# Appreneur

## Secrets to Success in the App Store

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*For your convenience Apress has placed some of the front matter material after the index. Please use the Bookmarks and Contents at a Glance links to access them.*

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# Contents at a Glance

# Introduction

You are interested in making an app. You have read all the stories of successful developers and appreneurs. You are determined to get a piece of the pie. Welcome to the app era. The world of apps is the fastest-growing market in the world today, and it is here to stay. The best part is, you can get in on it! Now, what if I told you that without the information provided in this book, the odds of your making a profit would be slim to none? What if I also told you that you probably wouldn't break even? There is more to apps than you might think. Most people assume that if they make an app, they will instantly become a millionaire. The truth is, without the knowledge garnered from years of successes and failures, you simply won't know where to begin.

This book contains tips, tricks, secrets, and stories from top developers, appreneurs, and companies from around the globe. The experiences presented here are those of real-life professionals, ranging from single-team developers to the big boys in the Fortune 500. After reading this book, you will be equipped to bring your idea to life, market it, promote it, and sell it. You will know exactly what to do to make sure your app stands out from among the more than one million apps available. Before now, a book that revealed the secrets of success in the App Store was nonexistent. With this book, you have the wisdom of some of the best appreneurs in the country right in the palm of your hand.

# Staring at the Bottom and Rising to the Top

The year was 2009; I was just finishing my freshman year at the University of Texas at Austin. I sat in my room, proud of my year. I had decided to pay for my own college education in order to take the burden off of my parents' shoulders. I took a look at my banking information and nearly had a heart attack. I had less than $100 in my account and a loan of nearly $25,000 staring me right in the face. Keep in mind that this was only my first year of college. At the rate at which college tuition was increasing, I was sure to be six figures in debt by the time I graduated. I thought to myself, "I may have bitten off a little more than I can chew."

Mentally exhausted by the financial pit I was digging, I decided to play video games with some of my friends to relieve the stress. What happened next changed my life. One of my gaming friends turned to me and said, "How cool would be if you could track your in-game stats via an app?" The basic idea was to know how well you were doing without having to log in to your computer after each game. I literally sat the controller down and opened up my laptop. I was majoring in computer science at the time, and I remembered seeing news of developers who were creating applications (apps) and making a considerable sum doing it. My friend's random comment motivated me to immerse myself into the world of development possibilities. That summer, I spent almost every waking moment learning Objective-C and the iPhone software development kit (SDK). In the fall I released my first app. It was an interactive guide for one of my favorite video games, *Halo 3*. The app was an overnight sensation. It began to receive tons of recognition in the gaming world. I was getting e-mails from professional players who were using my app at events. I had companies blowing up my e-mail, wishing to advertise in the app. Although I was

ecstatic with my success, I wasted no time before moving on to my next project. I knew that I had only scratched the surface of the app market.

By 2010 I was earning enough money from my app to reduce my student loan by half. Finally, I could enjoy my college career; I was even able to upgrade from my student diet of ramen noodles. I was by no means a millionaire, but I had found the App Store gold mine, and I was virtually mining away!

For my next venture I began to create different types of apps for many specialized niches. As I tracked the progress of my new apps, I noticed that the apps I made for hobbies that I lacked personal interest in didn't do as well as I had anticipated. It was then that I learned the most important thing about the App Store: if you are passionate about something and know a lot about it, then you can create a high-quality app for it that users will enjoy.

By 2012 being an App Store expert was my career. I was financially secure and living my dream. I opened a studio called the Idea 2 App Store (`www.idea2appstore.com`) because I wanted to create a way for people with no development skills to be able to sell apps and make money. If I could go from living in a 400-square-foot apartment and driving the same truck I had owned since I was 16 to living in my dream home and driving my dream car, I figured anyone could. I wanted to provide other people with the opportunity to make their dreams come true.

Unfortunately, my "dream" assumption was incorrect. I had forgotten how much I had learned in those three years. I had acquired a great deal of wisdom from my successes and failures. I decided to branch out and add consulting to the studio's list of services. Before too long, many major companies and other lucrative clients were seeking my counsel. During a three- to four-hour consulting session, I could take a client without even a basic idea of how the App Store works and mold that person into a pro. Such clients were able to take the skills I taught them and the secrets I shared with them and integrate these into their apps. It made me feel good getting phone calls from them a few months later, explaining how well they were doing. That feeling of helping others achieve dreams motivated me to share the information I use when consulting with clients with a wider audience and create the book you are about to read.

Some of you might be reluctant to believe that my success can be your success. You might even be thinking, "I am not a computer programmer. How can I create apps?" The answer is surprisingly simple. The swift advent of technological advancements in our society has created a surge in the number of quality developers available. No matter your location, you can find a developer or studio that fits your needs and budget.

Without a doubt, creating apps can be expensive; expect to spend between $50 and $150 an hour for quality app development. If hiring a developer is

your only option, consider this plan: start small, and expand. Most people do not understand that apps are software and that quality apps will take time. There is no way of accurately predicting what your app will make prior to checking your sales once the app is live in the App Store. Some apps blow up immediately, generating huge profits; some apps <u>tank</u>, without any profit. Such is the nature of the App Store. If you keep your first app small in the terms of price and time, you will reduce your chances of loss. If the app begins to generate steady revenue, then you can add features and update the app. This is the ideal business model for one reason: users love updates. I cannot stress this enough. There have been apps I have made and have almost given up on; however, after an update with a few extra features, these apps sprang back to life. Quality apps are never complete. If you think your app is done, then you will soon begin to see its sales drop.

So, you have an idea. What's next? First and foremost, do your research. Check the App Store and see who, if anyone, has made something similar. If you find something that resembles your idea, you need to do three things to compete: download, dissect, and do it better. Do not think, just because there is an app out there like yours, that your idea is a bust. Sometimes, it can be the just the opposite. The first thing you need to do is download the competitor's app. Dissect it; find out what is good and what could have been done better. Next, read each one of the app's reviews. This is a secret that not many developers/appreneurs know. You have access to crucial customer feedback. Focus on the negative reviews. Ask yourself, "Is this a valid point? Is this something I can do, and do better?" Finally, if applicable, search for the app's ranking. If you can find ranking data, you can get a general idea of the amount of revenue the app is producing. This is another secret many appreneurs do now know.

