

How to build lasting habits in digital products: let your app be your users' best friend

## The Apps and the habits

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**LEAWARE**

We build the right software.  
We build the software right.

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# HOW TO BUILD LASTING HABITS IN DIGITAL PRODUCTS: LET YOUR APP BE YOUR USERS' BEST FRIEND

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When you are hooked on a product, you become used to it and its functions. You trust it, use it often, connect with it, and you start investing time, money, energy, and information into it. This is because you are using a product that fixes, improves or, helps with something internal or external. What matters to you is that it gets a job done. We all know how successful an application (app) can become when it has people from all around the world using it because it shows that the business adds great value. You may ask yourself whether you can develop an app which gets the users hooked. Leaware makes this possible for you.

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Influencing users to use your app to engage with it, like it, share it, and invest into it will create habits in those who use it often. It will need to have a good interface, user friendly characteristics, and quickly solve your users' problem. Being able to buy something quickly, getting rid of boredom, receiving a specific service, or to quickly create and share information would be examples of resolving problems for your user.

Once users give the app good reviews and like your app, they will recommend the app to others. The app spreading by word of mouth will give you more positive reviews, which will make your service reach others faster. Word of mouth is a free, passive way for potential users to become aware of your app and it is more successful than using a combination of marketing strategies.

To achieve word of mouth marketing, different elements in the app play important roles and to do this you must have a clear goal of what you want to achieve and how you want your users to feel when they are using your product.

There are different kinds of industries and services, and your company might not be one that is looking to have thousands of users. The focus and target audience for your app may be other businesses, industries, organizations, or a specific group of people. However, it is still important to create something that will give a good impression on them because they will know it's easy, catchy, and effective in getting the job done.



We all know how popular apps like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter work. They make users aware of the service frequently during the day. Users invest not only time and energy, but also information and sometimes money too. At times for some people, these apps become addictive. They might not be the best examples of users making good habits, quite the opposite. Apps like these continue to hook the user because when users are inactive for a period of time, the algorithm encourages users re-enter the app via notifications.

This is like fire. Fire can be used for necessary things like cooking food or keeping us warm and alive when in nature, but it can also destroy forests and homes. Therefore, when creating software which users can build habits around, you first must consider the ethics of your business. Consider whether you should focus on creating something good for your users who will invest in your product with their resources. After all, your users keep your business alive, help you to grow, and make you succeed in the market.

It is possible to make your app a habits maker where your users will connect with it often, enjoying, using, and improving it. Our experts at Leaware are specialists in the necessary steps to make this happen. We will also give you a tailor-made solution that includes the basics for being a good habit maker for your specific product. Having a product like this for your business is a very powerful and interesting tool that is capable of making businesses generate good revenue and expand with users that like and use the product frequently.



# THE HOOK MODEL

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In Nir Eyal and Ryan Hoover's *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*, [there is a list of steps that businesses can take to hook their users](#). The steps are: trigger, action, variable reward, and investment. The four steps form a loop so the process will repeat infinitely.

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## The Hook Model

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Source on [Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products](#)

## The trigger

There are two types, external and internal. The external trigger is when the app sends notifications, reminders, or alerts to the user to make them aware of the product. An internal trigger is when users feel the need or desire to solve something personal. Examples are boredom, hunger, social validation, desire, or the need to finish a task. The ways to implement triggers vary depending on your business model, but the goal is always the same: [make the user remember your solution is there](#).

## The action

This is when the user “presses the button”. They are aware of what they need to do or what they will receive. Thanks to a friendly interface and strategically placed elements, the user can easily get the task done in a fast and enjoyable way.

