

Updated
and Expanded
Second Edition

Developer Success in the
iTunes App Store



The Business of iPhone and iPad App Development

Making and Marketing Apps that Succeed

SECOND EDITION

Dave Wooldridge with Michael Schneider

Apress®

The Business of iPhone and iPad App Development

Making and Marketing Apps That Succeed
Second Edition



Dave Wooldridge
with **Michael Schneider**

Apress®

The Business of iPhone and iPad App Development: Making and Marketing Apps That Succeed, Second Edition

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Michael Schneider At the beginning of 2009, Michael Schneider left Silicon Valley technology firm Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati to found HiveBrain Software. HiveBrain publishes a variety of applications on the iTunes App Store, the most notable of which, TouchType, peaked at #13 in the U.S. App Store. Michael continues to practice law under the name Bitwise Legal, focusing on software and interactive media clients. Notable clients include Bungie and Innerfence. Follow Michael at [Twitter.com/hivebrain](https://twitter.com/hivebrain).

About the Technical Reviewer



Joe Kissell is the senior editor of TidBITS, a web site and weekly e-mail newsletter about Apple and the Internet and is the author of numerous print and electronic books, including *Mac Security Bible* and *Take Control of Working with Your iPad*. He is also a senior contributor to *Macworld*, was the winner of a 2009 Neal Award for Best How-to Article, and has appeared on the MacTech 25 list (the 25 people voted most influential in the Macintosh community) since 2007. Joe has worked in the Mac software industry since the early 1990s and previously managed software development for Nisus Software and Kensington Technology Group. He currently lives in Paris, France, with his wife, Morgen Jahnke; their son, Soren; and their cat, Zora.

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Preface

First and foremost, I'd like to thank everyone who picked up a copy of the first edition, making it the best-selling business and app marketing book in publication for iOS developers. I truly appreciate all of the wonderful comments and feedback that we've received from app designers, programmers, and project managers who found the book beneficial. But even if you've already read the first edition, you'll quickly discover the wealth of new material within the pages of this second edition.

It has been only one year since the publication of the first edition, and yet there have been so many exciting new developments in the mobile arena that the book definitely warranted this well-deserved update. Within that short time, Apple changed the iPhone OS name to iOS for targeting app development on multiple platforms, released the instantly popular iPad tablet and iPhone 4, launched its own iAd in-app advertising network, unveiled the impressive new Xcode 4, rolled out Game Center, continued to evolve and improve iTunes Connect and the App Store, and the list goes on...

Some newcomers have the unrealistic belief that if you build a good app, people will buy it, so they feel an entire book on app marketing may be overkill. That couldn't be further from the truth! As any experienced developer currently selling apps in the App Store would attest, you should be doing anything and everything possible to help increase exposure and sales for your app. With more than 300,000 apps available in the already overcrowded App Store (and that number continues to grow exponentially every year), it's now more important than ever to learn how to successfully promote your app to stand out from the vast sea of competitors.

This newly revised and expanded second edition is packed with winning marketing solutions and effective business strategies on the very latest opportunities in the iOS world, including extensive new coverage of iPhone and iPad app marketing, universal applications, iAd, In-App Purchase updates, recent App Store submission policy changes, in-app cross-promotion, social media and sharing, and much more!

Enjoy! And may your app become the next big seller in the App Store.

Best Regards,
Dave Wooldridge

Seeing the Big Picture in a Crowded App Store Marketplace

Living in Los Angeles, there's no shortage of Hollywood clichés. There was a time when it seemed like everyone I met—no matter their profession—was working on a screenplay.

Now they're all working on their own iOS apps!

And who can blame them? It's a testament to the soaring popularity of the iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad. There's money to be made in the App Store, and everyone wants in on the action.

We've all read about the success story of indie developer Steve Demeter. His Trism game, along with many of the 500 other apps that were included in the initial July 2008 launch of the App Store, experienced an overwhelming explosion in sales. With some price tags as low as 99 cents, iPhone and iPod touch owners were impulsively downloading these inexpensive apps at a feverish pace. In the months that followed, several of the most popular apps were already netting their creators hundreds of thousands of dollars, allowing programmers like Steve Demeter to quit his day job to focus full time on this lucrative opportunity.

The media quickly proclaimed the seemingly overnight sensation of the App Store as a “gold rush” for developers. With the lure of potential riches, inspired entrepreneurs from all over the world have downloaded the iOS SDK, racing to learn Objective-C and Cocoa Touch in the hopes of cashing in on this software phenomenon.

