app and ALSO be relevant to your audience. Stuffing your descriptions full of popular yet irrelevant keywords will cause Google to penalize you with low placement on the search engine results pages, reducing your credibility and driving down your app's visibility. Your downloads might suffer as a consequence.

### 3.2.4. Paid Tactics

Some of the most straightforward ways to expose new users to your app is to pay for them to see it.

The two most effective paid acquisition tactics to acquire more users for your mobile app: Pay Per Click (PPC) campaigns, and sponsoring reviews by industry influencers to critically review your app.

- PPC - These paid clickable ads appear on websites, apps, or other channels that you determine would be appropriate for your audience, and every time someone clicks on your ad it takes them to a landing page that promotes your app, or directly to an app store to download your it. Common platforms are Google's AdWords, Facebook Ads, and Floating Ads on individual websites.

- **Sponsored Reviews** - the opinions of industry experts can make or break the success of your app. Sponsored reviews from quality app reviewers provide immense credibility, but you need to make sure that your reviewers resonate with your potential market but are also within your budget.

Paid tactics tend to be more involved than other forms of acquisition. Think about it; you are sometimes spending a great deal of money on your outreach. You REALLY want to make sure that you are getting your money's worth.

Whether it's researching the types of websites your users are likely to use, or writing a really compelling PPC ad, or researching which thought leader would give you the best review, take the time to do it right, and you'll already be ahead of the competition.

### 3.2.5. Creative App Design

This is probably the easiest thing to say to do, but hardest to actually accomplish: make your app creative. Make it fun. Make it interesting and make people want to download it, install it, use it, and keep coming back for more.

It's unfair, but even if you develop the best and most interesting app in the world, it doesn't mean people will find it, like it, or use it.

But if you hire good creative people, let them do their job to make an app that people want to use, that's a great start to successfully acquiring users.

Or even better, [hire a team that's built over 10.000 apps](#) and worked with Ohio State University, Wienerschnitzel, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and let us work our creative magic for you!





## 4. Analyze and Optimize

Don't think that the only way to acquire users is through outreach. You don't just create it, let it go, and watch money roll in, you have to look at what you've done and see how it works, and if it doesn't work, find out how to improve it and make money.

### 4.1. Measure What Matters

How are you going to determine if your app is successful? If it fails? The way you do that is to pick a few factors like downloads, or sales, or time spent on it, and give them points in time to check them. If you haven't reached them by that time, you need to reevaluate why.

### 4.2. Tools and Software

Once you decide what metrics you're going to track, you're going to need to use the right tools to track them.

Some one of the best tools to measure the effectiveness of your mobile app user acquisition tactics is without a doubt Google's Universal Analytics.

Universal Analytics connects information from multiple devices and associate multiple sessions to a unique ID to derive accurate user count, analyze user experience, and access other relevant data.

Another service is Flurry Analytics that counts Yahoo!, EA, and Groupon as clients, and provides:

- Usage: Active users, sessions, session lengths, frequency, retention, and more.
- Audience: Your users' interest, personas, and demographic breakdown.
- Technical: Device information, carrier data, firmware versions, and details on bugs and errors.
- Events: Define events, see user paths, and create funnels.

Both of these tools will provide you critical information on how people use your apps, and can indicate the directions you need to take to improve their experience. There are also dozens of other tools available on the internet that can help you adjust your app marketing and improve your tactics for acquiring new mobile app users.

## 4.3. Test, Test, and Test Again

Regardless of the channel or type of user acquisition tactics you use, you're going to need to test more than one. One of the most effective ways to determine the most successful versions of your outreach tactics is A/B testing.

A/B testing involves taking an element of a tactic and creating an alternate version, for example an email with the same

body copy but two different subject lines. You then send these two emails to similar group segments of your potential users, and measure which email gets opened more. Then you'll have great data on which is the more effective subject line.

Plus, you can use A/B testing on more than just email marketing. Swap out benefit lists, call to actions, anything that might work on different user groups, and you will have an extremely accurate view of your users and how they interact with your tactics.

One drawback of A/B testing is that while it can provide very accurate results, it does take a bit of time. Depending on the size of your campaign, the number of elements you want to test, and the groups of people you are trying to appeal to, you could wait up to a week or more for the results of your A/B.

## 4.4. What Happens if NOTHING Happens?

Even the best acquisition tactics sometimes don't work. Sometimes there isn't even a reason they don't work; you just don't get the results you want.

However, if you have followed these tips you've already identified the specific components of your strategy and tactics, and all you have to do is just sit down and review and re-evaluate your efforts

We'll let you in on a secret though. After building over 10,000 apps, we've seen plenty of strategies that start strong, but fall apart in their tactics. If you don't get the results you want from your mobile app, the most likely reason is that you picked the

wrong platform to acquire the users who would be most interested in your app.

But, you probably have other channels as well, so be sure to evaluate all of your tactics accordingly. Maybe you should have targeted Pinterest instead of Instagram. Maybe you should have put more into your PPC campaign so your budget lasted longer. Maybe you should have written a better headline, or devoted more time to your A/B testing.

The bright side is that because you already picked what metrics to track and documented your activity, you can go back and revise your strategy, and try again. Just don't give up!

But if you still can't figure out why your app still isn't performing how you want, there are people ready to help [you!](#)



## 5. Conclusion

There is no magic formula to acquire more users for your mobile app. No secret plan.

What most people don't realize about overnight successes is that they only appear instant. No one ever credits the public relations professionals who laid the groundwork for the connections that brought the initial attention, or the researchers who poured through thousands of A/B tests to narrow down the most effective design elements, or the writers who wrote the pithy but descriptive summaries that attracted the first users on the app stores.

The truth is, the only thing that will get you more users is a lot of hard work, listening to experienced voices, and a little bit of luck.

Throughout this ebook we've outlined some of the most effective ways to acquire more users, but we'd like to leave you with one final lesson:

You don't have to use all of them, or any of them, either altogether or one at a time. While this ebook is as comprehensive as possible teaching you the tactics you can use, what it can't teach you is wisdom.

It takes wisdom to know what tactics will work for your app, your budget, and your situation, but you can't learn that from an ebook, regardless of how comprehensive it is.

That's because that wisdom only comes from experience, and after building thousands of apps we've learned to see how larger patterns can affect the viability of certain tactics on certain types of apps.

If you want to know more, [click here](#) to schedule a free 60 minute consultation to talk with a BuildFire Genius. Let's build something great together!