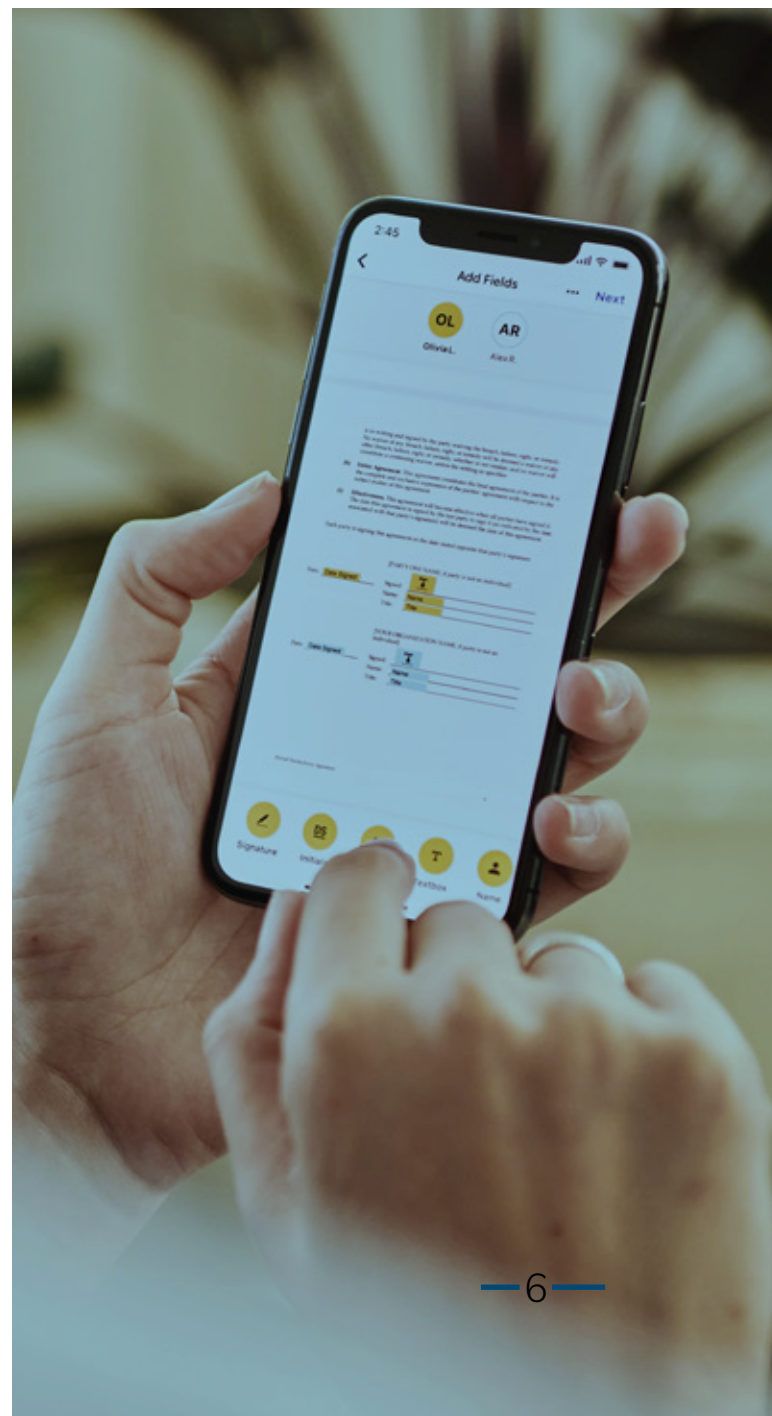
## The variable reward

This is the unexpected finding related to your main purpose or search while using the app. Users are given something new, useful, interesting, and unexpected. These recommendations create the wanting and reward effect and releases dopamine in the brain, which with increased use causes the user to always expect to get or see something.

An example of this is Pinterest, where you can find a specific picture but you can also see other related images. As a further example, when on Amazon’s website, you check the product you want to buy, but many other options are also recommended and this makes you spend more time on the website.

## The investment

This is the last phase where users are investing something that will make them feel more committed and expect something in return from this investment. They can invest personal information, effort, social gains, money, or knowledge, that will make them receive something in return. This also allows the user to return to the app with more confidence and commitment. The app already has something from the user and that makes them receive value in return.



Then the process repeats again and your users start to get hooked. Depending on your business model, you will always have the choice to create something good for your users that can make them improve with themselves by using your services. However, you must use the hook model carefully and diligently because you must have good intentions. At Leaware, we always go for the approach of making both the user and the product owner win and grow simultaneously.

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## In summary: Setting habits for solving needs

The important thing is that our products make our users get hooked on the management of the solution of their needs. The process of solving their needs will be harmonious, fluid, and simple. In summary, using the app is a quick, satisfactory, and profitable experience. Using the app is necessary to solve the users' needs and motivates them to continue using it. To start, we must let the needs of the target audience fit our ideas and objectives, not the other way around.