Fast-forward two years to July 2010. Apple has since introduced the iOS-powered iPad, selling more than 3 million in only the first 80 days. Combine that with the massive army of iPhone and iPod touch users for a staggering total of more than 120 million iOS devices sold and 7 billion app downloads from the App Store. You would think that with

stats like that, it would be easier than ever to make money in the App Store, right? Think again....

Why a Business Book for iOS Developers?

With more than 300,000 applications in the App Store and developer interest continuing to grow at a stunning rate, industry analysts predict that number will likely double before the end of 2012.

Think about that for a moment. When browsing through the App Store, how many new apps do you stumble upon weekly or even monthly? 25? 50? According to Apple, approximately 15,000 new apps and updates are submitted each week to its app review team!

In such a crowded marketplace, it's becoming increasingly difficult for new apps to get noticed. Without the necessary exposure, your app may simply get lost in the endless stream of new software that floods the App Store on a daily basis. Gone are the days when you could quickly cobble together a simple app, throw it into the App Store, and then sit back and wait for the large royalty checks to roll in.

The media hype machine is so good at celebrating the underdog stories of a few indie developers who found instant wealth in the App Store that newcomers often assume that if they build an app, the sales will come. When the anticipated avalanche of profit turns out to be nothing more than a trickle, surprised developers quickly discover that a *Field of Dreams* philosophy is no longer enough in this highly competitive market.

"Ah, but what if I've just created the next killer app?" you ask. "Surely Apple will want to showcase it as a featured app in the App Store."

Having a great product is certainly the underlying key in this equation, but it won't be enough. It's true that being listed as a "Featured App," "New and Noteworthy," or a "Staff Favorite" can instantly propel your sales into the stratosphere, but unfortunately, those high-profile spotlights are not purchasable advertising spaces. Apple chooses only a select few apps every month for those coveted spots. With thousands of new apps vying for attention every week, your chances of getting that life-altering call from Apple are pretty slim. In fact, you may have better odds of winning the lottery.

But don't despair. Your killer app can certainly make a lot of money without being featured by Apple. Like anything else in life, finding success in the current App Store environment will require some hard work and planning, but who says the journey can't be fun along the way?

Tackling the New World of Mobile Marketing

If you have the benefit of working for a large software company with deep pockets, it probably has a dedicated department to handle all of the marketing for the products you create. But if you're an independent developer who is responsible for managing every aspect of your own business, then you're all too familiar with the haunting questions that

arise when wondering how to implement effective marketing strategies to increase app sales.

And you aren't alone. Just take a look online at the various iOS-related developer forums and mailing lists, and you'll quickly see countless posts (some with generous amounts of cursing) from frustrated programmers, all asking similar questions:

- How do I promote my app?
- My app just got approved in the App Store. Now what?
- How do I get reviews for my app?
- Yikes! My 99-cent app is selling only a few units a week. What do I do?
- Is there anything I can do to avoid one-star customer reviews?

Although this all may look quite daunting, trust me—it's really not as overwhelming as it might appear. My goal here is to provide answers to those questions and much more. A lot of innovative marketing tactics, tools, and resources are available to iOS developers. Just as you wouldn't want to bring a knife to a gunfight, the key to success is in choosing the right weapon for the task at hand. This book's primary objective is to arm you with the ammunition you need, humbly serving as your definitive reference guide to the business of iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad app development.

Rest Easy—This Is Not Your Typical Business Book

If just the thought of reading yet another stale book on overgeneralized marketing concepts causes your eyes to roll back in your head, then don't worry! This is not your run-of-the-mill business book. You do not need a Harvard MBA to grok this material.

Like all Apress books, this one was written by developers for developers, taking you step by step through marketing solutions that have proven successful for professional iOS app creators. I won't just tell you what you need to do; I'll also show you how to do it.

This is not about expensive advertising campaigns. This is about cost-effective marketing alternatives that can help you sell more apps! In fact, most of the business strategies described in this book cost little to no money—perfect for all of us indie developers on shoestring budgets. All you need is some dedicated time, patience, a little creativity, and of course, this book.

Planning Your Own Success Story

I know what you're thinking. This all sounds very time-consuming, and free time is something you simply don't have to give. As a full-time developer myself, I understand this all too well. Whether I'm feeling the pressure from self-imposed work deadlines or racing to finish a project for a client, time often feels like the enemy. But I just want to spend any free time I do manage to salvage programming the next killer app. I don't

want to be bothered with marketing concerns, at least not until my app is finished. Unfortunately, that would be too late.

