



PLANNING CLOUD APP DEPLOYMENT: THE UX CHECKLIST

How to make sure your teams are considering user experience (UX) when planning cloud enterprise applications



Here at TATA Communications, we believe that cloud applications and network performance go hand in hand. We deliver a great UX for our customers by firstly working with them from an application perspective, and only then deploy infrastructure and network tailored for that experience. It's a completely integrated approach to application UX, and never one-size-fits-all.

Our IZO Cloud Enablement Platform is a great example. IZO lays the foundation for any enterprise to deploy their cloud applications by making sure they are always on and always performing to the level that's expected by their users.

Your business now has a great opportunity to take advantage of this platform and ensure a great UX within your enterprise apps – knowing that your network and infrastructure are optimised to support them.

But of course, a brilliant user experience is never a given, and you need to plan carefully to make sure you achieve your aims.

Based on our experience of working with multiple global enterprises and partners around the world, this checklist will help you monitor whether your teams are properly considering UX when executing any cloud app deployment.

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The questions to ask your team

First of all, it's vital to create personas for typical people and job roles that will use the app. This means interviewing a sample of users and investigating their characteristics as people, which will give you an understanding of how they might interact with the different interfaces or features.

Are you creating user personas?

Typical questions that will help to build useful personas include:

- Are your target users board executives, middle management, or junior staff?
- What's their level of digital exposure outside of work?
- What are the most important tasks in their job role?
- What are the most painful or time consuming tasks in their job role?
- What's already simple to achieve in their job?

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It's good to learn from any existing experiences of apps. So your teams should also be asking users about the applications that they currently use – even if these are outside the company approved list.

Remember also that people bring knowledge of cloud apps from other organisations. These experiences are also valuable, and your teams should be asking about those too.

Are you learning from experience?

Important questions to ask:

- Are they used to using any SaaS products at the moment that might set a standard of usability that they have come to expect?
- Are they using any other similar in-house software at the moment?
- Are they juggling multiple tools to do a job that could be done entirely within the app they use?

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From the earliest stage, it's important to make sure that everyone involved is mindful that they need to keep balancing user needs with wider business objectives. Your team should constantly question itself on this point.

For example, if the business is on a mission to boost productivity, this will tell you that the app design needs to help users benefit from features like shortcuts, favourites lists, automated rules/alerts and team collaboration.

This is an important step in the process, because these features may not have appeared on users' own wish lists.

Are you considering wider business objectives as well as user needs?

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It will benefit your teams if they involve users in the concept development early, even if it's in a small way. This can be a highly effective way to boost engagement and can be achieved via a number of creative ways – for example, by inviting people to help develop user scenarios that match their personas, or even holding a competition to name the app.

Once past the concept stage and into early development, it's also useful to run internal beta programmes with users. This is a good time to test functionality, or maybe split-test two interfaces. This will give you a good idea of potential issues with scalability and keeps the feedback loop open so you can weed out errors early. It's also a good idea to offer users incentives for finding bugs.

Are you sharing concepts and development widely enough at an early stage?

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Any app will get a major boost in profile if it has the support of an executive sponsor. However, this will only work if that sponsor is fully aware of their responsibility in getting the app adopted.

Your team needs to make sure this is the case by keeping their sponsor engaged and fully informed. Often, this is as simple as providing clear messaging that will enable the sponsor to communicate the value proposition of the application to the business.

Have you got an executive sponsor?

Ideally, your team also needs to cultivate champions from outside IT to help in the rollout and encourage proper usage across departments. This 'roots upward' approach is more likely to deliver success than a trickle down, authoritative approach. Non-IT champions that have experience with the app are likely to be much more relatable for the average user and have a key role to play.

Are you developing champions outside IT?

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It may sound simple, but have your teams considered the sign-in process as part of the apps' development? Would it be possible to make single sign-on available? You need the application to be secure, but at the same time you don't want password issues to become a barrier to adoption.

For customer facing staff, being able to log-in to applications quickly, or remotely, could be key to providing a positive customer experience.

Have you considered the sign-on process?

When it comes to training, users need structure and consistency. They should also be able to self-serve and move at their own pace with learning and training materials.

Training will be more successful if your team focuses on the specific user scenarios defined in the planning process, especially for more complex applications. This is likely to have a higher success rate and more positive user reaction than a generic training session which covers all basic elements of functionality.

Your team should also consider rewarding the most active users with tips and advanced training. This will empower those users to assist their teams, improve overall user experience and reduce the need for central IT support.

What are you doing about training?

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Once the application has been rolled out, it's crucial that your teams measure the adoption rate and make sure that there is an open feedback loop in place for continual improvements. If there are certain departments or regions that are not adopting the application, it's also important to collect their feedback and implement focussed training and troubleshooting sessions to try and overcome any challenges or issues they have with the application.

Are you gauging adoption and collecting feedback?

Of course, in the era of social media and online help forums, your teams have the opportunity to do much more than simply survey your users and collect feedback. Ideally, they will also create a discussion community where users can help each other and interact with support teams and FAQs.

This gives users an easy way to self-serve when they're having issues, which in itself will remove barriers to adoption and improve user experience. More importantly, it gives your teams another source of feedback and data that can be mined to identify areas that need to improve.

Are you encouraging a conversation?

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Next steps

User experience is determined by a whole host of factors. This guide shows many ways in which your teams can cater for it within the bounds of what they can control.

Once that's done, you also need to make sure that their hard work isn't let down by the infrastructure and network that the apps run on. This means ensuring that what they've created is supported with availability, reliability and security, no matter what the scale of usage or location of sites.

If you still have application challenges where you know it is network or infrastructure related, or are unclear about the root causes, it's important that you also have the tools to uncover the reason and optimise accordingly.

Tata Communications has created the IZO Cloud Enablement Platform to help enterprises resolve these problems and adopt clouds faster, more reliably and more securely. Find out more about the platform [here](#).

At a glance

Know your audience

Teams should have a full, rounded understanding of who will be using the app.

Involve your audience

Teams need to bring the users in at every opportunity during the planning, development and rollout process.

Listen to your audience

On an ongoing basis. Even an app that gets good initial take up will wane over time without regular updates. It's crucial to keep dialogue going via whatever means possible.

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