A habit is what you do unconsciously and doing it makes you feel good or makes you finish a task.

You don't have to think much in order to get it done, you just do it easily. It can make you feel relief because you have completed an activity that you had to do. We all know how good it feels to meet our goals and by getting users into the habit of meeting their goals, we create a cycle that leads them to use an app more frequently.

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## Defining the elements in our hook model

Now that we have outlined how to hook users onto an app, we will look at factors and details that play an important role in the process. We must take all of the below factors into consideration and apply them to make the hook model possible.

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## The Emotion

To begin with, we must think about what motivates our users. We have already spoken about their needs, but the needs are something that already exists and is something that we must identify. The app is focused on motivating our clients. This is where emotions arise and this is what we must focus on. Our app must not only understand the emotions that our audience is looking for, but interact with them so that it can focus and evolve this emotion.



We can adapt these emotions depending on the product. For example:

-If it is an app related to sports, set daily goals.

-If it is an app related to reading, create an interface that can change according to the tone of the book.

-If it is an industry related app, ensure that the app's search manager automatically shows contacts, tools, suppliers, and contractors based on the users' profile.

It is evident that the use of emotions is an important factor. It is necessary to know our target audience, their needs, and how we use that information to identify the emotion that moves our audience. Leaware and the client can then manage how the app can adapt to the emotion that the user experiences when their needs are met. Check on and view statistics over a period of time, set habits at specific times of the day, and set smart reminders to gently push you in the right direction. Add more reminder options, and better journals. In the app, you can create and track habits, goals, and to-do lists, and then access new game features as you complete these tasks.

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## The Action

Now comes the execution. As previously mentioned, the idea of using emotion is complex, but this is a part of investigating the users' needs before developing the app. We can use many tools that help us to centralize this information, such as psychology research, surveys, or interviews. Answers that respondents give will help to develop the triggers.

We must think about activities that could trigger the use of the app like notifications and reminders. After time, when the users are aware of the the value they receive from the app, their use of the app will become habitual.

The creation of healthy habits that resolve the needs of the user and makes the app grow. Why does it grow? *The user uses it more frequently.* Why do they use it more often? *It solves a need quickly and in a simple way.* The app is not something new because people generally like to use products that are simple and familiar. Does this product always solve the need? Yes, because the app is developing and growing based on the users' needs. There are three steps that people use to establish habits which form a cycle:

-Satisfy the needs

-Frequent use

-Development and growth

Having knowledge and applying this cycle is important because it will lead to the app's success via customer satisfaction. Let's explain them point by point.

### 1. Satisfy the needs

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It is important to focus on knowing the needs that the app will solve. It is also important to remember that while the user is using the app, they feel comfortable with the interface and can explore the app independently. You will then be able to establish links with the users' emotions and gradually establish usage habits. To do this successfully, complete an exhaustive analysis of the needs that must be covered and managed in the app so that the design is consistent with the goals and objectives of the user.



## 2. Frequent use

This aspect is a consequence of the success of satisfying the customers' needs. Consider the things that you need to manage at this point to move onto point three. To ensure that users' frequently use the app, first make sure that the user:

- Has good first impressions and results.
- Finds the app simple and can take action.

