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The App-to-Web Migration Playbook

How mobile subscription apps move existing app-store subscribers onto web billing — recover trapped margin, free up cash flow, and gain a direct subscriber relationship.

For founders & finance leads · $1M+ ARR mobile subscription apps

THE BRIEF

Unlock trapped subscription margin.

App-store billing takes 15–30% of every subscription dollar before it reaches your P&L. Migrating subscribers to web billing recovers up to 25 points of margin per subscriber and puts pricing, settlement, and the subscriber relationship back in your hands.

THE CAP

App-store fees take 15–30% of every subscription dollar

Apple takes 30% in year one, 15% on renewals. Google Play takes 15% flat. The fee is fixed; the only variable is how much of your business it applies to.

THE UNLOCK

Migration moves your existing book onto web rails

Each migrated subscriber returns 10–25 points of margin for as long as they stay subscribed. The work is done; only the billing relationship changes.

THE CONTROL

Web rails put pricing and the subscriber relationship in your hands

Pricing changes ship same-day, no app reviews. Stripe settles 45 days faster than Apple. Branded checkout, owned billing, and direct subscriber contact replace store-mediated outreach.

What migration recovers, per $1M of subscription revenue

+$220K

Migration year margin per $1M migrated

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+$100K

Each year after, per $1M migrated

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+$120K

One-time cash injection per $1M migrated

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THIS IS FOR YOU IF...

- ✓ Subscription app on iOS or Google Play, $1M+ ARR
- ✓ You can reach most of your subscribers directly
- ✓ Mobile IAP is material to your business
- ✓ You're investing in paid acquisition or want pricing flexibility

01 · THE OPPORTUNITY

App-store billing is a structural tax on growth

Store billing does more than take a fee. It caps margin, slows pricing changes, and keeps the subscriber relationship mediated by the platform.

1 · Margin Impact

Apple takes 30% on year-one subscriptions and 15% on renewals. Google Play takes 15% flat. Those rates apply to every renewal, upgrade, and additional subscriber — there is no scale tier where the store stops applying.

2 · Limited Control

Trials, plan tiers, regional offers, and price tests are still tied to store product configuration and review. Paywall tools can iterate the surface, but the underlying commercial layer remains constrained by store systems.

3 · Lifecycle Constraints

Many post-acquisition plays work better on web rails: cancellation flows, win-backs, upgrades, dunning, payment recovery, and pricing tests. While subscribers stay on IAP, those plays are mediated by the store or require awkward workarounds.

$220K
leak at $1M ARR
(22% blended)
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$1.1M
leak at $5M ARR
(22% blended)
recurr.dev

$3.3M
leak at $15M ARR
(22% blended)
recurr.dev

22% blended baseline reflects a representative iOS + Google Play mix across year-one and renewal subscribers. The audit uses your actual store mix.

The missing category: app-to-web migration

Web-to-app funnels help mobile apps acquire new subscribers through web flows. **App-to-web migration** moves the existing subscriber base onto web billing.

That difference matters: adding web checkout captures future subscribers, but the current IAP book keeps renewing on store rails until it is migrated. App-to-web migration is the controlled process for moving that existing recurring revenue onto rails you own.

WEB-TO-APP

- New acquisition
- Web funnel before app usage
- Future revenue
- Funnel optimization

APP-TO-WEB

- Existing subscribers
- Billing migration after subscription
- Current recurring revenue
- Retention-safe migration

02 · THE VALIDATION

The market is ready

The off-store playbook is no longer theoretical. Netflix and Spotify made direct web subscription flows core to their model, and Duolingo runs web subscription flows alongside its mobile app. Growth-stage apps can now use the same economics with less operational complexity.

Spotify

2016 →

Has routed Premium signup and plan management through **spotify.com** for years, and has publicly challenged App Store economics. Signal: checkout does not need to live inside the app.

Netflix

2018 →

Stopped accepting **App Store billing** for new and returning subscribers. The app remains the product surface; billing and account management live on the web.

Duolingo

Ongoing

Operates **web subscription flows** alongside mobile, using the web as a cleaner acquisition and subscription surface around paid channels.

The common thread

Each company moved the commercial layer — pricing, offers, trials, checkout — closer to systems they control. The app remains the product surface; the web becomes the growth and billing surface.

> **41% of top-tier subscription apps generate revenue on web.**
>
> REVENUECAT STATE OF SUBSCRIPTION APPS 2026 · TIER 5 APPS
>
> recurr.dev

Open window for growth-stage apps

The leaders proved the behavior. Infrastructure now compresses the path for growth-stage apps.