Another common misconception about app creation is that you have to be a technology genius in order to create a profitable app. On the contrary, a fellow appreneur, Benny Hsu, had his app 100 percent outsourced and still turned a profit, and a hefty one at that. His app, **Photo 365**, is very well done. Although you don't often read about developers' making money from outsourcing apps, Benny's story exemplifies how success is possible if you know the market. I asked Benny to share his experiences so that you could see that app success is not only for the computer literate. Here is Benny Hsu's story:

> *A long time ago, I wanted to create an iPhone app. As a user and fan of the iPhone since the first version, I had two reasons to create an iPhone app. First, I thought it would be cool to be able to say, "Here is my iPhone app." Second, I wanted to start a business on the side. I wanted to become my own boss and stop working for someone else.*

*My only problem was that I had no idea how to code! I thought that was the only way to create an app. One night, I was on the Internet and just happened to come across a blog about creating income online. This blogger had an iPhone app company, with a partner, that was earning thousands a month. The blogger didn't know how to code, either. He outsourced all the work. At that time, I knew about outsourcing but didn't know the possibilities. He recommended an e-book to learn about outsourcing app development. That's exactly what I needed. I bought that book and another small e-book. Developers who were able to create a business from apps wrote both books, much like what you are reading now, all without any coding experience.*

*I didn't let thoughts of failure stop me. I was determined to learn all I could and do the best I could. The app was supposed to take one-and-a-half months, but it ended up taking approximately seven months. The delay didn't frustrate me. I was really pleased with the prototypes my programmers were sending to me. I didn't want to rush things just to get it out. I wanted the app to be done well.*

*The app was released on August 10, 2011. At that time, I would have been happy just to make my investment back. It cost me $1,119.46 to develop Photo 365. That was a lot of money to me, but an amount I was willing to risk. Little did I know what was about to happen to my app.*

*Within the first seven days, I had earned back my $1,119.46. This completely blew my mind. This was beyond my wildest dreams. Things only got better. The following week, I saw Photo 365 featured under "New and Noteworthy." ("New and Noteworthy" is a category of apps selected by Apple. If your app is featured in this category, you are going to see a large influx of sales.) Not only did the app get featured, but it was in the second spot as well. I was still enjoying the feelingof accomplishment when, six days later, I got an e-mail from Apple's marketing department, requesting art assets. I read the e-mail many times just to be clear about what Apple wanted. I had a feeling what this was for but didn't want to get overly excited yet. There was a lot of work to do to meet the*

*24-hour deadline. Luckily, my brother is a Photoshop wizard and helped create the art assets needed. The contact person was really helpful in answering all my questions quickly. The next morning, I sent off the e-mail and waited.*

*That same week, I was working at my restaurant job. During a break I decided to check my app's progress. I knew that Apple updated the App Store in the afternoon, but I didn't know exactly when, so I was not expecting much of a change. I logged in to a forum and saw a private message telling me, "Congrats." What? I quickly went to the App Store and saw Photo 365 featured as "App of the Week"! I jumped and screamed like I had hit the lottery. My heart was racing. I went to Facebook and Twitter and shared my excitement. That whole night at work I couldn't stand still. It was a moment that I'll never forget. The sales that week were phenomenal. I couldn't sleep because I couldn't wait to get up in the morning to check sales. I felt like a kid waking up early on Christmas Day. I had become "App of the Week" in just my third week. Even as I type this, I find it hard to believe it happened to me.*

*After the first 30 days, I had earned $32,865.91. Not only did I make my investment back, but I was able to start my own app company as well. How quickly life can change in just 30 days.*

*You might be wondering how I marketed my app. You might assume that I spent a lot of money. I'll be honest with you, and it may surprise you. I didn't do any marketing. I didn't spend a single penny. I had some review blogs contact me that first week to ask for a promotion code to do a review. I was just happy anyone wanted to review the app, so I always said yes. The biggest web site to do a review at the time was AppAdvice. The same day that I got the e-mail from Apple's marketing department, a review appeared on Gizmodo. I hadn't been contacted by this site. That was a great surprise.*

*I'm proof that you don't need to have a huge marketing budget to create an app that gets seen by users and Apple. If you create a polished app that your target customers love, they will find it, and they will tell others about it.*

*I would counsel anyone who wants to develop an iPhone app through outsourcing that it's not as hard as you think. At the beginning, it might seem overwhelming because you're unfamiliar with the process. But, if you don't take a chance now, when will you? If I hadn't risked failure, I would have never experienced the success I did.*

If you wish to download one of Benny's apps or check out his blog, the details are as follows:

>**Photo 365**: http://photo365app.com
>
>**Gratitude 365**: http://gratitude365app.com
>
>**Get Busy Living**: http://getbusylivingblog.com

Benny Hsu's inspirational story represents all that can go right when you make smart development choices.

The next chapter outlines how to effectively develop your app to maximize results.

# Choosing the Right Development Option

I contacted Benny to share his story because it is both inspirational and relevant to this book. Also, I wanted to prove the power of both developing and outsourcing quality apps. He found a good target market, created an app that market would enjoy, managed his users, and, consequently, achieved great success. To see for yourself what a professional-quality outsourced app looks like, be sure to download **Photo 365**.

## Developing Quality Apps

When it comes to app development, you have two basic options: developing the app yourself or outsourcing the development. There are pros and cons to both options. If you are a tech-savvy programmer with some experience, then learning the language and SDK is a great idea and probably will not give you much trouble. You will certainly have lower overhead costs and thus a greater profit margin if you can develop the app yourself. However, the downside is that learning the SDK takes time, sometimes more than you can spare.

For example, just learning the basics of the SDK took me approximately five months, even with a good background in programming. The SDK is always expanding; I have been doing this for four years, and I still learn new things every day. While you are learning the SDK, someone could be developing your idea! I am not saying that developing your own idea is always a race against competitors, but it is possible that while you are preparing, another developer may cross the finish line with a similar concept. Therefore, I suggest that if you have an idea for the next big app, or an idea that is very time sensitive, then by all means, have a studio or developer create the app.

Having a developer create the app comes with its share of responsibilities and potential issues as well. FMost important, have anyone you are discussing an idea with sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA). This document will protect your idea and your intellectual property. Recently, a client came to the studio with an idea for an app that I thought was very original. He came to us because we offer a unique service whereby we develop a client's app free of charge if the idea is something we really like; in turn, the client receives a cut of the profits. This is a good way for people with great ideas and a low budget to have apps developed. In this particular case, we were a bit busy and were not going to be able to start on the app for at least another month. The client decided he couldn't wait and went to another studio. A few months later, I noticed that his app was in the App Store. I e-mailed him my congratulations. He didn't e-mail me back but rather called me immediately. The situation he described was that he still had not developed his app idea; furthermore, the new studio had not signed an NDA. Regrettably, someone was selling his app idea, and he had no way of proving it was his. Unfortunately, this is just one of many times in which the inexperienced have been taken advantage of through unethical business practices.

