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12 questions to uncover overlooked streaming app requirements.

A practical guide to identifying smart TV and set-top box requirements before they cause certification problems.



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You probably have a pretty clear idea of what you want your next streaming app to do.

You've thought about the content viewers will watch and how they'll find it. But the companies that make the smart TVs and set-top boxes your app runs on have requirements of their own. Those requirements can affect how viewers navigate your app, how it performs on older devices, and even what happens when someone changes a setting on their TV.

Some of these requirements are easy to accommodate when you know about them early. Discovering them during certification can be more complicated, particularly if your team needs to revisit decisions made during the app's initial design. By asking the right questions before development begins, you can uncover requirements that might otherwise surface late in the project and give your team time to account for them. That can mean less rework, fewer surprises during certification, and a clearer path to launch.

The following twelve questions will help you start those conversations with your product and engineering teams.



Section 01.

The viewing experience

How platform requirements can affect the way viewers interact with your app.



QUESTION 01

What happens when someone changes their device's language or subtitle settings?

Some smart TV and set-top box platforms require apps to recognize language and subtitle preferences configured at the device level. A viewer might change their preferred subtitle language in their TV's settings, then return to your app expecting that preference to carry over. Depending on the platform, your app may also need to respond when someone changes a setting while a video is already playing. If your team designs the viewing experience around settings managed exclusively within the app, accommodating those device-level preferences later could require additional development work.

What to check

Confirm which device-level language and subtitle preferences your app needs to recognize, including how it should respond when those settings change during playback keeping in mind that requirements may vary across different platforms, smart TVs, and set-top boxes.



QUESTION 02

Have you accounted for your platform's accessibility requirements?

Platform accessibility requirements can affect how viewers navigate and interact with your app. Screen reader support is one example. Your app needs to communicate what a viewer has selected, where they are within a collection of titles, and which actions are available. Note that some of these actions may be executed through voice commands on the remote control, which is another accessibility feature platforms often require. Consider what happens when someone browses a content library or tries to control playback without relying on visual cues. If accessibility requirements aren't accounted for when your team designs the interface, meeting them later could mean revisiting how navigation and interactive elements are implemented.

What to check

Review the accessibility requirements for each target platform and confirm that key app journeys and available actions are fully compatible with screen readers, voice guides, and remote control voice commands where required.



QUESTION 03

What should happen when someone presses the Back, Home or Exit button on their remote?

Back and exit navigation rules vary widely across TV platforms, set-top boxes, and even different OS versions of the same system. Some targets require an exit confirmation dialog asking the user if they wish to quit, while others prohibit exit dialogs entirely and expect the app to transition straight to a background or inactive state. Additionally, how the app responds to these keys often changes depending on whether content is actively playing. Factoring in these OS- and platform-specific requirements early prevents major navigation reworks during certification.

What to check

Map out the expected remote-control behaviour for each target platform, including what happens when viewers press Back or Exit during playback.



QUESTION 04

What happens when a viewer opens your content from outside your app?

Some streaming platforms allow viewers to select a movie or show directly from the device's home screen, opening the requested content within your app. This functionality is known as deep linking, and it can introduce requirements that aren't obvious when designing the app's main navigation. Development teams should ask, "What happens if the viewer needs to sign in or select a profile before they can watch?" Your app may need to preserve the requested destination throughout that process, including when it's already running and the viewer is watching something else.

What to check

Check which deep-linking scenarios each target platform supports. Confirm that viewers are routed directly to their intended content (handling any sign-ins or profile selections along the way) no matter the app's current state, whether inactive, backgrounded, or mid-playback.



QUESTION 05

Can viewers complete account-related tasks using their TV remote?

Account-management flows need to work with the input methods available on the devices your app supports. Entering an email address and password using a TV remote can be cumbersome, particularly when someone makes a mistake or needs to recover from an authentication error. Some platforms may also have requirements governing how these flows are presented or how viewers navigate through them. A sign-in experience designed primarily for a phone or computer may need adjustments to work comfortably on a television, such as offering voice commands for text entry where supported to smooth out sign-ins and error recovery.

What to check

Validate the complete sign-in and account-management experience using the input methods available on your target devices, including remote typing, voice commands, and QR code or shortcode activation, ensuring viewers can easily authenticate, handle text entry, and recover from typos and errors.

Section 02.