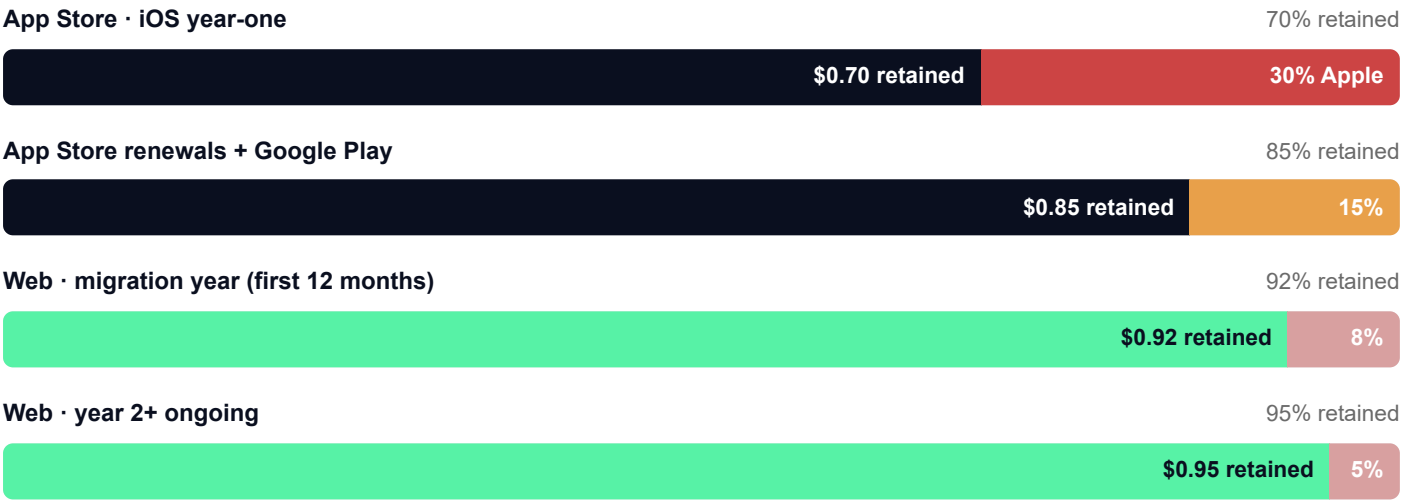
- The store fee schedule is the same whether you're at $1M ARR or $500M
- Margin recovered earlier can fund growth when cash is tight
- Retention discipline — holdouts, waves, cohort sequencing — scales down cleanly

03 · THE ECONOMICS

A structural change to your unit economics

Migration delivers an immediate margin lift, which holds for the lifetime of each subscriber. Recovered margin funds the next cohort — paid acquisition, retention, product velocity — or drops straight to the bottom line.

Per migrated subscriber dollar — store vs web



Migration year: 5% Recurr platform (2% base + 3% migration success fee) + standard Stripe processing. **Year 2+:** 2% Recurr platform + standard Stripe processing.

Per $1M of migrated subscription revenue

+$220K
Migration year margin lift per $1M migrated
recurr.dev

+$100K
Each year after, annual margin per $1M migrated
recurr.dev

Migration year: 30% iOS Y1 baseline → 8% web all-in including standard Stripe fees (22pt delta). Year 2+: 15% mature store rate → 5% web all-in including standard Stripe fees (10pt delta).

Cash flow bonus: Apple settles up to 60 days after the sale; Stripe settles in 2 days. Each migrated subscriber pulls forward approximately 45 days of revenue — a one-time cash injection on top of the recurring margin lift.

Durable lift: Migration changes the billing rail permanently. Future renewals run through the web fee structure for as long as the subscription remains active.

04 · THE DEPLOYMENT

App-to-web subscriber migration, end-to-end

Migration is the highest-ROI move on your existing base. Recurr operates the migration end-to-end through the Controlled Migration Framework — maximizing migration rate and retention. Your team approves messaging and key operating decisions; Recurr runs the migration workflow. No SDK. No app release. No migration build on your product roadmap.

1

Audit

WEEK 1

Quantify fee exposure, contactability, cohort quality, and recoverable margin on your specific numbers — self-serve calculator plus a founder review.

2

Pilot

WEEKS 2–3

Controlled wave on a small, low-risk cohort — matched against an IAP holdout to measure and contain churn impact.

