

ASO in 2026

Navigating the 2025 Store Revolutions &
Preparing for 2026 Growth



Executive **summary**

2025 changed ASO, further evolving from a "static keyword game" to a "dynamic user experience" ecosystem.

Highlights



Intent-based organic fragmentation via CPPs.



Technical health (Vitals) now directly controls visibility.



The "Web-to-App" bridge is officially open.

CPPS: From One Store Page to an **Intent-Driven ASO System**



What changed in 2025?

CPPs are no longer “paid only” assets

- 1 Organic keyword → CPP association (NEW) Apple now allows organic search terms to route users to specific Custom Product Pages, not only ads.
- 2 Maximum CPPs increased to up to 70 per app
- 3 CPP strategy now directly impacts organic CVR and keyword performance.
- 4 Better intent match → higher conversion → stronger keyword momentum. CPPs indirectly influence ranking sustainability, not just conversion.

CPPS: From One Store Page to an **Intent-Driven ASO System**



What can you do in 2026?

- 1 Personalize listings by user intent, connect each CPP to what users are actively searching for.
- 2 Show users what matters to them, highlight the features and benefits they are looking for, immediately.
- 3 Segment your store to understand behavior, use CPPs to learn how different user intents convert, this FINALLY will help us understand CVR per keywords
- 4 Optimize without a full revamp, no need to redesign the entire listing, focus on targeted, intent-driven CPPs.
- 5 2026 is about relevance, not redesign.

[Read more here](#)

SEO & ASO work together



Web-to-App Acquisition (SEO)

Your App Store listing is now a website. Google is crawling your long descriptions and "In-App Events" like never before.

"App Packs" in web search now pull your first 3 screenshots, as well as pricing and star ratings.

What can you do in 2026?

- Readability Audit: Ensure the first 3 screenshots have large, high-contrast captions readable at thumbnail size on a Google search page.
- Keyword-Rich Descriptions: Rewrite the Long Description (previously ignored by Apple's algorithm) to target SEO keywords for web discovery.
- Event Strategy: Launch monthly "In-App Events" to rank for trending web searches (e.g., "Summer Sale," "New Character Release").

Why is it important?

SEO is now a direct driver of ASO. The Long Description now has significantly more weight for web searchers. Because Google now pulls screenshots into the web SERP, your first three screenshots must be readable at a smaller, thumbnail size to capture web traffic. In-App Events: Events are now indexable, meaning a specific event (e.g., "Black Friday Sale") can rank on Google independently, creating a new acquisition funnel.

[Read more here](#)

Gaming beyond the App



Play Games Sidekick (beta)

Google is rewarding apps that keep users inside the ecosystem. Sidekick isn't just a tool; it's a "VIP pass" to store featuring.

It's an overlay feature for Android games designed to boost player retention and monetization by providing relevant content, offers, and utilities without requiring users to leave the game environment.

What can you do in 2026?

- Integration: Work with dev teams to implement Sidekick tools (achievements/streaks).
- Level Up Program: Apply for the "Level Up" program once Sidekick is integrated to unlock "Games" home screen placement.
- Retention Loop: Align in-game tips and "Game Tips" (upcoming feature, or limited to Early Access Partners) with common user drop-off points.

Why is it important?

It serves as a key qualifier for the Google Play Level Up program, granting access to editorial featuring, Play Points promotions, and placement on the "Games" home screen. It also increases session times and retention by keeping players inside the game for tips (rather than leaving for the web). Google's algorithms heavily prioritize these engagement metrics when ranking titles. Sidekick displays your game's updates and offers on the Play Store's personalized "You" tab, creating a new surface to win back lapsed users and drive organic traffic.

[Read more here](#)

Performance is a **Ranking Factor**



Raising the Bar on Battery Performance (New Vitals)

Starting March 1, 2026, a "bad" app is an "invisible" app. Google will literally warn users not to download battery-draining apps.

Google is introducing a new core vital metric, "excessive partial wake locks," to Android vitals to help developers reduce app battery drain.

What can you do in 2026?

- Vitals Audit: Check "Excessive Partial Wake Locks" in Play Console immediately.
- Technical Sprint: If sessions exceed the 5% "bad behavior" threshold, prioritize a fix before the March 2026 deadline.
- Monitoring: Set up automated alerts for Core Vitals to prevent sudden visibility drops.