Performance & playback

How device capabilities and platform expectations can affect playback and app performance.



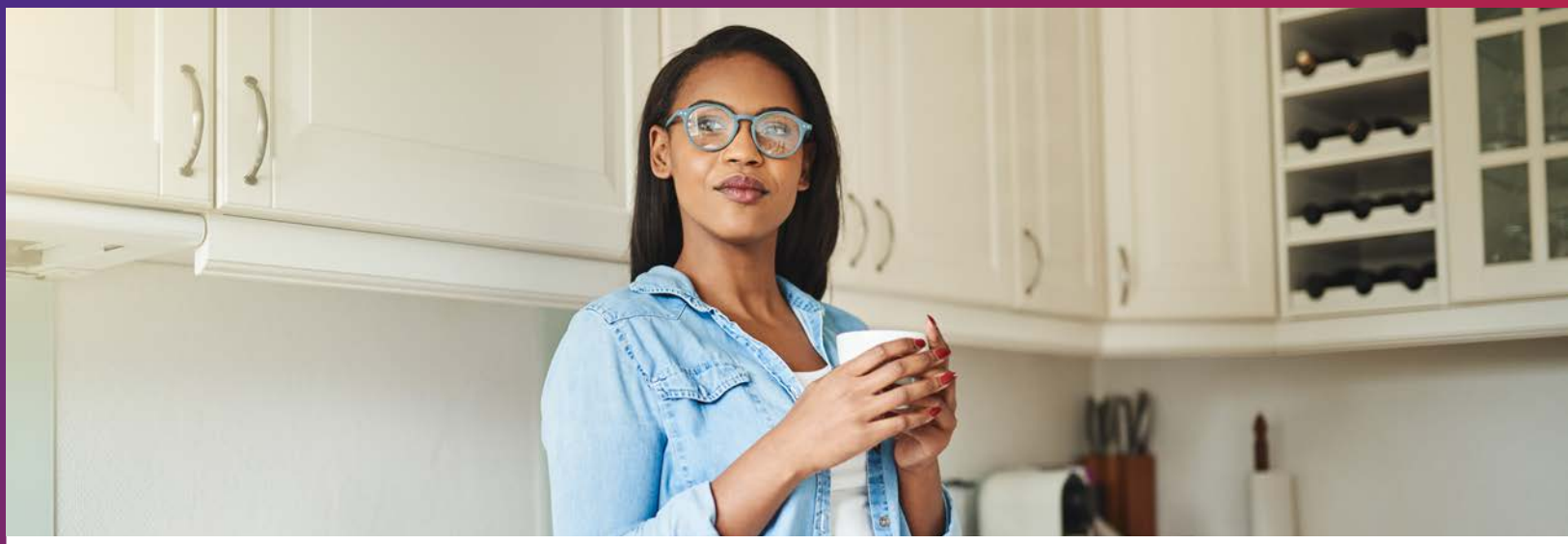
QUESTION 06

Will your app work on the oldest devices you plan to support?

Device manufacturers may impose performance requirements your app must meet across the hardware you're targeting. An app that runs smoothly on the latest smart TV might struggle on a model that's several years old, where available memory and processing power are more limited. Even loading a content library with hundreds of thumbnails can place significant demands on older hardware. If your team builds and tests primarily on newer devices, performance problems may only appear when the app is tested across the full range of supported models.

What to check

Identify the most resource-constrained devices your app needs to support, and validate that your proposed design meets the applicable performance requirements and memory consumption limits on that hardware.