3

Migration

WEEKS 4–12

Wave-by-wave migration across your subscriber base. Pause or roll back at any wave if signals diverge from pilot benchmarks.

4

Manage

ONGOING

Monitor migrated subscribers, billing, retention, reporting. New cohorts mature into eligibility over time.

Three factors of success

Migration is a multi-touch campaign run on a live subscriber base — emails, web checkouts, billing transitions, support flows. Like any campaign at that scale it carries risks (churn around the migration touchpoints, mis-targeted cohorts, rollout pace), but the Framework keeps those risks in check by sequencing for safety in three places.

- **Wave-based pilots with matched IAP holdout.** Each migration runs in waves. The pilot wave targets a small, low-risk cohort. A matched IAP holdout — same tenure, plan tier, and engagement, no migration offer — runs alongside as the comparison baseline.
- **Multi-axis cohort selection.** Each cohort is selected on five dimensions — tenure, geo, engagement, renewal window, and plan. Pilot waves test these axes individually so migration cohorts can sequence based on what cleared.
- **Store-policy compliance.** Migration runs entirely outside the app: subscribers are reached via email or owned channels, billing settles through your branded web checkout. The app binary stays untouched. Apple 3.1.3(b) explicitly permits out-of-app email about web pricing. Google Play and EU DMA compliance follow the same principle.

> **Migrate by waves. Read the signals. Scale only on what cleared the bar.**
>
> RECURR · CONTROLLED MIGRATION FRAMEWORK
>
> recurr.dev

04.2 · THE DEPLOYMENT

Operational Safeguards

The mechanics most teams don't think about until they're mid-cutover. Each one is the difference between a clean migration and a churn spike — and each is built into the platform from day one.

- **Email collection for anonymous subs**
  Subscribers who signed up via Apple anonymous ID, Google Play, or anonymous OAuth may be unreachable through email. For those segments, we may recommend an in-app email collection prompt — framed around account recovery, not migration. Collected emails roll into later waves; the migration does not wait on them to begin.

- **Coordinate store winbacks**
  Apple Subscription Offers and Google Play promotional codes can fire when a subscriber attempts to cancel. Where they interfere with migration, we advise the app team on which offers to pause or adjust during migration windows. The customer controls store configuration; Recurr sequences around the resulting behavior.

- **Card-save, not early-charge**
  Annual cohorts save their card on web checkout and are charged at their natural renewal date. No mid-cycle "pay now" ask. Migration conversion is materially higher when subscribers don't see a forced early payment, even with a promotional incentive.

- **Double-subscription detection**
  The web subscription is activated before the subscriber is instructed to cancel IAP. We then monitor for possible overlap where store auto-renewal persists. Flagged subscribers receive cancellation guidance and support follow-up; refunds stay with the app team's policy and store process.

- **Identity continuity**
  Apple Sign In and Google Sign In are first-class on the web checkout. Subscribers continue with the same identity provider they used in-app — no "create a password" wall, no email/password form, no drop-off at the auth step.

- **Trial & intro offer preservation**
  Subscribers mid-trial or on intro pricing don't lose their offer when migrated. We map the store's offer state — remaining trial days, intro price duration — to the equivalent web pricing. The economic relationship is preserved exactly.

- **Migration observability**
  A real-time dashboard across pilot and migration waves shows emails sent, opens, clicks, conversions, drop-off stages, and churn delta vs. matched holdout. Signals are visible the same day they happen — wave gating decisions run on live data, not end-of-week reports.

- **Like-for-like analytics**
  Migrated revenue books at higher net per subscriber by design. We expose like-for-like analytics that hold the fee mix constant — so growth teams can isolate genuine churn and conversion changes from the fee-reduction accounting effect that would otherwise masquerade as a performance lift.

05 · THE TEAM'S VIEW

What this looks like by role

Migration touches founder, finance, tech, and growth. Each role has different questions to answer before they get behind the move. Here's what each sees — and what Recurr handles instead.