Without a solid game plan in place, you'll find that one solitary publicity push when your app is released may not be enough to generate substantial sales. Once upon a time, sending out a press release, landing a few magazine reviews, and listing your product updates on the popular online software directories worked fine to promote traditional desktop applications. But many of those old shareware techniques don't apply here. In the unique world of the App Store, you would most likely see a momentary sales bump on launch day that quickly plummeted in the week that followed (see Figure 1–1). Then you would end up spending a lot of extra time that you had not originally allocated in desperate scrambling to figure out how to improve sales.

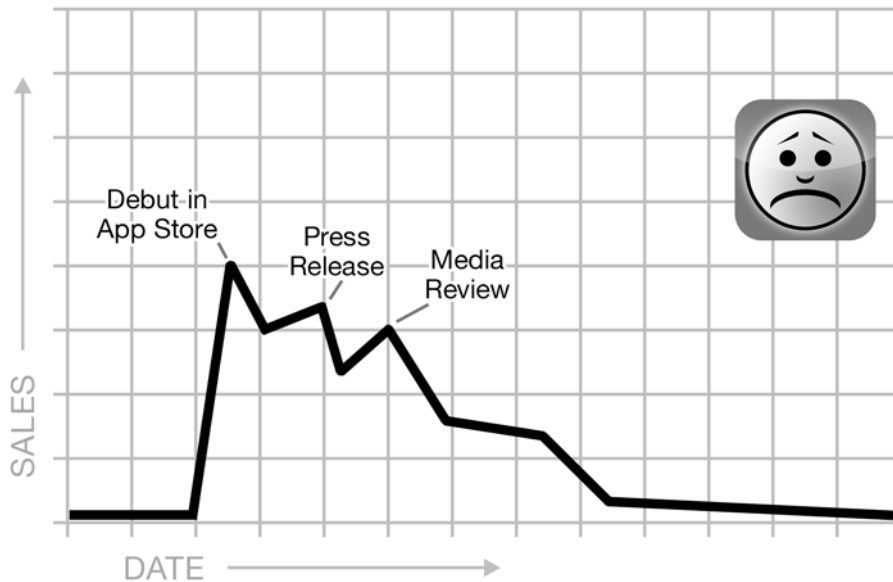


Figure 1–1. Without a long-term marketing plan in place, you risk drastically shortening the life span and profitability of your iOS app.

If no one knows about your app, it won't matter how many cool new features you add in the future. Did you build an app that consumers will want, satisfying an existing need in the marketplace? Did you do anything to create prerelease interest in your app? And what about your app's longevity in the App Store? Have you thought about how to sustain and grow your sales beyond the initial release? Wouldn't you prefer your sales to look more like the graph in Figure 1–2?

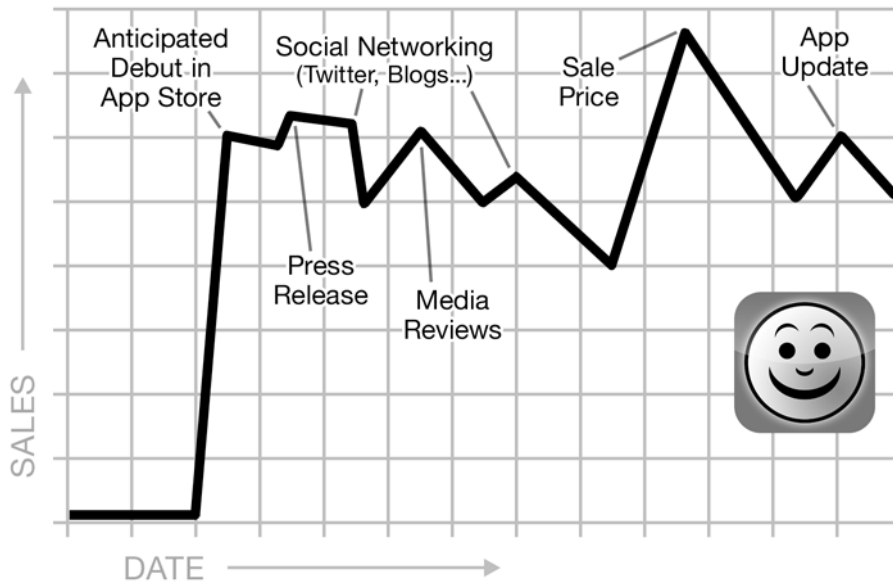


Figure 1–2. *Wouldn't you prefer your sales graph to look more like this?*

The reality is that if done right, your marketing efforts should actually help save you time in the long run. It's not just about time management. Sure, carving out a few hours every week to focus on promoting your app is important, but that's only part of the solution.