Moreover, choosing the right developer or development studio is crucial. This is by far the most complicated part of outsourcing the development process. Because I own a development studio the Idea 2 App Store (www.idea2appstore.com), I am familiar with the information most potential clients will require. The first question you should ask is whether the development studio or developer is local. Basically, developers are divided into two categories: *local* (which I will define as your country of residence) and *overseas* (which I will define as Indian, Chinese, or Russian). Both types have positive and negative aspects. Generally, local development will require more financially; however, you will likely get a much better product. A local developer will afford you much greater control over the development process. Most studios with local clientele have a more intimate connection with clients. Frequent face-to-face meetings are ideal for development because you will be able to communicate openly with the developer as you become more comfortable, allowing you to share your vision more completely. Generally, the greater personal handling of the local studios costs more than the services of a freelance developer, but the results are well worth the expense. In fact, the intimacy of a local studio will allow you to see a demonstration of your app before production, meaning that you will be able to correct any errors and greatly reduce the number of revisions needed in the end, a benefit that will likely save you precious time and money. Most local development studios will charge between $75 and $125 an hour for development; this usually includes all the necessary graphics.

Another option is remote development. Overseas developers typically work inexpensively but may deliver subpar apps. This is usually due to the language barrier and the education and experience of the developers.

I have outsourced a few apps when I have been too busy. Of the five I have outsourced, only one came back usable. Needless to say, I don't have entire apps outsourced. Although there are exceptions, historically, local developers/studios create superior apps.

At times, overseas outsourcing can be used without causing the final product to suffer. When my studio becomes overwhelmed with client requests, I choose to outsource some of the development. My method of outsourcing allows me to meet client expectations while still delivering a quality product. If I am forced to outsource development, I make sure that it is only the backbone and basic features of the app. Because doing these is fairly straightforward, it would be difficult for any developer to get it wrong. After the basic features are completed, my team will then develop the more advanced feature set. Experience has taught me that this strategy—outsourcing the easy jobs while keeping the major features local—saves the client money and ensures production of a high-quality app in a timely fashion.

Outsourcing the beginning design and easy features is generally the most mundane part of the development process and can be handled by a relative amateur. There really isn't a need to spend top dollar when having the base features implemented. For the select few with unlimited means, you could certainly keep all the app development local, but for those who need to economize, the hybrid development plan works well. Once you have a good base app built from outsourcing, find a quality local studio or developer. This is when having someone that is experienced matters. That person will be in charge of handling the more difficult features and overall user interface (UI), or, basically, what the user sees: buttons, images, animations, icons. By handling the development process in this manner, you will save time, money and headaches.

After you have found your developer, what should you do next? First, get a sound contract written. Fortunately, you do not necessarily need an expensive lawyer to make this happen. Search the Internet; there are hundreds of template contracts you can use. Make sure the contract grants you the rights to the source code of the app. If a developer will not grant you the rights to the source code, do not work with that person! Web sites such as Elance (`www.elance.com`) are useful for finding developers but are plagued with the issues discussed previously.

Before taking your idea to the developer, design the concept on paper. When a client comes to my studio with an app idea but no paper or Photoshop model, I almost instantly turn the client down. If you take the time to design the app, you will save yourself expense and frustration. Remember, you know in your head what the app needs to look like and do; nevertheless, developers cannot read minds! The more prepared you are, the better chance you have of your app's being a success.

It is no longer 2009; the App Store is a very crowded and competitive marketplace. If you are looking simply to create the next goofy fart app and retire, you should probably think again. Since the launch of the App Store redesign in iOS 6, it has become even harder for apps to get noticed, and things aren't going to change with iOS 7. You are going to need a great title, awesome keywords, a killer description, a superb app with beautiful graphics, and a near genius marketing plan. I am not trying to intimidate you; I am just letting you know the facts. Lucky for you, you have this handy-dandy book.

# Picking the Right Title

When app lovers are searching for new apps to download, they first see look at the app's title. The App Store loads the title of the app first and then loads the images asynchronously (in the background). Therefore, in order to sell, your title must be catchy and enticing. A user needs to be able to read the title and instantly think, "I have to buy this" or "Hmm, this is interesting, better open it and check out the details."

There are two types of titles: *plain* and *description*. A plain title is just that: the title of the app. This is common with popular games,such as **Angry Birds**, **Cut the Rope**, and **Tiny Wings**. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this type of descriptor:

> **Pros**: These short names build great brand recognition and are easy to remember.

> **Cons**: Without a description following the title, these apps will not get as many hits for keywords (keep in mind that words in the title count as keywords). For instance, if your app were called **Photo Caption—Create Pictures with Captions**, each word in the title—"photo," "caption," "create," and so on—would get a keyword hit, whereas if the title were simply **Photo Caption**, only "photo" and "caption" would get hits.

Description titles, conversely, are popular with appreneurs wanting to get a few extra hits for their keywords. Searchable keywords are divided into three categories:

> **Publisher name**: The publisher for the app's display name, such as Rovio for **Angry Birds**. If you search for "Rovio," you will see **Angry Birds** right at the top.

> **App title**: The title of your app; this can be either the plain title or the description title.

> **Keywords**: Keywords are hidden from the public and are submitted with the app to the App Store.

Publisher name is the strongest keyword and will yield the highest ranking, followed by app title and then keywords. Also built into the search algorithm are the number of total downloads, downloads per day, and ratings and reviews. No one knows for sure the exact formula for the search algorithm, but there are a few educated guesses among seasoned developers. I assign each category a point value to get an idea as to how my app will rank for a searched term. The more points, the higher the keyword ranking. For example:

> *Publisher name*: Five points
>
> *App title*: Three points
>
> *Downloads per day*: Two points
>
> *Total downloads*: One point
>
> *Keywords*: One point
>
> *Reviews*: One point

To demonstrate, let's say our App Store publishing company (or individual name) is Great App Publisher; our app's name is *Great App—Awesome Fun App*; and our keywords are "great," "app," "multiplayer," and "game."

If you were to search for "great app," chances are we would come up at the top because "great app" is in the publisher name, title, and set of keywords. There is some speculation that if a word is in your title, then it doesn't matter if it is one of the keywords. This was true until only recently. Now, if you searched for a term, for example, "great multiplayer" (for our game), and "great" and "multiplayer" weren't in our set of keywords, then our app wouldn't have shown up. For this reason, I like to include my app's title in my set of keywords. For the search "great app," we would have gotten ten points for the searched terms, regardless of downloads or reviews. That is a very good result, and it would be easy to keep a high search result for that ranking. Understand that this hypothetical scenario is an ideal case. Usually, publisher name is not something you can get a hit on; sadly, that's just the nature of the beast.

