

TECHDOTS: THE TRUE COST OF CUSTOM APP DEVELOPMENT

A straightforward guide to understanding and budgeting for your mobile app project.

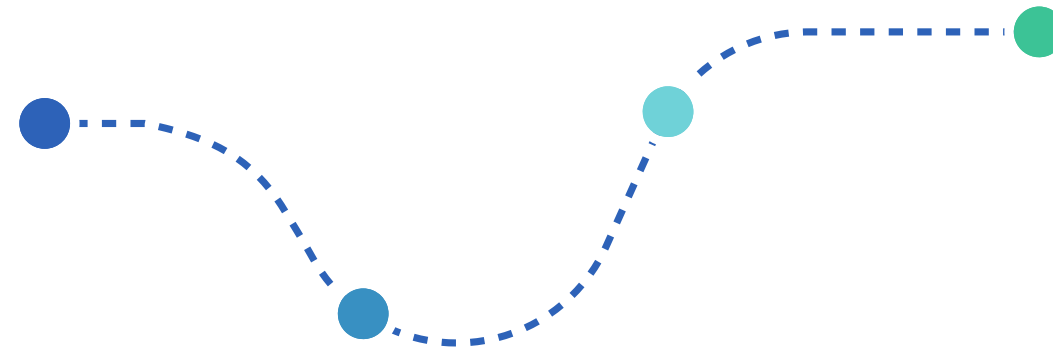
<https://techdots.dev>



This guide covers essential concepts that will save you time, money, and frustration on your mobile app journey.

"Purpose of This Guide"

*Figuring out the cost of a **new app** can be one of the most challenging parts of a project. It's easy to get lost in a sea of numbers and technical jargon.*



(We've created this guide to give you a clear roadmap)

1

We'll show you how to move past a simple quote and build a complete budget that accounts for every stage of your app's journey.

2

We will help you avoid surprises and manage your finances with confidence.

BEYOND THE SINGLE QUOTE



MOST PEOPLE ASK, "HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BUILD AN APP?"

BUT THAT'S LIKE ASKING, "HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BUILD A HOUSE?" THE ANSWER DEPENDS ON A HUGE NUMBER OF FACTORS.

"Quote"

A single quote for an entire app is often misleading. The true cost of a successful app includes the whole journey—from the initial idea all the way to ongoing support. Without a complete budget, you risk overspending, missing key deadlines, and creating a lot of stress for your team.



THE APP DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

"A SUCCESSFUL APP PROJECT CAN BE BROKEN DOWN INTO FOUR DISTINCT PHASES. BUDGETING FOR EACH ONE IS THE KEY TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS"

-  **Discovery:** The initial research and planning phase to validate your idea and reduce risk.
-  **MVP (Minimum Viable Product):** The first version of your app with a core set of features ready for the public.
-  **Growth & Iteration:** Post-launch improvements, new features, and scaling the app.
-  **Maintenance:** The ongoing costs of keeping the app live, secure, and working perfectly.

PHASE 1: Discovery

BEFORE YOU WRITE A SINGLE LINE OF CODE, THE DISCOVERY PHASE IS YOUR CHANCE TO TEST YOUR IDEA. IT'S ABOUT SPENDING A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY UPFRONT TO PREVENT SPENDING A FORTUNE ON THE WRONG PRODUCT.

This phase is used to:

-  **Validate:** Is there a real market need for your app?
-  **Plan:** Define the most important features to build in your MVP.
-  **Reduce Risk:** Identify technical hurdles early and find solutions.

“A discovery phase can be anything from a simple prototype to in-depth market research”

PHASE 2: MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT (MVP)

The MVP is your first product, but it's not the final one. It's a fully functional app with the most essential features, designed to be used by real customers.

The goal of the MVP is to:

- 🕒 **Launch Quickly:** Get to market faster than your competitors.
- 🗣️ **Gather Feedback:** Learn from your first users and use their input to improve the app.
- 🎯 **Prove Value:** Show that your core idea is a success and worth investing more in.



Phase 3: GROWTH & ITERATION

Once your MVP is live, the work is far from over. This phase is about building on your success. Based on feedback from your early users and data on how they're using the app, you will add new features, improve existing ones, and expand your app's capabilities.

This phase includes:

- 🔄 Adding new features to delight users.
- 🔄 Optimizing your app store listing to attract more downloads.
- 🔄 Improving the user experience based on real-world data.



PHASE 4: MAINTENANCE

This is the ongoing cost of keeping your app running smoothly after launch.
You'll need to budget for:

- 🔄 **Server Hosting:** Paying for the infrastructure that keeps your app running 24/7.
- 🔄 **Bug Fixes & Security:** Fixing issues and keeping your app secure from new threats.
- 🔄 **Customer Support: Responding to user feedback and** helping them with any problems.
- 🔄 **Updates:** Ensuring the app works on new versions of iOS and Android.



A SAMPLE BUDGET

Here's an example of how a \$150,000 budget for a new social app might be allocated across the journey:

DISCOVERY: \$30,000 (20%)

This covers user research, wireframes, and a clickable prototype to test with a small focus group.

MVP DEVELOPMENT: \$75,000 (50%)

This is the core development cost to build a fully functional social sharing app for a single platform (e.g., iOS).