Think like a marketer. Think big picture.

It's not just about what to do after your app is available in the App Store. Did you know that as a developer, you can integrate several elements directly into your app that can encourage sales, produce additional revenue streams, help users spread the word via built-in social marketing, and improve customer support and reviews? Your app itself is one of your most powerful promotional tools, but to take advantage of these valuable tactics (and many others), you should start planning your marketing strategy before you've even written a single line of code.

In fact, this is such an important point that I feel obligated to say it again: start planning your marketing strategy before writing a single line of code. By incorporating marketing and business savvy into every aspect of the development process, you're giving your app the best possible chance of succeeding in the App Store.

Now just to be clear, I'm not suggesting that you turn your app's interface into a walking billboard—that's a task better suited for your App Store description, your web site, and publicity materials (which are also covered extensively in this book). What I'm talking about here are essential components that can be integrated into your app's functionality and user interface (UI) design that will help promote your app in very subtle ways that your users will perceive only as convenient, quality-enhancing features.

The iOS SDK provides thousands of time-saving frameworks, many of which can actually make your job easier as a marketer. For example, both In-App Purchase and In-App Email will be explored in this book.

Yes, you read that correctly. Several chapters of this book will be focused on what you love doing most: designing and programming your app! Got your attention now? And you thought marketing wasn't going to be fun!

How to Use This Book

The sequence of chapters takes a very systematic linear approach, working step by step through the planning, development, and release of an iOS app. Along the way, important business solutions will be presented in each phase of the process to help you produce an app that sells! Although you may be tempted to jump around, reading only the chapters that appeal to you, I recommend reading the chapters in order to benefit from this strategic, organized workflow (see Figure 1–3).

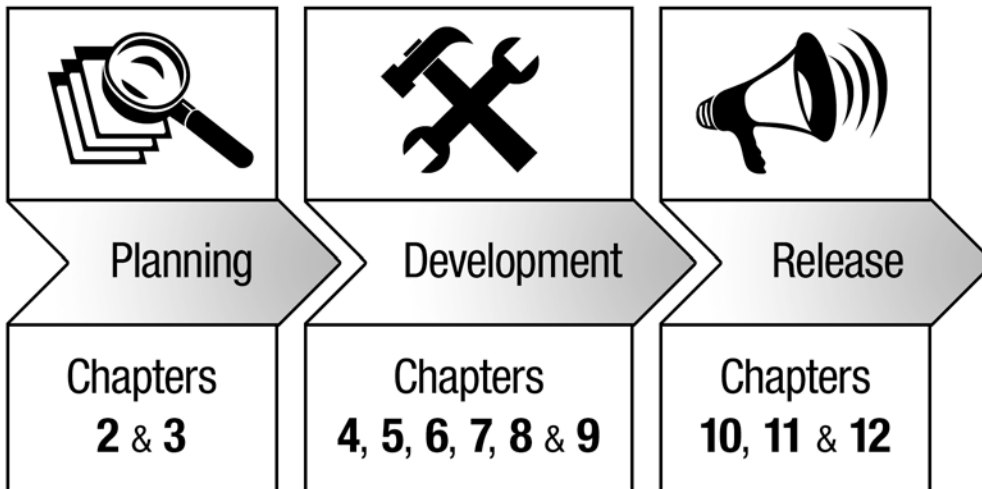


Figure 1–3. For best results, follow the linear workflow of this book.

- *Chapter 2, Doing Your Homework: Analyzing iOS App Ideas and Performing Competitive Research:* So you think you've got a great idea for a mobile app? Learn how to identify untapped markets and refine your app concept to be unique and highly marketable, setting it apart from your competition. You'll discover the immense value of doing some good old-fashioned detective work by analyzing what your competitors are doing right and wrong. We'll also explore the advantages of targeting multiple iOS devices beyond just the iPhone and the business challenges of universal applications.