Although you cannot control all aspects of the keyword process, there are still ways to show up very high in the search algorithm. Initially, rank is easy

to escalate with new apps, but it is much harder to achieve a high position by climbing the ladder over time. Follow these three steps to ensure you are ranked high when your app is released:

1.  Make sure your app has a few good keywords in the title and be certain they are used as description to avoid rejection by Apple. Technically, Apple does forbid having keywords in the title, but if they are used as a description of your app, Apple does not care. Take, for example, the app name Gun Range—Fun Exciting Super Awesome Gun Range. Apple will reject this instantly because you are using keywords blatantly in the title. Now, let's say we change the app name to Gun Range—Virtual Shooting Range 45+ Guns. Apple would likely allow this because it is a description of what the app does. This is a fantastic way to get a few extra keyword hits.

2.  Check that you have a good set of keywords, including your app's title name. Recently, Apple changed the search algorithm, such that you cannot search for a word in the title plus a keyword and see a result. Therefore, always include your app's title as a keyword. There are rumors that Apple will be reverting to the old search algorithm, but be forewarned that minor things such as this are changed quite often.

3.  Look to see that you are getting a lot of downloads in the first 72 hours of your app's going live. This is the crucial time for determining where you show up in the search term's ranking. The first three days can make or break your app. Don't worry; there is a ton of information later in the book about how to get the downloads you'll need.

# Choosing Quality Keywords

Once your app is in development, there is still work to be done. This is the time to do research on the most important part of the app: keywords. Keywords, as mentioned earlier, are words or phrases that users will search for to find your app. No matter how great your app is, if users cannot find it, then it will not sell. Regrettably, a defined set of keywords that will guarantee

your app is found and downloaded does not exist. However, the web site AppCodes (`www.appcod.es`) is a hidden gem, a resource for keyword help. This site is incredibly useful for optimizing search terms. Its value lies in allowing you to see your competitor's keywords. This is huge! Most people do not understand the power of keywords and how they are used to increase your app's visibility in the App Store. Quality keywords will put your app in front of the most users, and because of the vast number of apps available to consumers, you will need all the exposure possible. There are no set keywords that produce perfect results. Each app is different and, as such, requires specialized keywords.

Many developers will attempt to benefit from successful apps by including app names in their set of keywords. The purpose of this ploy is to gain traffic generated from popular apps. Although on the surface this may seem like a logical plan, it is not a good idea for one reason: in general, people don't search for apps by name. Users will usually enter a search term such as "fun game" or "free shooting game."

So, once you have done your research and have your keywords ready, what can you do next to ensure success?

# Designing a Quality App Icon

Besides the title, an app's icon is probably the most important factor in determining whether the app is downloaded. Consumer research attests that people like visually appealing icons. Case in point, we had an app that was really entertaining in terms of content but that had a really ugly icon. Sales were disappointing, to say the least. In an effort to improve sales, I decided to have the icon redone from the ground up. The icon looked substantially better; the makeover gave it that visually appealing "wow" factor. Overnight, sales quadrupled and continued to rise. The app went from being ranked 157 to 24 in games in one day. Remember when I said that users love updates? When updates address the issues and concerns users have, they are ecstatic to see the changes; happy users often tell other people about the apps they enjoy.

Because visual appeal is subjective, there is no set standard for designing an icon. Often, the graphic design process is the greatest struggle for appreneurs, but there are some guidelines that can make the process less painful. First, look at what kinds of icons your competitors have. What do you like about them? What do you dislike? Have the users said anything about the icon in the reviews? Once you have an idea for an icon, jot it down, and find a quality graphic designer. ***Do not pinch pennies when it comes to the graphic designer***. Graphic designers abound, but quality graphic designers are much more rare. Finding a designer is much like finding a developer. You

need to look into the person's past work and check the quality. Remember, the icon can make or break the app. I have seen apps that had the potential to go viral, but because the icon was so unappealing, users simply didn't download the app. To consumers, their phone is a prized possession; no one wants ugly icons on their home screen.

When you have what you think is a good icon designed, share it with your friends. Ask for their honest opinion. Listen very closely to any constructive criticism they may have. I would also post the icon on any forums that may be specific to your app and ask for opinions there. Two forums, iPhoneDevSDK (`www.iphonedevsdk.com`) and MacRumours (`www.macrumors.com`), are both generally good for this type of thing. Feedback is always important, and it is imperative to your app's success that you learn to receive it. Just because you like an icon doesn't mean everyone else will. Do not get so invested in your personal opinions and tastes that you discount valuable information. Ultimately, your goal is to make an appealing app for a user, not yourself.

# Writing an Engaging App Description

At this point, you have developed your app, chosen keywords, and designed a beautiful icon. You should be finished, right? Almost. At last, you are in the final stages of the development process. To complete the process, you need to write a great description of your app's purpose and function. Think of the app's description as a summary of what the app will do. Grab your favorite book or DVD, and flip it over to the back for inspiration. Imagine you are the app consumer. What could you read that would compel you to download the app? If the consumer is reading your description, that person is already intrigued; either your icon or your app title has piqued the consumer's interest. Now, it is time to close the deal! As an attention grabber, I like to start off my descriptions with any awards or great reviews my app has received. If a popular app review web site reviews one of my apps favorably, I will copy and paste the short review into my description and cite it. Users like to see this; it shows them they are downloading an excellent app. Even if you don't have a popular web review, you can also benefit from posting a specific user's review from the app's "Reviews" section. Although anonymous reviews are not as prestigious, they are still worthwhile, especially if your app is new. After positive reviews, I then like to put a few of the app's highest-achieved rankings in the app's description.

When users open my app, the first things they see about the app are positive. They see it has a good ranking and that it has earned favorable reviews. Oftentimes, this alone can be enough to get you that download. Yet, although you want to present your app in the best possible terms, it not advisable to invent good reviews or rankings if your app has not yet

earned them. Give it some time; if, after a few months, you don't have a good review or high ranking, it is time to make some changes to your app, because something is not right.

Once you have a good description written down, take it to an editor, or a friend who is grammatically gifted, and have him or her proofread it. Chances are by this point you're very excited about your app, and this can cause you to overlook a typo or other error. Trust me, I know from personal experience how embarrassing proofing errors can be. Granted, this metadata can be changed even after an app is live, but it still makes you look bad. You want your description to be engaging, informative, and accurate. Despite the description's importance in terms of appeal to app users, do not be misled by appreneurs who tell you that you can get search hits for words in your description. This is not true. Your description has one main purpose: to tell the user what your app will do.

