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Just like web sites and desktop applications, mobile applications benefit greatly from being evaluated via usability testing with target users. Mobile usability testing allows you to learn about your users' expectations and prior experience with mobile interfaces and illustrates how they will use your application in real-time. Further, mobile testing enables development and product teams to identify and prioritize pain points that must be addressed prior to launch or future releases.

Mobile application testing does not have to feel like a scary leap into unfamiliar territory. Most of the same practices utilized in desktop, web site or application usability testing can be applied to mobile testing. The main components needed include:

- **A skilled usability researcher** to moderate the usability test session and analyze the recorded participant feedback and interactions
- **A set of participants** to use the mobile application and provide feedback
- **A mobile device** that is similar to what your target demographic uses
- **A camera** to record participant commentary and interactions on the mobile device

In terms of moderating the sessions, we like to use a combination of user-driven exploration and focused task completion. In **user-driven exploration** the participants try out the application to complete tasks that matter the most to them, which provides insight into their needs and expectations. **Focused task** completion, on the other hand, directs participants to work within pre-defined scenarios or tasks that I have identified as high-priority areas from client and stakeholder meetings.

The findings from mobile application testing are always fascinating. Mobile usability testing offers insights that will help prepare for the real-world use of your application. For example, you

might learn that users:

- Use the mobile application most frequently in lighting conditions that are less than ideal, making it difficult for them to read text without adequate contrast between foreground and background.
- Are not familiar with a specific gesture your application relies to complete critical tasks.
- Do not need the same functionality as they do on the web or desktop version of your application.

With this evidence in hand, your team will be prepared to improve your product and understand your users' needs better than before.