- *Chapter 3, Protecting Your Intellectual Property:* This just might be one of the most important chapters in the book! Although we probably all hate dealing with legal matters, it's crucial to the long-term health and success of your business not only to protect yourself, but also to protect the intellectual property of your original concepts and code. Michael Schneider, an expert lawyer turned app developer, will walk you through everything you need to know to safeguard your software business.
- *Chapter 4, Your iOS App Is Your Most Powerful Marketing Tool:* Your app icon and screenshots are often the first visual elements users see in the App Store when evaluating your app. Bad first impressions can cost you sales and invite negative reviews, so fine-tuning your app's design is a critical component to success. Chapter 4 includes useful tips on prototyping, creating eye-catching app icons, crafting intuitive user interfaces, and designing for multiple iOS device targets.
- *Chapter 5, Social Inception: Promoting Your Apps Within Apps:* Building upon Chapter 4's quest to transform your app into its own marketing powerhouse, this chapter will take you one step further by integrating convenient sharing and social media elements such as In-App Email, Twitter, and Facebook. Gracefully encourage App Store user reviews within your app, build synergy with in-app cross-promotion and third-party social gaming platforms, and learn how to implement these various ingredients for effective results.
- *Chapter 6, Money for Nothing: When It Pays to Be Free:* Unlike the traditional desktop software world, the App Store does not currently allow time-limited or feature-crippled trial versions. To work around this restriction, many developers offer an In-App Purchase–supported “freemium” model or a free “lite” version of their apps, hoping users will buy in-app content or the separate paid edition to gain access to premium features. Learn the benefit of free to promote paid versions, plus the additional revenue opportunities of affiliate programs.
- *Chapter 7, Monetizing Free Apps with iAd and Other In-App Advertising Opportunities:* Free apps can still make money on their own, even without paid content. Learn how to tap into alternative revenue streams with in-app advertising, sponsorships, and product-placement deals. The world of in-app advertising is thoroughly examined, educating you on the mobile ad networks available for iOS apps and the value of tracking usage through in-app analytics. Chapter 7 also includes a step-by-step guide to implementing Apple's iAd framework in your app.

- *Chapter 8, Exploring the Freemium Model with In-App Purchase:* With In-App Purchase, developers can construct new business models within their applications, such as offering subscriptions, selling add-on content and services, and unlocking premium features. Interested in supplying additional value to your users while financially supporting your continued development efforts? This chapter provides in-depth instructions on when and how to use In-App Purchase and its related Store Kit framework in your iOS apps.
- *Chapter 9, Testing and Usability: Putting Your Best Foot Forward:* Did you know that many of the one-star customer reviews in the App Store are caused by user frustration with hard-to-use app interfaces or buggy features? Low customer ratings can really hurt your app's perception and sales, so avoiding those situations when possible should be your top priority. Chapter 9 is all about the value of providing built-in help, provisioning apps for on-device testing, and conducting thorough beta tests.
- *Chapter 10, Get the Party Started! Creating Prerelease Buzz:* Your app is finished, but before you submit it to the App Store, it's time to start generating some prerelease buzz for it. Chapter 10 will show you the best way to stir up some excitement and anticipation for your app by promoting it on your web site, blogs, Twitter, and other social networks, as well as by getting basically anyone you can to review or talk about your app.
- *Chapter 11. Keys to the Kingdom: The App Store Submission Process:* Your product page in the App Store is the world's gateway to your app, so its presentation is essential in properly communicating the value of your app. This chapter will walk you through the app submission process in iTunes Connect, helping you optimize your app's text description, keywords, rating, screenshots, and other required elements, as well as discuss how to set the price to maximize your sales potential.
- *Chapter 12, Increasing Awareness for Your iOS App:* Once you're in the App Store, it's time to rev up the publicity engine to increase consumer awareness of your app's availability. Even if your prerelease marketing efforts resulted in an initial sales surge, there's still vital work to be done. It's your job to ensure that your iOS application does not get buried amidst the thousands of new apps flooding into the App Store. Chapter 12 reveals how to craft effective press releases, utilize promo codes, gain exposure through interviews, and sustain momentum in the App Store with promotions, giveaways, and carefully timed sales events.

This book assumes that you're already familiar with Objective-C, Cocoa Touch, and iOS application programming. If you're looking for in-depth guidance beyond the

documentation and tutorials available from the Apple Developer site, I highly recommend the following Apress books:

- *Learn Objective-C on the Mac* by Mark Dalrymple and Scott Knaster (<http://www.apress.com/book/view/9781430218159>)
- *Beginning iPhone 4 Development: Exploring the iOS SDK* by Jack Nutting, Dave Mark, and Jeff LaMarche (<http://www.apress.com/book/view/9781430230243>)
- *Beginning iPad Development for iPhone Developers: Mastering the iPad SDK* by Jack Nutting, Dave Wooldridge, and Dave Mark (<http://www.apress.com/book/view/9781430230212>)
- *More iPhone 4 Development: Further Explorations of the iOS SDK* by Jack Nutting, Dave Mark, and Jeff LaMarche (<http://www.apress.com/book/view/9781430232520>)

Getting Started with Your First iOS App

We have a lot of ground to cover here, so before we get too far along, make sure that you've already downloaded and installed the latest Xcode tools and iOS SDK (4.0 or higher). If not, make your way over to the Apple Developer web site at <http://developer.apple.com/>.