# Creating Enticing Screenshots

Last, but certainly not least, is the app's display screenshots. In iOS 7, apps are displayed via tiles. These tiles show one app at a time, but they offer much more information about the app than previous displays. The biggest addition is that your screenshots show up on searches. Screenshots are now make-or-break for your app. Take a look at Ironhide Game Studio's Kingdom Rush Frontiers:
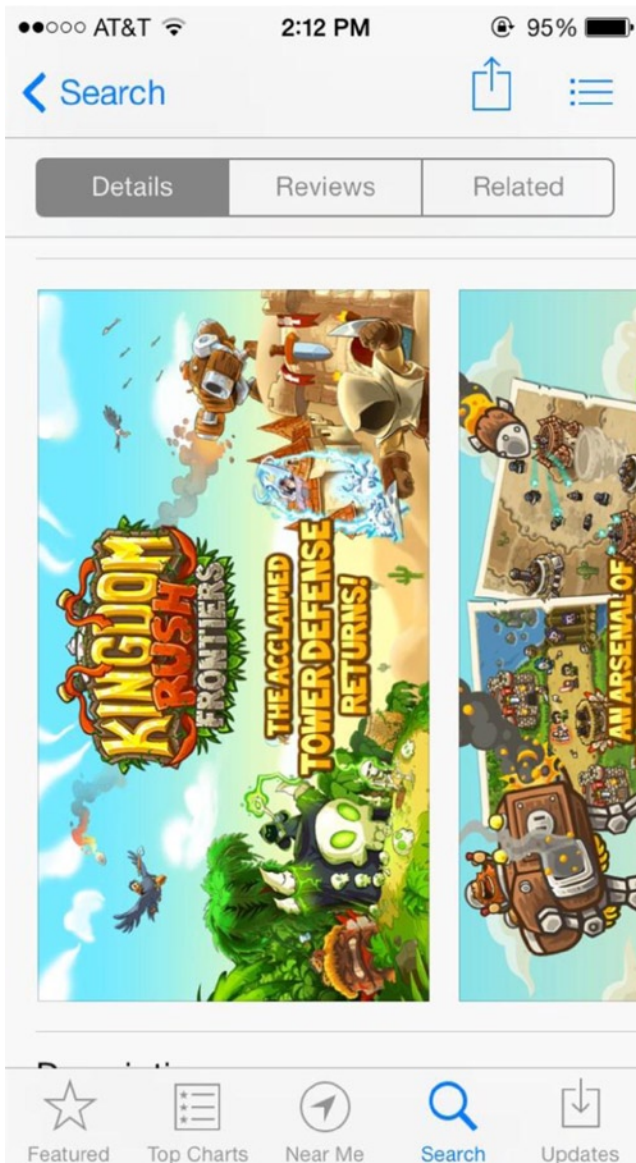
Screenshots are usually the first and last image users see before buying the app, so you need to impress them. Weary buyers are often convinced to buy an app because the screenshot sealed the deal. Screenshots are generally of two varieties in the App Store: *plain* (essentially, an exact replica of the app's screens) and *designed*. Designed screenshots can either enhance or degrade an app, depending on the quality. Most use an iPhone template and add cool colors and text over the plain screenshot that really make the

image come to life. For ideas on how to do these well, take a look at the top 25 apps. These are usually done by companies with large budgets and have amazing graphics. But, bear in mind that whereas you cannot go wrong with a simple screenshot, a poorly designed screenshot can have devastating results. Recently, I tested my theory. We had a funny picture-captioning app that was ranked number 12 in its category. The app had plain screenshots, so I decided to make some rather poorly designed screenshots and see what happened. (Testing a theory on a top app is not generally a good idea, but I was willing to risk it in the interest of gathering the most accurate data for this book.) Almost overnight, the app's ranking fell by nearly a hundred spots. To test the positive effects of superb work, I had my designer create some professional screenshots. My theory was proven to be accurate. With the new, graphically pleasing screenshots, the app surged in the rankings to number 7, even higher than its earlier position!

An effective strategy I like to use when making designed screenshots is to try to tell a story. If you can do this successfully, potential buyers will be attracted. Make the screenshots colorful and fun. Users are buying apps to have a good time; make them entertaining! Here are the example screenshots from our photo-captioning app **Meme Creator Pro**. They are very simple, but much more entertaining than plain screenshots.



Do you see how these screenshots tell the story of the app—what it is and does? Well-designed screenshots such as these are also more amusing and visually appealing than ordinary, straight-from-the-phone screenshots. If you have been researching apps, you probably noticed that most of the top-selling apps include well-designed screenshots. Why do you think that is? Simply put, good-looking screenshots drive downloads. The possibilities for screenshot design are endless and vary with each unique app. If you find a good designer for your screenshots, stay with that person. As discussed previously, finding a reliable, capable designer is not an easy task, and you may have to work with a few different people before finding one that meets your needs.

Finally, you have your first app ready to be uploaded to Apple for review. Keep this in mind: Apple has become much stricter on the content it will and won't allow in the App Store. To avoid rejection, be sure to review the Apple *IOS Human Interface Guidelines* before submitting an app. If your app requires any type of login or registration, provide Apple a test, or demo account, in the "Review Notes" section of the metadata. If you have any concerns as to whether your app may get rejected, I recommend signing up for any developer forum and posing your questions there first. My personal favorite is iPhoneDevSDK (`www.iphonedevsdk.com`). Quality developers and appreneurs have formed a professional learning community via this site, in which developers will help solve your most troubling content issues. It is likely you'll see me posting on there as well. If your app gets rejected, don't panic and start to wave the white flag. I have had more apps rejected than I can count. My first reaction was usually worry over the months I had spent working in vain. Usually, you will get a message from the reviewer explaining why your app was rejected. Simply make any requested changes and reupload. If you reupload a rejected app, the same reviewer will review it the second time. If it gets rejected the second time, the odds are that particular reviewer will never accept it.

To circumvent the same reviewer, change the app's title, using, for example, a string of random letters, so that you can use the app's title again when you reupload the app. Then, start the upload process again from scratch, reuploading the app. This time, you will get a new reviewer, and maybe your luck will be different. At this point, you will need to create all new metadata, keywords, and screenshots. My rule of thumb is that if I get rejected from three different reviewers, then I throw in the towel. I draw the conclusion that my app contains content that Apple will not allow. If you can find an app in the App Store that is similar to yours, but you are getting rejected, just hang in there, and keep uploading. It may take some time, but if the other app was approved, so, too, can yours be. Once your app is live and in the App Store, you can finally relax, right? Wrong. Relaxation of concern is the most crucial mistake amateur appreneurs make.

How to create considerable profits and long-term revenue are considered next, in Chapter 3.

