**Ian Garlic:**

Welcome to the Garlic Marketing Show, Ian Garlic here and we have an awesome guest today, once again. I've been getting some great ones, and this one today we're going to talk about apps, where they are 2019, how to build one and they’re building amazing ones. Before I get started a little promo from our sponsor:

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Christopher White is our guest today from the Sneaker Agency in New York City. Thanks for being here. I'm super excited, and if you guys hear any sounds it is the genuine sounds of the city. If you’re watching the video, you can see straight up north. You can see all of beautiful New York. Chris, thanks so much for being on the show.

**Christopher White:**

2 MINUTE MARK Hey, man, super excited to be here. Really, really grateful. Looking forward to talking apps, man.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah, so I mean apps, you know, it's funny because obviously seven to eight years ago it was like everyone had to have an app and then it kind of it's been up and down and up and down. Let's talk a little about who you've worked with because some people understand that you are an expert in apps.

So tell me a little bit about the types of companies that you've helped build apps for.

**Christoper White:**

Yeah, well, we work with a number of different types of clients. We work with startups, enterprise clients and we also work with agencies. So through those different relationships, we've done work with folks such as Pepsi.

We're currently working with a bigger name fitness brand, sort of a little under NDA right now, soon to be launched. So we're getting into more of that side of the space, particularly with Android as there's a bigger shift now for people playing some catchup on the Android side of the spectrum.

We've recently been working with the Infatuation on redoing their IOS app, which has been a really fun and challenging project, you know, but yet those would be just a few.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah. I mean, those are some big names and later on the show we're going to talk about what goes into really making an app that works.

Chris and I were talking about what's really important right now, but let's talk a little about the state of the app market. Who should be building apps? What's really working in apps and getting downloads and users and all that stuff?

**Christopher White:**

I think that there definitely was a correction in the app space as you sort of hinted. Seven to eight years ago everybody and their grandmother needed an app. I think right now there's been a couple key consolidations. 4 MINUTE MARK One is that for a lot of industries things have just consolidated around platforms. If you're in a restaurant, you probably don't have your own app anymore. You’re just making sure that your restaurant’s on all the different platforms, so you're on Red Z, etc, etc.

But then I do think that there are still unique situations for brands you wouldn’t expect like Dollar Shave Club. They have an app. It's actually a really cool app. What does it do? Actually, it has a lot of content, a lot of great content. Dollar Shave Club does a great job with their product, but when you get their product they have like a cool little printed sort of a little thing in the box, but they've also been translating that into like a fun digital experience, too.

I think even for brands where you wouldn't think to engage with the brand like that all the time—like you just set up your subscription and forget it—you could still, if you need to, manage your subscription via their app, but you could also get a lot of good fun engaging content. So that I think is is one direction that some bigger brands are going into. I think augmented reality is something we discussed a little bit prior to the show. It’s really interesting, particularly in the fashion space there are some really cool apps where you can basically try on sneakers virtually.

Have you ever tried one of these?

**Ian Garlic:**

I have not.

**Christopher White:**

You got to check out Wanna Kicks. Pretty mind-blowing stuff. You can pretty much hold your phone like over your feet and just like swipe through and try on different sneakers, and it's pretty amazing how accurate it is in terms of lining it up with your with your feet. It gets a little janky if you move your foot or if you're near things, but overall the quality of it's pretty wild.

6 MINUTE MARK I think that if commerce they change a lot with respect to its relationship to mobile over the next couple of years, as well.

And then, as I sort of hinted at before, I think that there's a big shift for folks to make sure that they're doing a really good job on Android as well. I think that's a big piece of momentum that we see, too. There's definitely a lot of brands that typically launch first on iOS and that's still very common today even.

Even though Apple isn't even when the top seller of smartphones, most people still at least and the states at least want to develop their app for iPhones first, but given how large of a population there are of Android users both growing here in the States, but also internationally, I think a lot of brands are now starting to pay a lot more attention to Android.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah, obviously Android’s growing. I mean the app market is still there.

I want to get into augmented reality in a little bit, but who do you think should really be developing an app that maybe isn't—or if we can talk industry, or even specific companies—who do you think should be developing apps that probably isn't and should be thinking about in a different way?