If you're not yet a registered Apple Developer, then sign up (it's free) so that you'll have access to the latest SDKs, tools, documentation, tutorials, and sample code at the iOS Dev Center (<http://developer.apple.com/devcenter/ios/>).

While you're there, take the time to apply for the required iOS Developer Program. Do not wait to do this when your app is ready to be submitted to the App Store, since it can take weeks to receive acceptance into the iOS Developer Program, which would delay your progress unnecessarily. After being accepted, pay the applicable fee to complete your registration. After your payment has been processed, when you're logged into the iOS Dev Center, you'll see an iOS Developer Program column on the right side of the browser screen. Click the iTunes Connect button listed there.

On the main page of iTunes Connect, be sure to visit the Contracts, Tax, & Banking Information section to view the contracts you currently have in effect. By default, you should have the Free Applications contract, which allows you to submit free apps to the App Store, already activated. But if you want to submit paid apps to the App Store, you'll need to request a Paid Applications contract. Apple needs your bank and tax information so that it can pay you when you've accrued revenue from app sales. Since Apple transfers money via secure electronic deposits, you'll need to provide your bank's ABA routing number, name, and address, as well as your account number, so make sure your bank supports electronic transactions with third-party vendors. If you plan on selling your app in several regional App Stores, in order to receive international payments, Apple may also require your bank's SWIFT code. Although most large national banks support the SWIFT

system, some smaller independent banks and credit unions do not, so make sure your bank can supply a SWIFT code.

Until you complete the required steps (see Figure 1–4), Apple will hold any money it owes you in trust. And since this can also be a fairly lengthy process, I highly recommend completing the Paid Applications contract long before submitting your app to the App Store.

iTunes Connect Manage Your Contracts Dave Wooldridge, Electric Butterfly, Inc. [Sign Out](#)

Your Contracts In Process

View the status of your contracts and manage your contract, bank and tax information. Once setup is complete and the contract effective date has been reached, these contracts will go live and are moved to the 'Your Contracts In Effect' section below.

Contract Number	Contract Region	Contract Type	Contact Info	Bank Info	Tax Info	Contracts Download	Contact Info	Bank Info	Tax Info	Setup in Process	Setup Complete
W00000000	All (See Contract)	Paid Applications	Edit	Edit	Edit						

Your Contracts In Effect

Contract Number	Contract Region	Contract Type	Contact Info	Bank Info	Tax Info	Effective Date	Expiration Date	Contract in Effect
W00000000	World	Free Applications	N/A	N/A	N/A	June 26, 2010	March 24, 2012	

[Done](#)

Figure 1–4. In order to get paid for your App Store sales, make sure you complete Apple's required Paid Applications contract in the iTunes Connect online portal.

Already in the App Store? It's Never Too Late to Boost Sales

Even if you're a veteran iOS developer with one or more apps currently available in the App Store, you can still do a lot to increase exposure and sales for those apps. You've already invested valuable development time and money to get to this point, so it would be a shame to give up now!

But don't make the mistake of skipping ahead to the postrelease chapters in this book. Many of the solutions presented in earlier chapters can be utilized with great effect, especially when planning new versions and updates for your existing apps.

Take the time to work through all the chapters in the order they're presented. You may be surprised by the tips you pick up along the way that can help even older apps that have been stagnating for months in the App Store.

Developing iOS Apps for Clients

This book can benefit not only the people who want to sell their own apps in the App Store, but also consultants who develop apps for third-party companies. You're being hired for your expertise, so anything you can do to help your clients succeed in the App Store will serve to strengthen your worth to them.

What better way to secure a consulting contract than by offering a full turnkey service, guiding your clients from app concept to launch, providing both code and marketing support? By adding an optional marketing/publicity package to your list of iPhone development services, you're also establishing new income opportunities for yourself!

The success of your clients directly affects the success of your relationship with them. Add this book's business solutions to your existing toolbox so that you can prove to be an indispensable superhero for all your clients' mobile app needs.

Ready to Dive In?

