

MOBILE APP
DEVELOPER'S GUIDE blog.kii.com

Choosing the Best Mobile Backend

A brief guide to selecting a trustworthy
Mobile Backend as a Service (MBaaS).



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YOU'RE A MOBILE APP DEVELOPER - SERVER AND DATABASE SKILLS DON'T NEED TO BE ON YOUR RESUME

You wouldn't hire server engineers and database admins for user experience and graphic design. So why try to do their jobs? Highly configurable mobile backends provide the functionality you need to quickly deploy scalable apps on multiple platforms.

With the right Mobile Backend as a Service (MBaaS), focus your time, energy, and resources on your app's user experience - what users actually care about. Services like **Kii Cloud** help you get to market, attract users and iterate faster.

Here's how:

- **No learning curve.** Having what it takes to build a killer app interface doesn't magically grant you backend prowess. With MBaaS, there's no need to write server code, set up databases, provision servers and load balancers, handle traffic and scaling, or learn new ropes overnight.
- **Less time to market.** Even with virtualized servers, it takes a lot of time to get even a basic backend up and running. You have to create APIs by writing server code to define logic and handle methods, test it in staging and production environments, then constantly update and iterate your code. MBaaS saves you weeks, even months, of dev time.
- **Out-of-the-box functionality.** Full-stack mobile backends have all the core features you need, from user management and object storage to social integration, push notifications, geolocation and analytics.
- **Optimal uptime.** You often have one chance to get it right with users, and they'll quickly abandon slow apps or those that don't function as promised. A reliable MBaaS ensures availability and fast performance for apps that are nimbly coded.
- **Built-in scalability.** Whether your app is an instant hit or gains traction over time, good MBaaS services will be able to handle the traffic. Flexible pricing allows you to scale your costs based on actual app usage.

10 QUESTIONS

EVERY MOBILE DEVELOPER NEEDS TO ASK

Most mobile backends provide the core building blocks of a functional app, including ways to:

- Sign up and authenticate users from any device
- Create, manage and sync application data and files
- Track user and application behaviors

This is all perfectly fine if you're developing an app **for fun**. Want to grow a solid user base and return on investment? You'll need more. To discover what each mobile backend really has to offer, ask yourself the following questions when comparing providers:

1 Does it have a reputation for being stable and reliable?

Visit forums to see what other developers have to say and read case studies. Also look at the company's history to get the big picture. For example, Kii recently made its backend technology available to developers, but for years we've been the leading backend for NTT Docomo, Japan's largest mobile carrier.

2 How much does it cost?

Free accounts that provide enough bandwidth and storage to get started give you the opportunity to test-drive your options.

3 Which features are included?

Think about your mobile app's requirements. Beyond the basics, developers often want:

- **Server Code** as a first class citizen
- **Social integration** for easy user onboarding, authentication and sign-ins
- **Push notifications** to message users even if they're not using your app
- **Geolocation** to enable location-based services

4 What are my development options?

Your app may be on a single platform now, but what happens when users ask for others? Look at which SDKs the provider has available: Android, iOS, JavaScript (HTML5), Unity? Is there a REST API? Does it have a server extension to support custom server code, enabling you to build your own custom APIs as needed?

5 Can I collaborate?

If you're not working alone, all your teammates will need to be able to log in to manage your projects.

6 Can I monetize my app?

In-app advertising is one of the most popular paths to return on investment, especially for free apps. Look for a powerful combination of integrated ad networks with mediation so you can start making money from day one. Also be aware that you might want to broker your own deals someday, so keep an eye out for direct ad capabilities. Ideally, you should be able to switch between these options to best serve your global users.

7 Are analytics included?

Your app's first UI/UX is based on instinct, but it takes more than a hunch to perfect them. To introduce new features that resonate with users and build out your idea, you need real business intelligence. Many mobile analytics solutions give you basic vanity metrics about downloads, average session length and users. These should be free.

Also consider where the data you want to analyze is stored. When your mobile backend provides the analytics, you can slice and dice any data points stored on its cloud. If you can define custom metrics, all the better. Analyze behavior specific to your app without having to re-release to the app stores every time you want to track a new metric.

8 What resources are available?

Quality guides, documentation, sample apps, and tutorials are a great way to become familiar with features. They're particularly important when you're moving from one backend provider to another. Does the provider have migration guides for iOS and Android? Scripts to move primary data? Public projects on Github? Real people behind the scenes to ensure things go smoothly?

9 How many users can I reach?

Explosive growth in smartphone and tablet usage is happening in countries throughout the world. That's millions of users you may not reach if you only distribute your app in one country. The challenge is in understanding the nuances of each region, including usage trends, popular app stores, and monetization requirements. Kii provides distribution services as well as cloud technology to help developers reach new markets faster.

10 Is the provider financially stable?

The big question on a lot of developers' minds is whether MBaaS providers will be around next month. Small venture-backed startups can disappear overnight. A recent slew of acquisitions by larger companies has also opened up questions as to who owns your data if a company is sold. Where does Kii fit into this picture? We're profitable, have been for years and not going anywhere.

MOBILE BACKEND

FEATURES CHECKLIST

Getting Started

- iOS SDK
- Android SDK
- JavaScript SDK
- Unity SDK
- Windows 8 SDK
- REST API
- Server-Side Code

Social Integration

- Facebook
- Twitter
- (Regional Specific)
- Other _____

User Management

- Phone verification (SMS)
- Email verification
 - Customizable template
- Manages log-ins across devices
- ACLs
- JSON
- Anonymous user / guest support

Data Management

- Data browser
- Object storage and retrieval
- File storage and retrieval
- Access control
- Data syncing

Push Notifications

Geolocation

Analytics

- Free basic analytics
- In-app analytics
- Supports custom metrics

Monetization

- Ad mediation
- Supports direct ads
- Ability to switch configurations

Distribution

- Regional cloud hosting
- App store submissions
- QA and testing
- Translation and localization
- Regional ad networks
- Carrier and manufacturer marketplace partners
- OEM partnerships (preloading)
- Custom distribution packages

Developer Resources

- Developer Dashboard
 - Multiple Log-Ins/ Collaboration
- Sample code and snippets
- Tutorials
- Blog
- Community

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Kii Cloud is a carrier-grade and tested, full-featured Mobile Backend-as-a-Service (MBaaS) for iOS, Android, HTML5 and Unity mobile applications. It provides user and data management—including social integration and custom object creation—push notifications, geolocation, collaboration features, custom in-app analytics, and integrated ads for monetization. Flexible, affordable pricing plans, including custom packages, are available to scale with you. It's free to get started.

**Need a full-stack mobile backend to power your app?
Moving from another backend you're not 100% sure about?**

Visit us at www.kii.com