**Christopher White:**

That's a really good question. I'd have to go back to even my Dollar Shave Club example of like a direct consumer brand. I think a lot of direct consumer brands are just thinking about web right now. I think there's a lot of value that they could be bringing to their users via mobile apps.

8 MINUTE MARK So that would be, you know, doing it via website is just a no-brainer. You have to have your website and there are people that want to place their orders via those sites and stuff. But tying that back to a mobile experience of some sort, as well, I think has a lot of value for these brands.

**Ian Garlic:**

Makes a lot of sense too because then I mean because the customer acquisition is so important and staying in contact with them. A lot of people to get most of their alerts from their apps.

**Christopher White:**

Yeah. I mean the push capabilities alone there's things that you can do with a mobile app that are just really hard to do on the web or that you can do via mobile web that they're just kind of janky, you know. I think for those kinds of brands they're probably going to step up and start doing more stuff in that space. I think there's a lot of room in the co-working space for mobile apps.

WeWork is a big player. I think they've done a great job of building out like their whole digital ecosystem, so I think a lot of the other like co-working spaces that are trying to compete with WeWork need to probably step up a lot of their game, and especially on the mobile side. They've really done a great job of onboarding you, activating your keycard. You can pretty much do anything. So I would say that space.

I think real estate is an interesting sort of general space. There's definitely players in that world been established for a while now here in New York with StreetEasy and stuff like that. A lot of them haven't updated their technology in a while and other users who don't really like them as much. 10 MINUTE MARK I think there's definitely some room for disrupting things in the real estate space that probably ties back to some different types of business models that people want to do in the real estate space, but I think that there is definitely opportunity there.

Travel is also really interesting. I think that you're going to start seeing a lot smarter types of travel experiences via mobile where it's more curated for you using machine learning or A.I. coming up with ways to sort of take the pain out of planning trips and travel. I think you're going to see a lot of movement in the travel space, too.

**Ian Garlic:**

So let's talk about augmented reality—AR—because I think it's one of those things that's really cool. If you haven't seen it, it's basically where you can, well, I’ll have you describe it because you're probably better at describing than me.

**Christopher White:**

Yeah. I describe augmented reality as a situation where using your phone you're able to see something in the real world that's not actually there. Probably like the most simple non-technical way that I can describe it. So as I was moving before now let’s say beauty apps and fashion apps you're able to see how sneakers would look on your feet without them actually being there in reality, and it's getting pretty realistic, pretty good quality. It's only going to keep improving.

Makeup apps: they're letting you just put on a whole facial makeover completely within an app driven experience with no physical makeup whatsoever.

So I think it's bridging something that you want to see in real life with just what you can see and do on your phone, but that makes augmented reality really interesting.

12 MINUTE MARK Services at your house where you can like sort of design rooms using virtual reality—lay out the dimensions of the room to place furniture in it—all of these types of things companies are doing and they're going to keep pushing the boundaries on this stuff. Soon enough probably the bigger brands will sort of pick up on it and try to play catch up, too.

**Ian Garlic:**

I think you know one of the examples I saw, too, I don't know if you've seen this it’s like 19 Crimes wine did a great job with it and because they took and they augmented—they use an app right—but they also told stories on each of the labels and you can combine video with the app so you can look and now you have a video and you have storytelling and really engages and bring that brand to a whole new level. It's really, really cool.

And this brings me to another question. Obviously, you know, I'm big into video and video marketing. Video is a discussion that we had, that’s how we met. How do you see video being used now? What are the keys to really create a great video inside of an app?

**Christopher White:**

Yeah. Wow... giving me the easy ones, huh? I think that video on mobile short-form content is always best. Couple minutes tops people seem to like and respond to. That said, I sometimes watch Netflix movies on the way home on the subway. A lot of the video platforms have gotten a lot better at buffering content. 14 MINUTE MARK You can be underground for quite a while and it'll just keep playing, and when it gets to the next station it'll just keep buffering depending on your platform. I mean, if it's for long-form video, I think you want to have creative ways to buffer content for people or let them take stuff offline, even for kids. That's a big plus to have limited data plans.