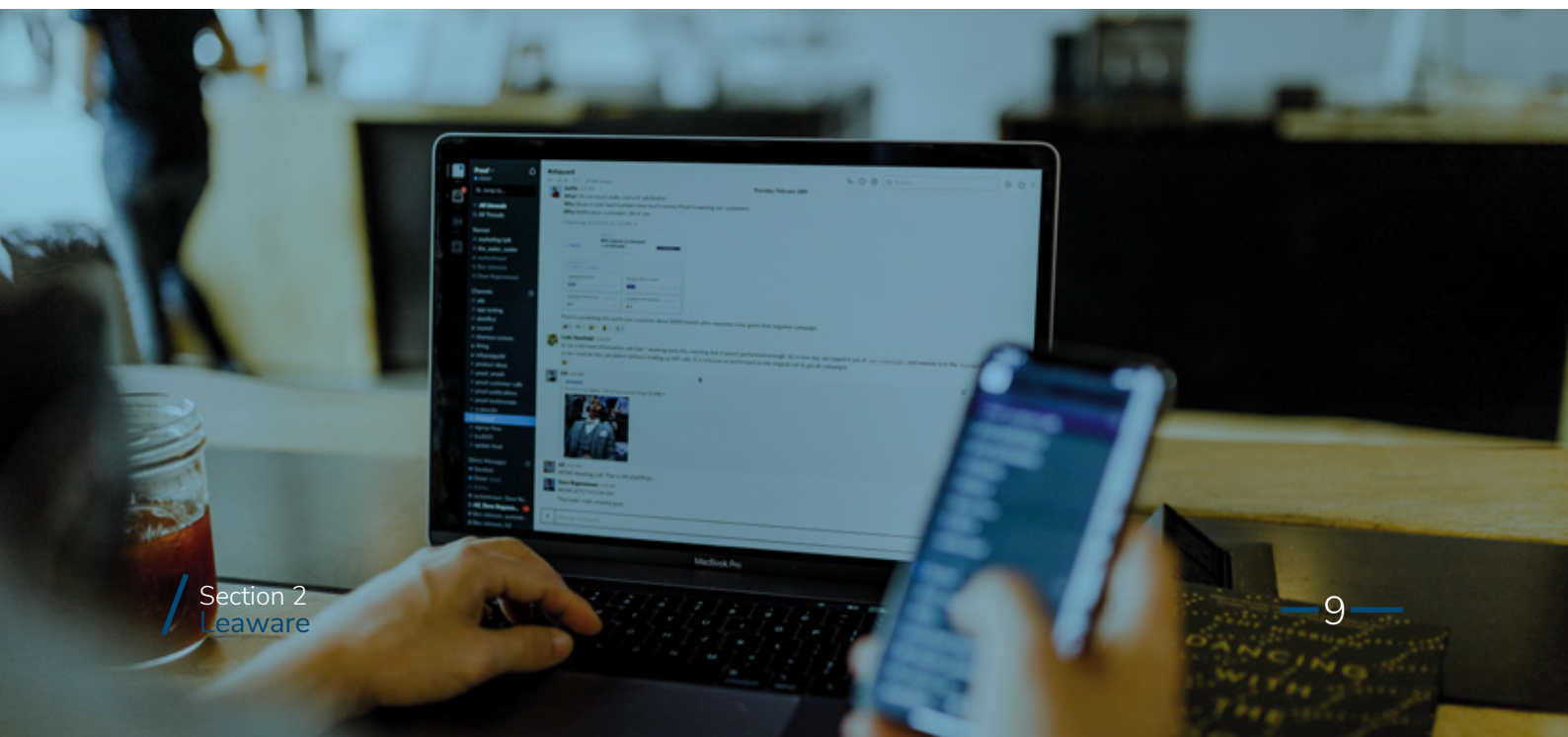
If the user can do both of these things, they are more likely to habitually use the app. These habits will be based on what you want your app to do, how quickly and accurately it does it, and how the interface is structured. What the app does is specific to the business model and goals you have. The app will be a tailor-made product adapted to your business and your users. This is why knowing what the user is expecting from the app, how accurately it gets the job done, how intuitive it is, and how easy is to use it cause habitual use of the app. From this, we manage the solution that solves customers' needs in an easy and intuitive way that delivers results that they consciously and unconsciously expect.

## 3. Development and growth

This point is not the end of the cycle because the aim is never-ending. At this point, we need to ascertain:

- How to ensure that the app grows.
- How to ensure that the app meets users' needs.

The answer to these points are the same: developing habits. This is something that we have covered previously in this article, but it is crucial. Users' habits are the fuel of your app because they drive the growth of it through frequent use. With this, Leaware can do all the steps to develop and update the app so that the characteristics of the app are innovated over time, without forgetting the needs that our public requires to be solved. If the app does not evolve, the user will become bored and stop using it, even though their need is being solved.