FOR FOUNDER

High-ROI wedge, controlled execution

- Recover margin from the existing base without waiting on a product roadmap cycle
- Pilot first; scale only when retention and payback clear the bar
- Create direct subscriber rails for pricing, offers, and lifecycle work
- Founder-led review keeps strategy, messaging, and rollout connected
- Design partner structure gives direct input while the category forms

FOR FINANCE

Predictable, aligned pricing

- Fees scale with web-billed revenue — not seats, tiers, or usage
- One-time pilot fee + scoped migration fee; pilot credited against migration
- Migration year: 5% Recurr platform on migrated subscribers (per subscriber, 12 months from migration date)
- Year 2+ ongoing: 2% Recurr platform per migrated subscriber, for the life of the subscription
- Standard Stripe processing passes through separately on top
- Audit models payback for your specific cohort before commit

FOR TECH

Lightweight integration, zero ongoing burden

- No SDK install, no app releases, no auth changes
- OAuth/API keys to your entitlement system
- Stripe Connect: payments settle to your account, your data
- Webhooks sync subscription state into your existing entitlements
- DNS record points to Recurr-hosted branded checkout
- Recurr operates the migration flow; no maintenance burden on your team

FOR GROWTH

Web acquisition runs alongside

- Existing channels keep operating: App Store ads, organic, partnerships
- Click-to-subscriber attribution on every paid channel routed through web
- Pricing, currencies, and offers ship in days — no app reviews
- Branded checkout supports Apple/Google sign-in
- Cohort flexibility: sequence, segment, pause/rollback at any wave
- Subscribers who don't accept the offer stay on IAP, untouched

Your team's lift: 1–2 hours per week reviewing wave performance and signing off the next cohort. The rest is the platform.

06 · A WORKED EXAMPLE

What this looks like at $5M ARR

Per-$1M unit economics anchor the math; the shape of an actual engagement depends on subscriber base, plan mix, geography, and engagement distribution. Below is one illustrative engagement at $5M ARR — modeled on a representative subscription app.

HEALTH & FITNESS · $5M ARR · 12-WEEK PROJECT

App profile

- 60,000 IAP subscribers
- iOS / Google Play split: 65% / 35%
- Plan mix: 50% monthly / 50% annual
- Reachability: 88%

Pilot waves — Weeks 2–3

3 small test waves (1,000–1,500 subs each) across the cohort axes — annual vs. monthly, top vs. mid engagement.

- P1 — annual, 12+ mo on renewal, top engagement, primary geos (1,500 / 2.5%). Card saved at web checkout, charged at natural renewal. Matched IAP holdout established.
- P2 — monthly, 3+ mo active, top engagement, primary geos (1,000 / 1.7%). Tests monthly response.
- P3 — annual, 12+ mo on renewal, mid engagement (quintiles 3–4), primary geos (1,000 / 1.7%). Tests engagement gating.

Migration cohorts — Weeks 4–12

Five to seven cohorts at 10% of the base max per cohort, sequenced by cleared-pilot demographics across the same five axes (tenure, geo, engagement, renewal window, plan). Each cohort runs over a 1–2 week window with rolling holdout benchmarks.

Outcomes (illustrative)

- Migration cases: conservative 24,000 subs migrated (40% of base), base 33,000 (55%), optimistic 42,000 (70%)
- Base case used below: 33,000 subscribers migrated over the 12-week project
- Base-case year-one margin recovered: $605,000 (net of Recurr platform + standard Stripe fees)
- Base-case cash flow boost: $340,000 (45-day store-float unwind on migrated revenue)

Representative engagement. *Numbers shown are illustrative — modeled on a representative subscription app at $5M ARR. Migration rate depends on offer strength, cadence, copy, reachability, and cohort quality. The audit models your specific conservative, base, and optimistic cases.*

07 · THE LEVERAGE

Each migrated subscriber compounds

Migration recovers margin on day one. The substrate changes too — and that's where the leverage compounds.

Each subscriber moved to web rails lifts margin permanently. That margin funds the next cohort — more acquisition, faster payback, more pricing velocity. New web subscribers route through the same rails from day one, with no migration step needed.

The earlier you start, the longer compounding has to run.

WHAT YOU GET FROM WORKING WITH RECURR

Founder-led delivery. Matt is in the room from pilot through go-live — not a sales-engineer handoff.

The Controlled Migration Framework, operated end-to-end. No SDK, no app release, no migration build on your product roadmap. Recurr handles modeling, cohort sequencing, store-policy compliance, and wave reporting.

Pilot-first sequencing. Model, prove, then scale — each wave gated on retention and payback signals agreed before any subscriber moves.

Roadmap input. First-class voice on what we ship next while the design-partner program is open.

Audit. Pilot. Scale.

Run a 60-second audit. Personalised on your ARR. Results shown instantly.

- → **Year-one and steady-state recovery** modeled on your fee mix
- → **Cash flow injection** during the migration window
- → **Sharable PDF brief** for your team

Run the Audit →

recurr.dev/audit

Matt
Founder, Recurr · matt@recurr.dev