For other social media apps, I think it's always best to try and focus on short-form content. Newer areas like 360 video I don't know as much about it. I think those areas are still coming into the fore, and unfortunately, I think you need more headset year stuff and other things for those, but I'm definitely curious about where things like that are going to go or if it'll just continue to be more of like a novelty since you sort of need more hardware associated with it sometimes.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah. That's one of the things you never know what's going to take off, but I think it's important to be thinking about video. Let’s talk a little bit about like how do you create a great app, and when someone comes to work with Sneaker Agency and wants to create an app, what's the process to make sure it's an effective, fantastic outcome?

**Christopher White:**

Well, we start with a very detailed discovery process. The key is really to understand their business goals, if I had to put it in the most simple terms. I think that when people do struggle with apps, they sometimes forget that this should all be tied back to a business, especially if they’re a startup. You really want to be clear on what your actual business goals are because the app shouldn't be your business goal—the app is a solution. 16 MINUTE MARK It's a window into your product or service, but at the end of the day, that should be one component of your overall business model to dig into that with clients, make sure that they understand it fully, but they get us to understand it. And then from there, deduct like... okay, what are going to be the top app goals that we need to focus on given their business goals.

So that happens during the discovery process and we're constantly tuning and refining that process in trying to bring more user research into that initial discovery. Doing more user journey mapping with clients. Really trying to understand like, “Alright, there's your business goals. These are the app goals.” How do we get a user from A to B? They download the app, how do we get them as efficiently as possible to do what you actually want them to do? So that is all of the initial discovery and design. There's sort of technical skill thing that happens during that process.

Then really once you get into the development phase, it really comes down to being on top of product requirements and user acceptance testing criteria. You really have to work hard to be as clear up front as you can with those things so that one, the engineers know what they're supposed to be building and two, so you know how to verify and test it where things can go off the rails during the engineering process in the build processes.

If you haven't done a good enough job really putting down those those types of user acceptance criteria for all the different features of the app. 18 MINUTE MARK So once we should do discovery and design, the product build, the final piece for us is the launch phase working with a client to get everything ready for the app store if they need help with app store imagery or giving them at least suggestions on that stuff if they have their own designers. That's sort of the final fit and finish in launch phase of the process.

And then from there, if somebody has a longer backlog of things they wanted to do, maybe we keep filling in new features or they may just go more into, like, a maintenance mode. But those are sort of all the key components of the product life cycle.

**Ian Garlic:**

When someone comes to you for the first time they've got this app idea, which everyone has one, what do you see as the biggest mistakes that people are making if they actually have a good app idea? Where do you see their biggest mistakes in planning and getting it ready to go?

**Christopher White:**

I would say the biggest mistake is underestimating the amount of time and financial investment that's going to be required from their end. It definitely is something where, even if you're working with an agency, you're going to have to be very involved in the process. As it turns out, it may seem counterintuitive, it's oftentimes actually a solo founder who can be difficult to work with because they're just strapped for time, and we need their input, we need their time.

Often my key suggestions are to try and find a good product manager, someone you can bring on with equity, somebody who can handle the product side of things so that you can focus on the business and fundraising.

20 MINUTE MARK To being conservative with your financial estimates, working with your agency to understand not only what is it really going to cost to build this introversion, but what is it going to cost to market it? What is it going to cost to sell it and maintain it? Once your product goes live and is out in the world a lot of times that's when the real work begins. You have people using it. You've got to market it. You got to get it in front of people. They're probably not just going to find it themselves. If it's an enterprise B2B app, you may actually need a sales team to actually do cold outreach and drum up interest along with whatever digital marketing you're doing.

If it's an extensive service or something that does like video for instance, you're going to have to have your budget for content distribution, keeping servers up and running, paying for engineering time and design for updates. It gets pretty involved and pretty expensive, and I think the time and money are just sort of two things that I see folks underestimate all the time when they're going down this path of building a new product.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah, I can imagine that because you're making really slick, simple-looking apps, but that's the hardest thing to make, right?

**Christopher White:**

Yeah, you see like eight or nine screens, but there's a lot of planning and design and engineering that went into that, including whatever is happening behind the scenes with database server content distribution, all of that stuff coming together is what really drives the app. If you want it all web, as well, that gets more expensive. 22 MINUTE MARK Some people want it on both, some people still just go mobile first, so I think that in this day and age if you want to build something of quality you really have to have your business hat on and remind yourself that you're building a business not just an app. That's typically how I describe it to people.