Now that we've taken a broad look at the current state of the App Store, it's apparent that several challenges await all iOS developers as they navigate their way along the road to success. As programmers, problem solving is what we all do on a daily basis, so I'm confident you'll enjoy each step in this process. And just think, put together the right puzzle pieces, and you may just find that elusive pot of gold at the end of the road. Mmmm, app sales!

First, shake off all that Objective-C code bouncing around in your brain. You'll want a clear head for the next two chapters. Don't worry—you'll be diving into design and development issues soon enough. But before you do that, you need to do a little competitive research and business planning. So, roll up your sleeves, put on your detective hat, and let's get started.

Doing Your Homework: Analyzing iOS App Ideas and Performing Competitive Research

So, you think you have a good idea for an iPhone or iPad app? Make sure it's a *great* idea. No amount of marketing will help sell a bad app. Sure, you may have excellent coding skills with the ability to produce a performance-optimized, high-quality application, but if it's based on a poorly conceived concept, it won't stand a chance in today's crowded App Store.

In this chapter, you'll learn how some good old-fashioned detective work can help test the validity and marketability of your app concept. Analyzing what your competition is doing right *and* wrong will give you the insight needed to truly refine and improve your ideas into a unique app that stands apart from the rest.

Even if the thought of doing a little competitive research seems elementary to you, keep reading. You may be pleasantly surprised to learn some new tricks here. We'll also explore the advantages of targeting multiple iOS devices beyond just the iPhone and the business challenges of universal applications.

Fulfilling a Need

People buy software to solve a problem or satisfy a need. To-do lists keep us organized. Weather and news apps keep us informed. Games feed into our desire to be entertained. Even silly novelty apps serve our basic need for acceptance by enabling people to bond over a few shared laughs. Although these general examples may be easy to recognize and understand, what about more specific needs?

If you're thinking of building something other than a game, such as a productivity or utility app, here are a few factors to consider:

- Does it focus on a need or issue that is currently not being addressed by existing apps?
- Does your app fulfill that need in a way that makes the mobile experience significantly easier than performing the same tasks on a desktop computer?
- If your app is similar to other existing apps, what feature(s) can you add that would solve the needs not currently addressed by your competitors?

Discovering Untapped Markets

Thousands of iPhone apps have very few users. Back in 2009, before Apple changed their policy on third-party app analytics (more on that in Chapter 7), the popular mobile advertising network AdMob reported that of the iPhone apps that actively displayed embedded AdMob ads, a whopping 54 percent of them had fewer than 1,000 users each. Granted, the few thousand apps included in that 2009 AdMob report represent a small sample compared to the sheer size of the App Store (then and now), but it's still a shocking wake-up call nonetheless, especially when you consider that most of the apps in AdMob's network are free.

Even if an app is free, it does not guarantee that people will use it. And if you expect people to pay for your app, it's that much more important that you provide a desperately desired service, feature, or experience—something users will feel compelled to download.

Although mobile apps are inexpensive compared to traditional desktop software prices, they are no longer considered impulse buys, as they were in the early days of the App Store. In the past year, users have packed their iPhones, iPads, and iPod touches with so many apps that they've gradually become much more selective about which apps they choose to download.

Just think about your own decision-making process when purchasing a new app. You may not think twice about spending \$12 for a movie ticket, but for some curious reason, you more than likely contemplate at great length whether to spend a mere \$2.99 on an iPhone game. I'm guilty of doing the same thing, even though as a programmer, I'm fully aware of how much hard work goes into creating an iOS application.

Part of the problem is that with so many apps priced at only 99 cents in an attempt to boost volume sales and rank higher on the App Store charts, users now have a distorted perception of app worth. Unfortunately, this has conditioned users to expect a lot of value for very little money. To cut through this purchase barrier, your app *must* be special, providing a unique experience and/or satisfying an existing need.

With more than 300,000 apps in the App Store, at first glance, it might appear that all the original ideas have already been taken. When Apple says, "There's an app for that,"

the company is not kidding, or so it would seem. But then, every so often, a pioneer comes along with a new app that causes developers worldwide to slap their own foreheads while shouting, “Why didn’t I think of that?”

Sometimes the coolest ideas are the simplest concepts, hiding right under our noses. As developers, we’re so captivated by (and envious of) the success stories of our peers that one of the first instincts to strike us is often the most fatal: how to take advantage of current trends by riding the coattails of what’s popular. When iFart Mobile became a runaway hit in 2008, a flood of copycat fart apps bombarded the App Store, hoping to cash in on the popular novelty. Jumping on the bandwagon, the first handful of copycat apps probably generated enough sales to justify their development, but at a certain point, the App Store became oversaturated. With more than 500 fart-related apps currently available, the odds of consumers finding and purchasing your new fart app are pretty low. When needing to choose from such a large assortment, it’s simply too overwhelming to look at them all, so consumers will more than likely settle for the most popular apps currently residing near the top of the charts.