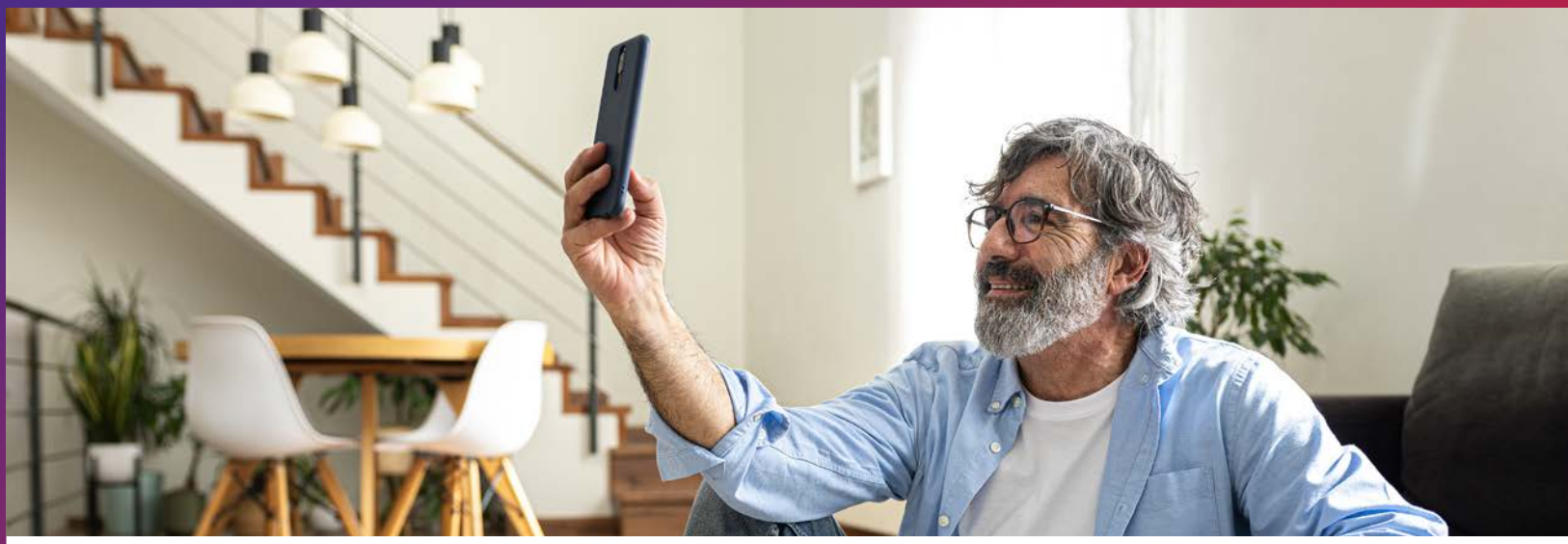
QUESTION 07

What happens when someone leaves your app and comes back?

Smart TV and set-top box operating systems manage how apps behave when viewers switch between applications or leave a device idle. A viewer might pause a movie, open another app, and return twenty minutes later expecting to pick up where they left off. But what happens if the device enters sleep mode or the operating system closes your app while it's in the background? Platform lifecycle requirements may influence whether the app resumes its previous state, reloads, or needs to re-establish the viewer's session.

What to check

Review how each target platform manages an app's lifecycle and confirm the expected behaviour when viewers return after an interruption.



QUESTION 08

Have you confirmed that your playback and DRM setup will work on every target platform?

Different streaming devices support different playback technologies and digital rights management (DRM) configurations. A video player that works well on one platform may require changes to run on another, particularly when older hardware is involved. Your choice of player and DRM solution can influence the app's underlying architecture, so compatibility issues discovered late in development may be expensive to resolve. Before your team commits to a particular approach, it's worth confirming that it can deliver the required viewing experience across the devices you intend to support.

What to check

Validate your proposed video player and DRM configuration on every target platform, including older device models where relevant.



QUESTION 09

What happens when playback fails or runs for hours?

Streaming platforms may have requirements governing how apps handle playback interruptions and extended viewing sessions. A viewer could lose their internet connection halfway through a movie, so the app may need to retry playback or provide a useful way to recover. But there's another scenario that's easy to overlook: what happens when playback simply keeps going? Some platforms include longevity testing in their requirements, where a playback session may need to run continuously for four or even eight hours without the app crashing. Testing these scenarios can uncover problems that might never appear during a typical development session.