**Ian Garlic:**

Interesting. So let's talk about, you know, you have an example here of an app—we're going to share it here. If you're listening, you can go to YouTube and the link will be in the show notes because we're going to share a screen of the PINATA app here.

Tell me a little about this project here and what went into it. How did you plan it and how did you gauge success?

**Christopher White:**

This is a unique project because they had started going down the path of trying to put together this whole product and they were struggling because they sort of were in an “analysis paralysis” mode, I would call it. We came in probably a couple years ago now and helped sort of work with them to come up with their first minimum viable product. Their platform was designed to connect brand ambassadors with brands so that they could do on demand, on site brand marketing and promotions.

It's a challenging concept because it's a two-sided marketplace. It’s got location aspects to it, outgoing payments involved with it, brands have requirements for what people need to wear, so it's a pretty involved process overall. They were struggling and it's not trivial to figure out an ideal way to get all this going.

24 MINUTE MARK We sat down with them. We really had made them really sit down and map out the absolutely essential requirements and features of the app, which took a little time, probably took a couple weeks to really iron that out. Some people had to give up stuff that was on their wish list. I always tell people that you're just not going to get everything you want in your first version. So I had a lot of hard long conversations, really was able to narrow down the app to like, “Okay, well, at the end of the day brands have to post available gigs and ambassadors need to be able to sign up and find those gigs. So let's focus on that. Let's focus on a web experience that lets brands post available gigs. Let's put focus on a mobile experience that lets brand ambassador sign up, find brands that they want to work with, apply for those, go work the gig and get paid.”

We helped streamline that whole process from cradle to grave and then working with them on the design and the build out and the launch.

**Ian Garlic:**

Cool, yeah. That's one thing people are like, “Oh, I just want to app that does this and this,” and you don't think about all the processes involved.

**Christopher White:**

Yeah, because like here there's two sides, right? You've got the brands, you need help and the people who want to help, so what you see in the mobile app is one part of it. There's all this other stuff on the backend or what we call “the admin” where all these other parts of the system are happening. How are you getting gigs into the system so that people can actually apply to them? 26 MINUTE MARK We really work to educate clients that they're building a business and they're building a system. This app is a window into their system, but they really need to have a systems-level type of thinking because there could be multiple components to the entire thing. Users are just downloading the app, but there's usually a lot of other stuff going on behind the scenes.

**Ian Garlic:**

Yeah, especially for something this complex because I can imagine how long this takes. Now tell me, how is PINATA doing? How did you measure success with this?

**Christopher White:**

Well, with startups a lot of times we measure success by whether or not they're able to raise more money and bring on their own team, and they were they were definitely successful in doing that.

I think they've since pivoted and gone into… I'd have to look at some of the stuff they're doing right now. They basically tested out this whole model. They weren't too happy with just the traction for it, or I guess logistically it was just a lot harder to pull off. Signing up the brands proved to be difficult. Part of the model was that they would they would get brands to go away from using traditional agencies who just did this type of stuff for brand promotion and instead get those brands to sort of use their platform directly, and I think that that was maybe a bigger ask than brands were ready for, so they've sort of since pivoted and it built more of like a—I don’t know if it’s a SAS product… I’ll have to check on the current stuff they're doing.

But that's part of the way the story goes, right? You have to be willing to potentially pivot if you think you need to. That's why we really try to focus on getting clients to build something fast, effective so they can get it out into the market and actually test it.

**Ian Garlic:**

28 MINUTE MARK I'm looking at their website right now and it looks like it's been used by Nike and Pepsi and General Mills and Patrón. They've definitely moved the needle.

**Christopher White:**

Yeah, they’ve got a great team and we always love taking on additional work from startups, but if they can actually get their own team, that's great, too.

**Ian Garlic:**

No matter what someone's building, you know, we were talking before the show about what really is important for them, think about no matter what, and you were talking about that initial user experience. Why is that so important and how do you make it work?

**Christopher White:**

I think it's really important because first impressions matter, you know, with anything in life and that's your first impression. That's the first time somebody's going to experience your service, your product. So you have to think about that as its own unique thing when you're thinking about your app.