# Don't Compete in a Market, Create It

A lesson I have learned from the App Store is that apps in specialized markets can do very well. Specialty, or niche, apps are apps for very specific hobbies or types of people. The possibilities are endless: video games, sports, dogs, bird-watching, fishing, astronomy, and so on. Even though these hobby-targeted apps seem to appeal only to a small segment of the population, they can easily bring in six figures. Unfortunately, the success of niche apps is overshadowed by the more widely touted news of someone's creating the next game sensation. Realistically, the odds are stacked against you in terms of creating the next viral game craze. Among the stories that generally go unpublished are those of apps in specialized categories that generate tons of long-term revenue and that have much less competition. I reached out to a fellow appreneur, Brass Monkeigh, when writing this book. His unique series of apps not only transformed the app market, but also literally created a new genre of apps. Brass Monkeigh shares his chronicle of how business acumen can be born of personal passions and interests:

*The story of Brass Monkeigh Apps begins with a familiar set of circumstances: a college dorm, too much free time, and an idea. In 2009 I was a college student taking introductory programming courses. In my spare time I, like most of my roommates and peers, spent far too many hours playing video games. Having the engineering mind that I do, I always kept a calculator next to me while I played. The purpose of this was to keep track of my kill-to-death ratio, which is commonly considered the primary statistic for determining the skill of a*

*player. After every few games played, I would bust out the calculator and figure out how many more kills I needed to add to the numerator of the equation before my ratio would tick up. Streamlining this simple math equation became the springboard on which my company was launched.*

*Around the same time, I purchased my first iPhone. The device's ease of use and ability to support custom software amazed and intrigued me. I made it a personal goal to learn the necessary programming language and design a specialized calculator for the iPhone that would calculate and track my kill-to-death ratio for me and then provide me with different statistics about it. After a month or so of saving tips from my food delivery job, I managed to scrape together $250. I then asked my parents for a loan for the remaining $200 needed to purchase a used MacBook on eBay. This first MacBook wasn't pretty, but it did the job. With only a 13-inch screen there was barely enough room to fit the iPhone simulator, but it was enough for me to design my first app.*

*After I had a working model of what I called the Kill Death Ratio Improvement Tool, the question arose as to whether to publish the app  in the App Store. This question did not have a straightforward answer. I had already spent $450 on this project, nearly half of which was borrowed money that I would have to pay back, and to publish my little calculator in the App Store meant signing up for the iTunes developer program, which would set me back yet another $100. "One hundred dollars buys a lot of ramen noodles" was all I could think of. According to my logic at the time, after I convinced five or six friends to download my app, I would still be out more than $90 in the long run. Thankfully, I could not have been more wrong.*

*January 2010 rolled around, and by that time I had repaid my parents and even had a little holiday money burning a hole in my pocket. I decided to sign up for the developer program and publish my app. By the end of the month, the Kill Death Ratio Improvement Tool by Brass Monkeigh Apps had been published in the iTunes App Store. What happened next would change my life forever. My first day I had three sales. I couldn't believe that three totally random people had paid to download*

*the app I made. The following day, three turned into five. Before long I was making nearly $10 a day, which meant that I would be able to recover the cost of the developer program in only a number of days, compared with the year I thought it would take.*

*The excitement consumed me. Literally overnight I went from a college student sleeping until noon to a motivated individual waking up at 7:00 am every morning to check my download report from iTunes. Shortly thereafter, I started receiving e-mail requests from users of my app asking me to include more features. I spent more long hours working to oblige those requests. Soon, I was devoting as many hours to programming as I was to my delivery job.*

*The process of listening to customer feedback and updating my app accordingly turned into a continuous cycle. The days turned into months, and before long, I had what could be considered a small business. Over the course of two years, I've learned a lot about the app market, and I was honored when Taylor asked me to share some of that knowledge in his new book. There are many lessons that I've learned, but I feel that my friend Brian, of Web Pyro, summed it up best. He told me, "Some of the complex issues that you run into when designing software are so crazy that they probably only have one-in-a-million odds of ever occurring. The problem is that there are millions of them, so statistically you're bound to run into a few." He could not have been more right.*

*Although I feel that my career as a programmer is still just beginning and that the experiences I have to draw on are limited, I have found several lessons to be near universal truths. The first of these truths is that working as an independent software developer provides you incredible freedom. You have the freedom to set your own hours and work how and when you please. Yet, although it may feel like you are your own boss, you're not. Your customers are your boss and should always be treated that way.*

*The next word of advice I would pass along is that you can never expect to make everyone happy. It is an unachievable goal that you must always strive for, but no matter how vast of a resource pool you devote to your products and customer*

*satisfaction, you will never please all your customers. Handling these seemingly illogical consumers will be what defines your company's reputation, its character and integrity.*

Finally, competition is not warfare. I carved out a niche for my business, and it has since become a crowded one. Although I strive to make the best products I can, I must acknowledge that there will always be others out there who come along and make similar (and, admittedly, sometimes better) features for their products. This is, in fact, how I met Taylor. We both designed similar products but managed to learn from one another rather than undermine each other's efforts.

*Competition, success, and failure are all part of the natural cycle of business and life. I am very thankful for the success that the App Store has given me, but it is important to know that success can depart as quickly as it arrives. For this reason, it is important to act with the understanding that nothing lasts forever and to enjoy any success you experience while it lasts, because only time will tell how enduring any given market truly is.*

Brass Monkeigh makes some major points I want to emphasize. I am sure you have heard the saying "The customer is always right." This is beyond true for users. If you fail to keep your users happy, your apps will not do well. Brass Monkeigh saw a market opportunity and was able take advantage of this knowledge. He customized his apps to meet the needs of a particular segment. He is very humble, but let me tell you, his latest line of apps is very well done and incorporates any possible feature a user could imagine. Because of Brass Monkeigh's willingness to optimize features and content based on his customer base's requests, his apps have consistently ranked among the top 100 in the reference category for more than two years.

Let's apply this concept to your app. If you already have an app in the App Store, you probably woke up to download your sales, expecting to be a millionaire; odds are this didn't happen. Maybe your lack of success is what has motivated you to read this book. If success has eluded you, it is not time to give up. Rather, it is time to analyze your app and come up with a good business model. The reason I have dedicated an entire chapter to niche and specialty apps is because of the competitiveness of the App Store today. The days of creating fart apps and fake fingerprint scanners that make millions are over. Truthfully, I am glad about this because I would get infuriated when I would see these stupid apps making tons of money. People now expect quality, complex apps that focus on special interests and hobbies. If you're able create apps that enhance or integrate into a consumer's hobbies, you have struck gold.

# Picking the Right App to Develop

I cannot tell you how many clients come into my office each day and have this "amazing" idea for a game that is going to make billions. Usually I just shake my head. The gaming category of the App Store is beyond competitive. If you create a game, your competitors, who are not independent developers, but multimillion dollar companies, will have a significant advantage. I get this e-mail approximately once a day: "I want to create a game like **Angry Birds**." Really, you want to compete against an app that is so popular and branded that it now has shirts, toys, candy, and even headphones? Yeah, that will go well. Can you sense my sarcasm here?