MAINTENANCE: \$15,000 (10%)

This covers the first year of hosting, monitoring, and ongoing support.

Growth & Iteration: \$30,000 (20%)

This budget is reserved for adding key features post-launch, like direct messaging or an "explore" page, based on what early users want.

THE ICEBERG OF COST

Think of your app's features as the tip of an iceberg. What you see is only a small part of the total cost. The majority of the budget is spent on things that aren't visible to the user.



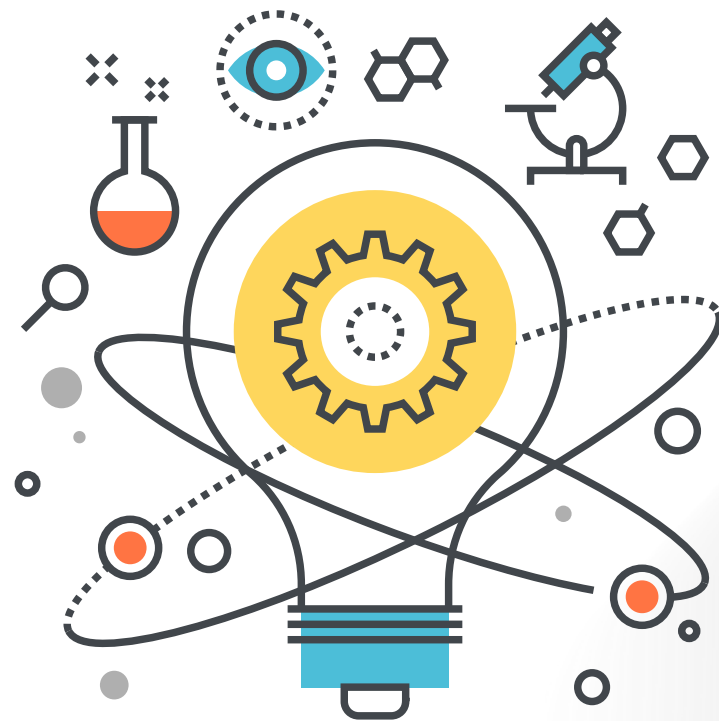
THESE UNSEEN COSTS INCLUDE:

- Legal fees for privacy policies.
- Marketing and app store optimization (ASO).
- Analytics setup to track user behavior.
- Setting up a customer service system.
- Quality assurance and manual testing.
- Integration with third-party services.
- Backend infrastructure and APIs.

Always make sure your budget accounts for the entire iceberg, not just the tip.

THE DISCOVERY PROJECT

The best Discovery projects involve speaking directly with your potential users to get real feedback. This process helps you define exactly what you need to build and what you can skip.



A DISCOVERY PROJECT IS THE ULTIMATE RISK-REDUCER. IT'S A SMALL, FOCUSED PROJECT THAT CAN TAKE MANY FORMS:

- A Figma prototype to test user flows.
- A research report on competitors and market trends.
- A technical audit to prove a complex feature is possible.

COST OF A DISCOVERY PROJECT

A Discovery project is a small investment that can save you from a huge mistake. The cost depends on the project's scope, but it generally ranges from **\$10,000 to \$40,000**.

FOR EXAMPLE, A \$15,000 DISCOVERY PROJECT COULD INCLUDE:

- A week of in-depth market research.
- Two weeks of creating and testing an interactive prototype with 10-15 potential users.

“This small investment gives you concrete data to make informed decisions before you commit to the much larger cost of full-scale development”



COST VS COMPLEXITY

**THE MORE COMPLEX YOUR APP, THE MORE IT WILL COST.
COMPLEXITY CAN BE MEASURED BY SEVERAL FACTORS:**

- **Number of Features:** A dozen features cost more than two.
- **Platform:** An app for both iOS and Android costs more than an app for just one.
- **Integration:** Connecting to external services like Stripe or social media APIs adds to the cost.
- **Technology:** Using cutting-edge tech like augmented reality will be more expensive.

“A simple calculator app will always cost less than a feature-rich social media platform”

THE RISK-REWARD SCALE

When you're making a budget, you are also making a decision about risk.

Low Risk, Higher Upfront Cost:

Investing more in the early phases (Discovery, PoC) means you spend more upfront, but you significantly reduce the chance of building the wrong product.

High Risk, Lower Upfront Cost:

Skipping the Discovery phase to save money might seem tempting, but it drastically increases your risk of failure.

“A smart budget balances your desire to save money with the need to build a product your audience will love and use”

THE POWER OF A GREAT TEAM

The final and most crucial factor in managing app costs is the team you work with. A skilled, collaborative team is worth its weight in gold.

A GREAT TEAM DOES MORE THAN JUST CODE, THEY:

- **Ask the right questions** to prevent scope creep.
- **Suggest better solutions** that save time and money.
- **Communicate clearly** so you're never in the dark.
- **Help you prioritize** the most important features.

THANK YOU FOR READING OUR GUIDE!

We hope this resource has provided you with a clear and actionable framework for your next project. Our goal is to empower you to make informed decisions and build an app that not only succeeds but thrives.

Ready to start planning your app? Visit us at ***techdots.dev*** to connect with our team and turn your vision into a reality.