## Reward

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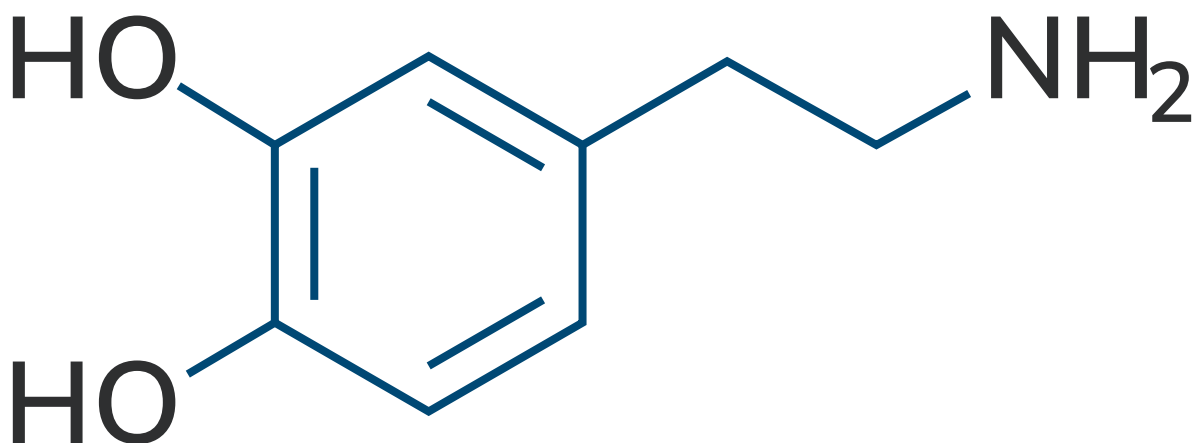
The reward is what encourages the user to continue using the app. It is what tells the user that they are doing a good job and will encourage them to use the app more often to get even better results. What we need from the user is for them to continue using the app frequently. As previously mentioned, using emotions is a very effective way to achieve this.

We are interested in that the user gets hooked on the use of the app and we have already intervened in it, establishing motivations, emotions and actions that leads to the frequent use and the habit is generated, but this is not enough, it is necessary for that habit (that already is immersed in the daily use of the app) to be more and more effective. The app's interface, combined with the actions that the user takes while using the app must allow him to interact with them and see how the use of the app brings something good and unexpected sometimes.

We must establish small actions that make the user feel good. Examples of these actions are:

- Bonuses
- Notifying users of potential opportunities
- Likes
- Followers
- A panel of activities and goals achieved

There may be endless kinds of actions that could be considered as a reward. It is our duty to investigate and according to the emotions of the user and the nature of the app to give those "gifts" that increase the commitment and experience of the user with the app. This works because it releases the addictive chemical dopamine –otherwise known as the “happy hormone” – into the brain. When users use the app, dopamine will be released when the user finds an expectation or a reward.



Sources on [Chemistryworld](#)

## Investment

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Now comes a crucial part of the strategy of creating apps that are designed for users to habitually use them: the investment. We're not talking about financial investment here, but what the public does to feed the habit that helps them meet their need. The investment will change the users' perception, converting actions to frequent habits. Investing generates a sense of belonging that is something like a tacit agreement between the users' work and their actions. The user will be committed to perform those small actions again because it helps with fulfilling the need more effectively. The more involved the user feels, the more they will value the app.

### Examples of investment in apps

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Each investment example varies depending on the nature of the app. Here are some examples that can be taken into account:

- If the app focuses on sharing photos, the investment should be to follow accounts that are similar to the users' interests.
- If the app focuses on sports, the investment would be to upload personal progress.
- If the app focuses on reading books, the investment would be to upload book reviews.

Regardless of the nature of our app, we recommend that you add a reviews section where users' ratings can be clearly seen. It certainly helps with the development of our product, but it is also the platform that the user can have to express their thoughts of the app.

From reviewing the app, the user is taking a little time (investment) to unconsciously reveal the emotions they want to feel when using the app (reward).

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## Real life examples

Below are some popular apps and websites, we will mention some key components they have related to their big success in the market. While using them, you don't think much. You just type some keywords, press some buttons, and they take care of the rest. The colors, interface, and size of the pictures fit the screen strategically, which keeps you coming back to use it.

### Amazon

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- The website has different products with different characteristics. There are sometimes discounts or extra features that increase your expectations of the product.
- You are shown similar products to what you have already searched for, making you wonder if there is something else useful. This tactic influences you to pay more and spend more time on the site.

### Netflix

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- Episodes finish with suspense, making you wonder what will happen. You are able to watch the next episode right away, releasing dopamine in your brain.
- After a show or movie finishes, Netflix recommends something similar, keeping you engaged in using the platform.



