

Could progressive web apps be the apps of the future?

By  Nick Durrant, issued by [Bluegrass Digital](#)

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Progressive web apps (PWAs) are the perfect cross between native mobile apps and websites. Here's why.



What makes you delete an [app](#)? Perhaps you're tired of excessive adverts and notifications. Maybe the app is buggy, which makes for an unpleasant user experience. You might be running low on storage space on your phone or maybe you just haven't used the specific service or platform in a while.

Alternatively, you may be deleting something because of security or privacy concerns and sometimes the process of signing up for, and registering on, an app is cause enough to delete an app before you've even started using it.

For developers, it's important to understand what makes people ditch an app so that you can try to simplify complexity and eliminate friction in future software iterations. Progressive web apps (PWAs) have the potential to eliminate most of the scenarios outlined above.

Think of PWAs as a website but with all the benefits of an app. PWAs provide a quicker, more reliable and more engaging version of your website by bringing together the best a website has to offer and the best of what native apps have to offer.

They are able to do this with the help of service workers – a JavaScript file that sits between the server and browser and adds a layer of background functionality that mimics typical app functionality. With PWAs you can load an app at the push of a button without having to bear the cost of downloading a native app from an app store.

The major [benefits](#) of PWAs are listed below.

- PWAs are more affordable to create and maintain than native apps.
- PWAs deliver better performance than traditional web apps.
- They offer higher performance levels and improved customer engagement/experience.
- One-click access; with no installation or updates.
- PWAs are faster and smoother.
- PWAs are app store-independent.
- Users can browse websites while offline and they use less data; two particularly appealing benefits in the developing world.

But there are [drawbacks](#). While PWAs do offer a wide range of functionality, they can't do everything regular mobile apps can do. And because they are written in JavaScript, they are not as battery efficient as other apps. There may also be some issues using PWAs on certain operating systems and legacy hardware.

PWAs in action

PWAs may be making a lot of noise at tech conferences right now but they aren't exactly new and they're already being used by some of the big tech names. In fact, Twitter and Instagram are both using PWAs to offer a fast, reliable and engaging mobile web [experience](#).

At Bluegrass, we've embraced the trend too. Amawasha, an ICT platform that improves safety for women in informal settlements by providing information around public latrine facilities, is a PWA mobile solution that we implemented in partnership with the University of the Witwatersrand.

Creating a PWA was the ideal approach because we could implement data free reverse billing to allow users from underprivileged communities to interact with the platform without costing them any money. Users don't have to download anything from an app store; they can simply login with their cell number.

And once they've used Amawasha, the app operates offline, capturing and storing data that is only submitted when Internet is detected. It was a win-win for all involved and we are already looking to support similar projects across Africa.

At Bluegrass Digital we are constantly working to find the right digital solutions to solve even the most complex problems. And sometimes these scenarios don't demand the flashiest and fanciest tech. Want help developing a digital offering that meets your unique needs? Contact us, [here](#).

ABOUT NICK DURRANT

Nick Durrant is MD at Bluegrass Digital, a digital solutions company with offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and London. We are experts in crafting web and mobile products and platforms. After spending 17 years in working the tech industry in the UK and setting up the Bluegrass in London in 1999, Nicholas now runs the company from Cape Town, developing the business into Africa and Europe offering world class digital solutions.
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