Most novice appreneurs do not fully fathom the complexity involved in creating popular games. To compete alongside the games of this quality will require an investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars. For this reason, I deliver the same forewarning to all clients who want to develop a game app: you will make a dollar or millions, but there isn't much room in between. I know scores of developers and appreneurs; many have made millions on apps, but none have made millions on games. I never shoot someone's dream down, but I try to let clients know that they are taking a huge gamble and that the odds are stacked greatly against them. So, to minimize risk, I try to convince them that their first project should be smaller—a niche app. You need experience before taking on such a major project.

Perfection without practice is an unreasonable expectation with any endeavor, and creating apps is no different. Therefore, I begin questioning my clients about hobbies and passions to help them with the app development process. Usually, by the end of this conversation they have nixed the idea of a game in favor of a niche app that will yield them more money and cost a fraction to develop. Whereas the gaming market has a small potential to be lucrative, the niche market shows promise for long-term financial gain. The simple economics of supply and demand explains this phenomenon. The games market is flooded with choices; however, the niche market has fewer offerings for the target population. Needless to say, when consumers search for apps relevant to their particular hobby, the scarcity of choices will influence them to download those apps that appeal to their interests. It is a little known fact among experienced appreneurs that the specialized market is extremely popular and powerful. I am not a fortune teller, but I could probably take your phone, look at the apps, and tell you what your hobbies are.

# The Power of Niche and Specialty Apps

Advertising and marketing niche apps is not difficult. For instance, maybe you have created an app for bicyclists because you're an avid cyclist. Initially, you want to make sure when you market the app that only cyclists are exposed to the ad. There is no point in doing broad-spectrum advertising, for example, using Facebook or Google, because not everyone cares about cycling. Free advertising is always the best, so begin accessing some forums for cyclists. Then, post about the app to let people know about it. It is likely the cycling groups will be excited to see what you have created. Next, look on YouTube for some popular cyclists. Remember, you have a new app, so don't approach Lance Armstrong or Dave Mirra. Instead, find popular but lesser-known cyclists. Reach out to them, and see if they are willing to back and promote the app. You should expect to offer the cyclist sponsor something in return for the endorsement, either money or exposure. My experience has shown that having some popular YouTubers backing your app will be worth the aggravation; popularity sells.

After you have recruited popular cyclists to back your app, people on the forums will be talking about it. Now, it is time to approach some cycling companies for affiliate programs. Affiliate programs are set up to offer you money for selling a company's products. Companies providing these programs are also willing to advertise your app for you; of course, while they are advertising your interests, they are simultaneously advertising the company's products. By the completion of the affiliation process, your app is selling, and you are making steady revenue. Consequently, people are buying your affiliate's products from the app, and you are making even more revenue. Affiliate programs are a well-kept secret in the app world that you now know about! The cycling example serves as a model for successful app marketing. Even though you may not be creating a bicycling app, changing this template to fit your app's needs is very simple.

In the world of niche apps, customer relations is paramount. People will want to contact you about your app. This may be in the form of a bug report or just someone saying that he or she enjoys the app. Be sure to include a simple e-mail form in your app for these inquiries. Getting back to your customers in a timely fashion will benefit you significantly in the long run. You can build a great relationship with a user just by taking a few seconds to e-mail that person back. If your app is for users between the ages of 12 and 18, this is even more important. Young consumers think it is cool when the developer e-mails them back and often will look up to you. Also, if your particular app is conducive to community interaction, take advantage of this. For instance, Brass Monkeigh makes guides for popular video games; he has one of the best customer relations models of anyone I know. He personally writes responses to the majority of his users'

e-mails and interacts with his users via Facebook and Twitter. His best form of customer interaction, however, is community games. He invites his users to play the video games with him. By making a connection with his consumers, he ensures that these people will download each app he makes, and believe me, they do. People also share and retweet his apps constantly on the various social networks. So, Brass Monkeigh has created a virtual relationship with his consumers, resulting in repeat business and free advertising!

By taking the time to build a relationship with your users, you are guaranteeing they will buy your future apps. These actions will make them feel like your friend; as a friend, they will likely advertise your apps to others. Remember to respect your customers. They paid money for your app, so keep them happy, and add the features they want. The appreneurs that listen to their customers are always successful.

Now it is time to further your app education by learning about the various business models for apps. This topic is covered in Chapter 4.

4

# Generating Revenue from Various Business Models

As you learn more about the world of apps, you begin to understand that different types of apps require different business models. Most amateur appreneurs think that the only way an application can generate revenue is with the paid model (pay a flat, one-time fee to download the application; $0.99, $1.99, $2.99, and so on). This is the simplest strategy, but it doesn't always produce the results you desire. Recently, I have noticed that free apps with in-app purchases, or "freemiums," have dominated the market. Here is why: people do not hesitate to download free apps. You will generally get between 50 and 100 free downloads per paid download. That means (at the high end), if fifty people downloaded your app for free, one would have paid outright for it. Now, if this sounds like a very low number, that's because it is. The freemium model changes this up in your favor substantially. Please note, however, for the freemium model to work, you need to have an application that is enticing and entertaining. If your application is not something of value, why would a user buy premium upgrades? Let's go on a quick tangent to illustrate this point. When you think of the apps that generate the most money, which ones come to mind? Possibly, you thought of **Angry Birds**, **Words with Friends,** or **Cut the Rope**? You might be surprised to learn that of the top-5-grossing apps, all are freemiums.

One of my freemium favorites, **Zynga Poker**, serves as an excellent case study. This app is free for anyone to download. As you begin to play, you are given a limited number of chips (virtual currency) with which to bet. Each day you play, you are awarded a few more chips. But, if you lose your entire daily chip allowance, how can you continue to play? In "App Purchases" the game allows you to buy chips and keep playing. The game designers draw

players in with the free app. This allows you to play and get hooked. When you run out of chips, you have two choices: wait until the next day to play or pay a small fee to continue playing. Two personality traits that seem to be shared among app users are impulsivity and impatience; users **hate** waiting! A wise appreneur can use this knowledge to his or her business advantage. Surely, you are wondering who would pay for virtual currency that has no real value. I'll answer that for you: millions of people! Don't just take my word for it. Research the top-25-grossing apps (top-grossing apps are the apps that produce the most revenue, not downloads), and see how many are freemiums with virtual currency or upgrades.

Another example, **Temple Run**, also took the App Store by storm. I downloaded it and played for a while, all the time wondering, "How does this app make any money?" My first couple of exposures only showed it as a freemium. Then, I saw it; as you progress through the levels, you earn coins to use on upgrades and unlocks. The game's design includes an in-app purchase to acquire more coins. Once again, I thought to myself, "Who would buy this? It has no purpose." By the next day, I could answer my own question because I was hooked on the game and wanted to upgrade my character. My decision was a simple one: I could play for a few hours and earn the coins or spend a buck and buy them. I bought them and was actually quite happy with my purchase.