## Spotify

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- You can listen to music easily on any compatible device. Songs and playlists are recommended in line with the music you like. Spotify offers songs for different types of moods and you can have access to other people's playlists, making you enjoy and feel rewarded at the same time.

## Airbnb

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- It has a friendly interface which shows you rental properties, experiences, and prices that sometimes you were not expecting to find, giving the effect of a reward.

## YouTube

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- Videos are suggested according to things that you have watched and interacted with in the past. This can be music that is similar to what you like and short videos that doesn't take much of your time. After the video finishes, YouTube suggests further videos, giving you a surprising reward.





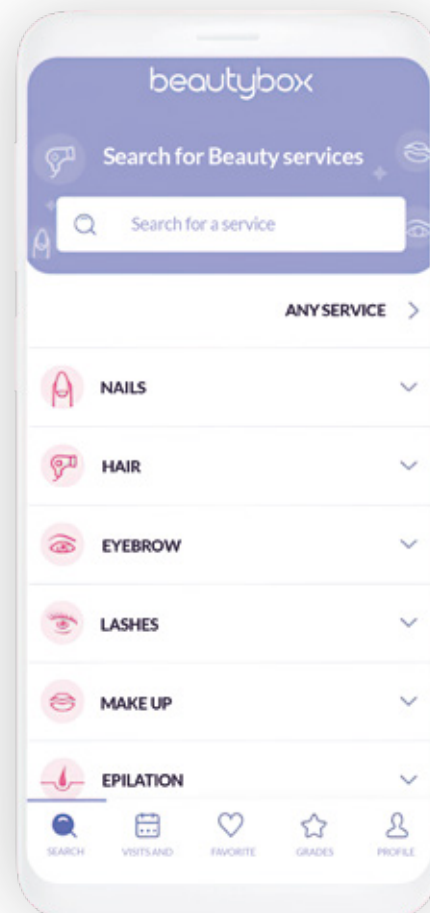
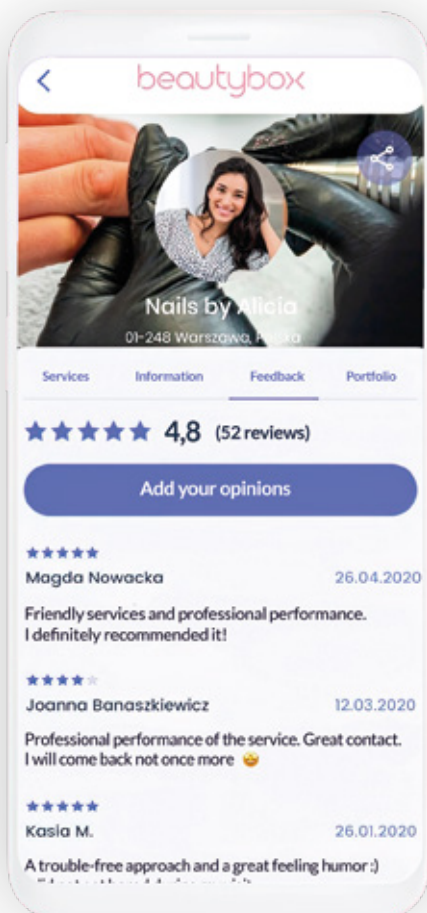
# A LEAWARE SUCCESS STORY: BEAUTYBOX

We have an excellent example of the hook model in one of our most successful apps, Beautybox. Beautybox is an app for Android and iOS that allows users to search and arrange beauty services in a selected location and connect service providers with their clients. It enables providers to manage their reservations, simplifies the way clients search for beauty services in their area, and enables clients to book services.

Beautybox also sends clients reminders before their appointments and has a review section, different services offered. In addition to this, the interface is intuitive.

After the client takes action, the app recommends other potentially interesting services, services that are close-by, and an opportunity to interact with different providers. After users initially invest their data in the app, the process repeats itself, benefitting both the client and the provider.

After a year of its release in 2020, Beautybox has 3000+ active users on the app, and this number keeps increasing as clients and providers continue to join.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Since 2010, LEAWARE has been helping start-ups and already established companies build and develop their digital solutions, making them grow, boost their businesses, and succeed.

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