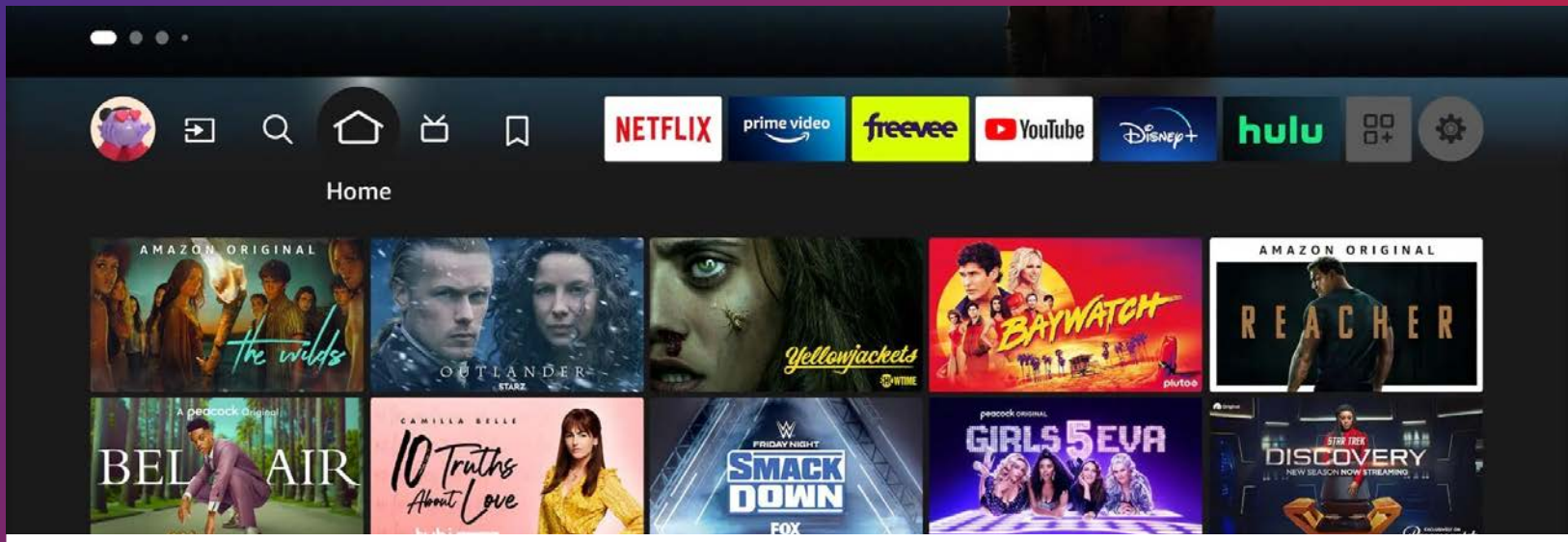
What to check

Test how your app handles interrupted playback and confirm that it can remain stable for the continuous playback period required by each target platform.

Section 03.

Device settings and platform requirements

How device-level preferences and evolving platform requirements can affect your app.



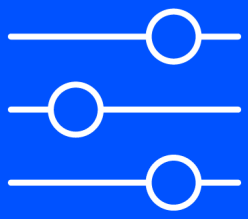
QUESTION 10

How will your team meet platform-specific catalog metadata schema requirements for universal search?

Many smart TV and set-top box platforms mandate or strongly incentivize apps to export their content catalogs so viewers can find titles through system-wide universal search and home screen discovery hubs. However, catalog schema requirements vary significantly across target ecosystems and each enforce unique metadata formats and delivery rules. To maximize your app's discoverability against competing services, your team must identify these specifications early and leverage all available metadata attributes. Failing to align with each platform's specific catalog schema could lead to rejected submissions or poor placement in platform content hubs.

What to check

Review the exact catalog export format, feed delivery mechanism, and metadata schema required by each target platform . Confirm that your backend content management system can generate, map, and continuously update metadata feeds using all platform-supported attributes to optimize search visibility and pass certification.



Preferences

QUESTION 11

Does your app respect the device's advertising preferences?

If your streaming service is ad-supported, your target platforms may have specific requirements for how apps use advertising identifiers and respond to viewer preferences. Some devices allow viewers to limit certain uses of their information for personalized advertising, which can affect how your app interacts with its advertising integrations. These requirements may also influence the data your app passes to third-party advertising services. Understanding them early can help your team account for the relevant platform settings when designing the app's advertising experience.

What to check

Review the advertising-related settings on each target platform and confirm that your app's advertising integrations account for the viewer's preferences.



QUESTION 12

What happens when platform requirements change after your app launches?

Getting your app approved is an important milestone, but the requirements governing it may change over time. Device manufacturers release operating system updates and may revise their certification criteria, sometimes introducing new expectations for existing apps or future submissions. Those changes can affect features that worked perfectly well when your app first launched. If your team doesn't have a process for reviewing platform updates, it may discover new requirements only when preparing a release or investigating a compatibility issue.

What to check

Establish how your team will track changes to platform requirements and determine whether they affect your existing app or upcoming releases.



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