Why is it important?

A "battery drain" warning label may appear on your store listing, actively deterring installs (this is a conversion killer). Also, your app can be removed from high-traffic discovery surfaces like "Recommended for You." And, last but not least, as a Core Vital, poor scores will directly lower your position in search results.

[Read more here](#)

The store gets "YouTube-ified"



YouTube Videos Feature in Play Console

Fresh video content are the new organic traffic drivers

Google Play introduces "Youtube Videos" feature in Play Console, a new section that allows developers to link an entire YouTube channel or playlist directly to their Play Store listing. These videos can appear on your app's page and in other high-visibility areas across Google Play, giving users a more engaging preview of your app or game.

What can you do in 2026?

- Playlist Integration: Link a dedicated YouTube playlist to the Play Console showcasing app features, tutorials, trailers, or updates
- The "21-Day Rule": Upload new video content every 3 weeks to trigger Google's "freshness" algorithm boost.
- Localization: Create region-specific video playlists to increase conversion in different markets.

Why is it important?

Qualifying videos can appear in high-traffic areas like the "Apps" and "Games" tabs, driving traffic from outside your store listing. The algorithm prioritizes recent content incentivizing frequent updates over static trailers. This feature allows region-specific playlists, ensuring users see localized content that drives higher conversion rates. You'll be able to see dedicated metrics (views, clicks, installs) to prove exactly how much value your video strategy contributes to growth.

[Read more here](#)

Personal “You” tab for Google play users



Google introduced a personalized “You” tab in Google Play

The tab centralizes: Active subscriptions, Play Points rewards, Personalized app recommendations, Usage and engagement signals

Subscriptions are now more visible, easier to manage, and part of the daily Play experience.

Google Play is shifting from discovery only to ongoing user relationship management.

What can you do in 2026?

- Align store messaging with user goals, support retention, ree-engagement, and subscription win-backs.
- Plan content drops and updates that map to Play’s personalized merchandising.
- Stay active, apps with seasonal updates, live events, or evolving content are more likely to surface than static apps.

Why is it important?

Google Play is prioritizing long-term engagement, not just installs.

Visibility increasingly depends on how often and how meaningfully users interact with your app after install

[Read more here](#)

Engage Sdk, Your App, Everywhere



Google Play introduced Engage SDK, a lightweight SDK that lets apps surface personalized in app content across key Google surfaces, and drive users back into the exact relevant screen.

Where your content can appear:

You tab and Apps Home in the Play Store, Collections on Android home screens, Entertainment Space on Android tablets, Google TV

What can you do in 2026?

- Plan content like a feed, not a static store listing, define what you want to surface per user intent, and keep it fresh.
- Build around the 3 Engage formats, Continue journeys, Recommendation clusters, Featured cluster, each tied to a clear re engagement goal.
- Operationalize refresh cadence, treat content updates and deep links as a growth channel, not just product work.

Why is it important?

Reuses existing home screen content, supports deep linking back into the right experience, keeps brand assets as intended

Supports 7 content categories, Watch, Listen, Social, Read, Shop, Food, Travel

[Read more here](#)

Hero content carousel



Google Play introduced the Hero Content Carousel.

Apps can upload up to 5 square images (1440 × 1440 px) in Play Console.

These images appear as a carousel at the very top of the store listing (currently on mobile).

The carousel is more visually dominant than traditional screenshots due to placement and motion.

What can you do in 2026?

- Use Hero assets to drive conversion lifts, especially during seasonal moments (Black Friday, holidays, major launches).
- Treat it as a high-impact hook, communicate value fast, before users scroll.
- Rotate creatives for: Promotions, new features, Time-bound offer

Why is it important?

Hero assets push screenshots further down the store listing.

This is a strategic trade-off: Higher visibility at the top, Fewer screenshots immediately visible, Requires testing and CVR validation to confirm incremental impact.

Think of it as a premium visual layer, not a screenshot replacement.

[Read more here](#)

More Important Platform Changes

Google Play: Submitting additional items for app review

Google Play now allows developers to submit certain assets and content independently from the main app release. This means updates like in-app content, events, or fixes can be reviewed without waiting for a full app update, enabling faster iterations and more flexible release cycles.