Wouldn’t you much rather be the visionary who develops *that* app—the one that hundreds of developers rush to emulate? Of course, we all would. So, how does one go about finding new, untapped ideas?

First, take a look at your own needs and interests. Sure, you’re a developer, but first and foremost, you’re also a user. Is there some missing functionality that you would love to see added to the iPhone? If so, do any existing apps already provide that functionality? No? Well, if it’s a feature you want, then odds are that others out there are wishing for the same thing, and maybe even willing to pay for it—bingo!

It’s worth noting that some wish-list items might make great features but not great apps. For example, the heavily requested copy-and-paste feature was finally added to iOS 3, but it doesn’t really make sense as its own stand-alone app.

What interests do you have outside of technology? There are successful apps for bird-watchers, comic book collectors, sports fans, and so on. If you’re passionate about a specific hobby and have not found any related apps, that might be a great space to fill. Just remember that the more niche it is (underwater basket weaving, anyone?), the smaller your potential customer base will be. If you develop a journal log for the small yet dedicated group of arctic nude swimmers, you could make a few shivering, blue-lipped individuals happy, but you may not make much money doing it. By broadening that idea to encompass all water sports (including custom log templates for surfers, boaters, swimmers, and scuba divers), your journal app dramatically expands its potential customer base, making it a much more viable app concept.

If you’re feeling particularly void of any original ideas, try turning to your friends and family. See what specific needs and interests they have that might be well suited for a mobile app. But whatever you do, please do not solicit for app ideas on your blog, on your Facebook page, or via Twitter. Although your followers may provide some great suggestions, accepting their feedback leaves you legally vulnerable. If your app becomes successful, you run the risk of a stranger suing you for stealing his idea without providing adequate credit or compensation for it, producing evidence in the

form of an archived tweet or blog comment he posted to you. You're better off limiting your inquiries to only your trusted friends and family.

Another great source for original ideas is your local newsstand. Although that may seem a little "old school," don't discount the ease of flipping through the pages of the latest magazines. The Internet is a vast treasure chest of data, but you need to know what you're searching for in order to find anything of relevance. At a newsstand, you can quickly browse through dozens of popular magazine genres. Print is expensive, so if there's a monthly magazine dedicated to a topic, the odds are good that enough people are interested in it to justify further exploration. The real question then lies in figuring out whether a decent percentage of those readers are tech-savvy and either plan to own or already own an iOS device. If the magazine has a web site, that's a good place to start. Check to see whether it has an active online forum, an RSS feed, podcasts, or a Twitter account. By just taking a few minutes to read some of the posts there, you can get a good feel for that magazine's reader base.

Also look to see whether any of the magazine advertisers are promoting computer- or mobile-related solutions. For example, writing magazines include several ads for software tools that assist authors with various elements of the writing business and the story-building process. The App Store already has several mobile writing tools to help authors organize their notes and story ideas, but what about giving freelance writers the ability to track the status of submitted queries to potential publishers?

Now that you have a general idea of what to search for, it's time to take your investigation to the Internet. Back in 2009 when I wrote the first edition of this book, there were several desktop software programs and subscription-based web sites that offered that query-tracking service, but there weren't any iPhone apps that handled that particular task. At the time, it looked like the market was wide open for this mobile app concept.

As fate would have it, several months later, Andrew Nicolle released his iPhone and iPad app, Story Tracker, to fill that demand. The vital point here is that if you do stumble upon an untapped market, it's best to start developing your app quickly. If you discovered a new niche, I can guarantee there are *at least* a dozen other developers thinking about similar app concepts. Time is of the essence. Just remember this famous (and very relevant) saying: "There's no such thing as an original idea. It's who does it first that counts."

When fulfilling an existing demand, you're selling to a known target audience. But if you introduce an entirely new product concept that is unlike anything else in the App Store, be aware that your marketing efforts will require educating consumers on why they should buy an app they do not yet know they need or want.

You can't sell people a solution for an issue that they aren't aware they have. That's why your marketing focus must illustrate the inadequacies of the current options available (or the lack thereof). Show how your app addresses that void and can save them time, improve their workflow, provide happiness, or whatever it does that would enhance their daily lives (as all software should strive to achieve). For an entirely new app category, you sell the solution by showcasing the problem.