And why do I say that? Well, let's say that you are a social media platform. Social media platforms are dependent upon having more than one person doing stuff together. So as part of your onboarding experience, if you haven't thought about that, you might go and build this thing where somebody signs up, they get thrown into some home page and they haven't been encouraged to invite people to use it. They don't really know what it's supposed to be doing for them, and then you'd like just lost not only that user but all of their potential friends, so you have to understand that that is a very unique time where you've got maybe, I don't know, 20-30 seconds to help somebody decide if they really want to keep using your app or not.

30 MINUTE MARK So we work with clients to really focus on that. What's the most important things on the home screen? What are the things that we need to collect from users? Do I need some sort of onboarding? Can we get users to understand the app just from some landing graphics or information?

Those are a lot of the things that we work with clients on because, I don't know, for whatever reason it's easy to forget. You sign up for an app, you use it. I've been using Instagram, I don't know, for like a gazillion years. I haven't gone through their onboarding process in a long time, but presumably they've improved it. They've updated it. They've done a lot of work. So a lot of times I actually will look at other apps and their onboarding and even sign up as a new user and see what are some apps that we've used for years now doing. First to improve the future retention rates for their app users.

**Ian Garlic:**

That's critical. What are the two or three things that you absolutely think that every onboarding process needs?

**Christopher White:**

I think a very clear landing screen. We call that just the first screen that a user would see. Typically, that's got your sign up or your sign in. Just really, really clear sign up instructions and maybe give them a little overview of the app.

A really great onboarding experience where you're getting the essential information you need, trying to get some information you'd like to have but don't need, and letting people skip over those three—just a great home screen experience.

32 MINUTE MARK Once they've taken the time to sign up, once they’ve taken the time to get through your onboarding, giving them something to see even if it's another call to action because maybe you still don't have everything you need. As opposed to an empty experience, at least you're giving them some sort of call out that there's something else you need for them to do to get utility from the app.

**Ian Garlic:**

And what are the big mistakes that we can avoid in the onboarding or on the home screen?

**Christopher White:**

I would say having too many things on your home screen. You really want to keep that clean experience, the clean feed of information. That really should be the place where users go by default to do anything with your app.

The other stuff—user profile, search, whatever notifications—put that stuff in other tabs. Focus your home screen on the stuff that whenever somebody comes to this app what are they going to want to see most quickly and do the most often. Keep your home screen focused on those things, and that's not always easy, but that's the way you should think about it.

**Ian Garlic:**

Awesome, awesome. This has been fantastic information, Chris. If you have any last piece of advice someone's on the fence about building an app or which direction to go, what would be the final thoughts that you'd give them? I’m giving you all the hard questions today.

**Christopher White:**

I would say product development is a lot of fun. It's not without its challenges if you've never built a digital product before. It's a humbling, but really fun experience. I would say that if you've definitely never raised money before, you really want to do your research, really understand the way that money fundraising works and don't get in over your head.

34 MINUTE MARK I would say start out small. If you have a little bit of money, maybe just do some design prototyping. Don't go building all this stuff, yet. Once you start building stuff like that it gets expensive, so be smart, even if you don't have a lot of money and you’re bootstrapped, there's still really effective things you can do to push the ball forward and help yourself raise more money.

You keep validating your idea. I would always just be aware of the situation you're in and get as much as you can out of it. There's always something you can do more effectively, so if you've got your first $50,000, you probably want to invest that in more research, doing some design prototyping. You probably don't want to go spending all that on building technology because you're going to burn through that pretty fast. That would probably be my parting wisdom.

**Ian Garlic:**

Alright, that's awesome advice because a lot of people just want to go straight to the development. I think that's a great way to manage that cash flow and it's so important. It is important. Apps are expensive, but the payoff is big as we've seen.

Christopher, thank you so much for being on show. It's been a lot of fun talking about apps and if you guys want to find out more about Sneakers Agency, just go to sneakersagency.com and you can see all their work, and then if someone wants to work with you, there's a “Get A Quote” button. Is that the best way to get in touch?

**Christopher White:**

Yeah, just click on “Get A Quote,” fill in some key details and we'll be in touch.

**Ian Garlic:**

Beautiful, beautiful. Well, thanks again, buddy. I appreciate it again. Thank you all for listening to Chris and I taking us on your journey. This has been Ian Garlic and the Garlic Marketing Show.

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