Apple: Expanded search inventory coming in 2026

Apple announced the expansion of search result inventory starting in early 2026. Advertisers will automatically benefit from additional placements without changing existing campaign setups, increasing overall visibility further down the search results.

Apple & Google: AI-driven search transformation

Both platforms are increasingly leveraging AI and Natural Language Processing to reshape search behavior.

Google introduced AI-organized results and intent-based categories.

Traditional keyword matching is being replaced by intent and context understanding.

Top 3 Threats to Watch in 2026



The "Warning Label" Era

Bad technical vitals
(battery/crashes) will kill
Conversion Rates via store
warnings.



AI Review Summaries

Apple/Google's AI will
summarize your worst reviews
at the top of the page; "Review
Management" is now "Product
Management."



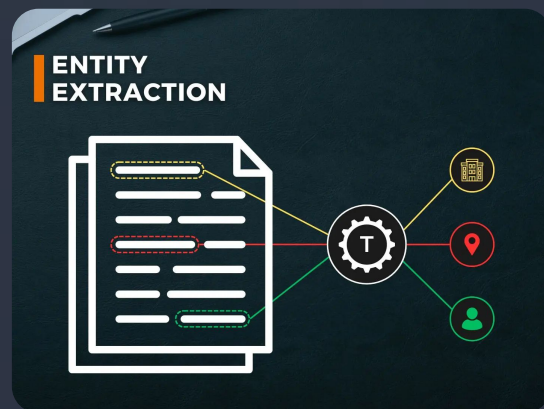
Algorithmic Volatility

Seasonal "In-App Events"
might cause more ranking
fluctuation than keyword
updates.

The 2026 ASO Roadmap

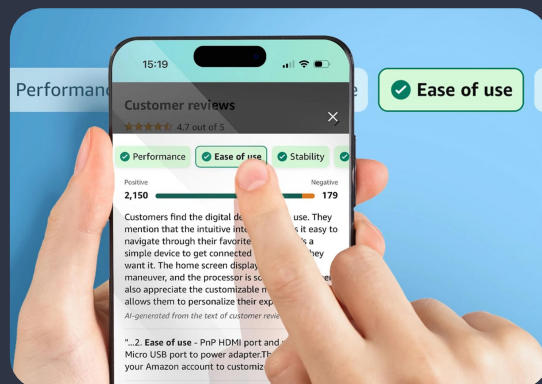
Keyword Strategy

Moving from "Exact Match"
to "AI-Extracted Entities"
(Semantic Search)



Creative Strategy

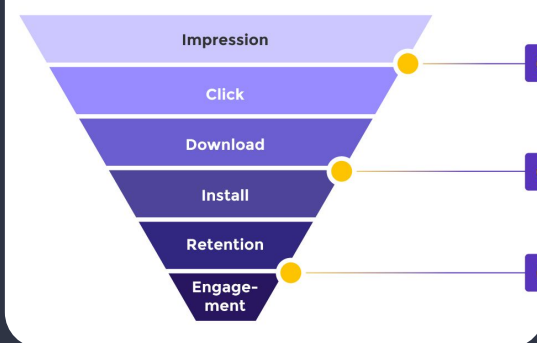
Not just impactful graphics
anymore, goal is to incorporate
"User Sentiment Reflection"
(aligning visuals with AI-generated
review summaries).



The Big Shift

ASO is moving "Full-Funnel"
impacting retention more
than ever, not just installs.

The mobile app marketing funnel



Action Plan & Next Steps

Your Q1 2026 Checklist

Type	Task	Target Store
Urgent Fix	UrgFix "Partial Wake Locks" (Battery Vitals)	
Growth	Map Keyword Groups to 3-5 CPPs	
Visibility	Link YouTube Playlists & Update every 21 days	
SEO	Optimize Long Description for Web Crawlers	

How we can help

- ✓ **Audit:** A 2026 "Health & Intent" comprehensive ASO Audit for your app.
- ✓ **Technical:** Monitoring of Android Vitals to prevent "Visibility Bans."
- ✓ **Creatives:** CPP-specific screenshot production.
- ✓ **ASO best practices:** Making sure your store listing is up to date and optimized for organic search.

Let's Talk Growth