

Shopify Apps vs Custom Development: Decision Matrix

Keep, defer, or rebuild, one app at a time. Built by Kaspian Fuad, Shopify CRO consultant and Liquid developer.

The one question

Does it work when no shopper is on the site?

Stores data, sends messages, bills, syncs = KEEP.

Does it only paint UI in the browser?

Size chart, timer, badges, picker = REBUILD.

Always keep (backend apps)

Reviews: Judge.me, Loox, Okendo

Collection, moderation, request emails live off-site.

Email/SMS: Klaviyo, Postscript

Flows, segments, deliverability.

Subscriptions: Recharge, Skio

Billing, dunning, customer portal.

Helpdesk / returns / loyalty

Gorgias, Loop, Smile.io own a ledger or queue.

Rebuild as native Liquid

Size chart

Metaobject + modal. ~5 hrs.

Countdown timer

One section with schema. ~2-3 hrs.

Recently viewed

40 lines Liquid + localStorage. ~2-4 hrs.

Trust badges / shipping bar

Section settings, Oms, no fee.

Bundle picker (UI only)

Theme section + Shopify Bundles or a Function.

Measured blocking time

Median app: 90ms

191 apps measured across 18 categories.

Page builders: 220ms median

Shogun 320, PageFly 280, GemPages 240.

Rebuy 140 / Vitals 240 / Yotpo 250

Only 13 of 191 apps exceed 180ms.

Native Liquid section: 0ms

Rendered on Shopify's server.

Google's budget

Third-party code >= 250ms = flagged

Lighthouse third-party summary audit.

Five-app stack ~ 860ms

Three median apps already break the budget.

App Store cap: 10 points PER app

Nothing measures the total. You do.

Cost both ways

Senior freelancer: \$48-74/hr

My rate: \$50. Agency: \$100-250 blended.

Typical rebuild: \$500-2,000 once

vs \$10-50/mo forever.

Break-even on fees: 12-40 months

Then add the speed cost. That decides it.

Defer instead of rebuild: ~2 hrs

Load a backend app's script after interaction.

Rebuild triggers

UI-only app over 180ms

Top of the list.

App breaks the page

£0.00 flash, duplicate prices, layout shift.

No app fits the product

Configurators, made-to-measure, custom kits.

Leftover code after uninstall

Shopify: uninstall does not remove theme code.

Proof it pays

Bundle app removed: RPV +38%

127KB JS, +180ms INP, 12-day test.

Enea Studio: 5 apps = 60% of JS

1,526 KiB unused. Deferred, not removed.

Everly: 38 hardcoded prices

Liquid money filters, CLS 0.11 to 0.00.

Verify in 5 minutes

PageSpeed Insights, field INP + LCP

Ignore the lab score.

App Bloat Detector re-scan

Script gone from the waterfall, not just uninstalled.

14 days flat traffic

ATC rate + revenue per session.

Red flags in a quote

Countdown timer quoted over \$500

Get a second quote.

'Rebuild your reviews app'

You inherit a moderation queue forever.

Ships straight to live theme

Every removal goes preview first.