# Making Money from Free Apps

Just because an app is free doesn't mean it cannot make any money. The preceding case studies, **Temple Run** and **Zynga Poker**, serve as excellent examples for disproving the notion that free apps are not profitable. Freemium apps are still one of the best ways to generate a large number of downloads and then translate those downloads into good, stable revenue. Remember, you will likely get between a 1to 50 and a 1 to 100 paid-to-free download ratio. By being able to convert this massive number of free downloads into sales, you will likely make more money than with a paid-only version. When I am creating a freemium app, I like to include ads and in-app purchases. If you have a paid version of the game, do not feel guilty about adding ad banners to it. Ideally, you want to annoy users with the ads in the hopes that they will buy the paid version to remove them. Furthermore, I also try to provide an array of in-app purchases. The more you can think of, the better. You can have in-app purchases to add features, upgrade in-app features, remove ads, and much more. As mentioned earlier, you will be surprised by the things people will buy. Just because you find the idea of purchasing virtual items ridiculous does not mean a user will share your perspective.

We have discussed both paid versions and freemium versions, so what is left? Free with ads is a business model that I would suggest only if there are no applicable inapp purchases and if a paid version doesn't make sense. This model allows you to have a completely free application, with ads. These ads are your sole source of revenue.The more users you have, the more money you will make on ads. In reality, appreneurs will not likely become millionaires from only ad revenue, but there is still money to be had.

The final business model is known as user base. A user base is essentially a collection of users who are engaged with the app. Most user bases contain a database with e-mail addresses. In today's online world, user bases are worth their weight in gold. I am sure you have heard of the free app *Instagram*. It seems unbelievable but true that *Instagram* has made more than one billion dollars without offering a single ad or in-app purchase. In a famous business transaction, Facebook purchased *Instagram*, primarily for its user base. This has happened more times than you would think in the App Store. Apps that require users to register will give appreneurs access to users' names and e-mail addresses. This can be an invaluable business tool. If you build a good e-mail list of your app's users, you can then market to them directly, via e-mail, when you release a new app.

# Choosing the Right Business Model

After considering all the business model possibilities, which one will you choose for your apps? That answer should be fairly straightforward: all of them. Many of the top apps have both a paid version and a free version with ads and in-app purchases. For what business reasons would they offer two choices? Exposure. Offering two versions doubles the chances that a user will find the app. The free with ads and in-app-purchase-backed versions typically generate a greater number of downloads. Moreover, the more downloads you have, the more users you have; the more users you have, the more people are talking; the more people are talking, the more downloads you will get. See the cycle here? To generate revenue, your app has to be downloaded. Your goal is to get users who downloaded the free version to upgrade to the paid version. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that this transfer from free to paid will happen. Keep in mind that there are users who will never pay for an app; you will probably not influence their mind-set, regardless of what your app is or does. So, how do you reach the users who are willing to pay? How do you convince them to download the paid version? If your app is a free game, I would use the following model: After each turn, show users a full-screen ad asking them to buy the full version. If they click the ad, it should take them directly to the App Store to make the purchase. It will likely require multiple exposures to the adt to generate a sale, but if they play the game often, soon it will annoy them enough to purchase it. This method of advertisement is a tactic commonly

used by large companies. I actually saw this work with my girlfriend. She was playing one of the online games such as Scrabble, and she was getting annoyed seeing the ad appear after each turn. Finally, I saw her digging in her purse for her credit card. I highly doubt she stopped playing to pay some bills.

Briefly, I want to cover how users in niche markets will pay more for apps. For this example, I will use an app I made that I will call **App X** (I leave my apps out of this book because I am not selling you a product; I am teaching you to make one). **App X** was a paid app ($2.99) that included premium features. I had thought long and hard about what model I should use. The paid-only version was generating good revenue. The users who bought the app absolutely loved it. I added the new premium features as a nonconsumable in-app purchase (nonconsumables, in app purchases, are bought one time and unlock new features or content). I really didn't expect the results I saw the next morning, when I downloaded my sales report. I had a 78 percent conversion rate. That meant that 78 percent of the people who bought the app also bought the in-app purchase. The lesson learned from this scenario is not to underestimate the power of premium features in a niche market. Just because users have already purchased your paid version, that does not mean they are unwilling to pay again. The opposite is actually true, for one simple reason: people who are willing to pay for apps are exactly that, **willing to pay**! Make sure you take advantage of this, or you will be passing up a ton of potential revenue.

Now that you have gained insight into the variety of business models available, let's consider the importance of managing your users. This is the focus of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

# Managing Users Today for Success Tomorrow

In the summer of 2011, I created a new app that I hoped would be a real success. After a few months of low sales, I decided to make the app freemium. With this new model, the app saw thousands of downloads each day. Server costs began to get pretty expensive, and the app was taking up a lot of my time. Server costs are generally calculated based on the amount of data your app's database uses. If you have an app that has a lot of database interactions and a lot of users, your server costs can be hundreds of dollars a month. I wanted to move on to a new project, so I decided to sell the app. Although the app did not generate much revenue, it had a massive user base. I listed the app's rights for sale; the app sold within 48 hours. What was interesting about this was that the buyer didn't purchase the app because he liked it or because he saw it as a million dollar investment. He purchased it for the user base.

Another little-known fact among the majority of appreneurs is the worth of a good user base. Some of my success can be attributed to my early realization of this truth. If you fail to capture your user base, you have a bunch of random users and no data to track. I advise clients to capture, or try to capture, a user's name and e-mail. Collecting this data is relatively easy and can be done via a registration screen and a simple database. It is beneficial to gather as much data as possible. In my apps, I capture information using the following fields:

E-mail

Username

Version number

Paid or free

Number of in-app purchases

Online or offline

Number of e-mails (either to the developer or telling friends)

Number of in-app tweets or Facebook posts

To the inexperienced this may appear to be too much information, but skilled appreneurs realize that information is power. That database interactions are fairly inexpensive makes the data retrieved through them all the more valuable. If you are able to capture a ton of user data, you are going to be an expert about how your app is used. For instance, knowing how many people are online at a particular moment is valuable because it tells you if a new update or added feature was a hit or a miss. Moreover, in the event that the time comes for you to sell the rights to the app (see Chapter 10), you will have all the data at hand. As a result, you will have no problem selling the app. Investors love when apps have a good user base. Investors will want to know trends, daily active users, and if there is an e-mail list associated with the app. Ready access to this information will increase the likelihood that the investors will work out a great offer for you. They will view you as a business professional who deserves respect. In contrast, if you don't have data, you will appear unprepared and unworthy of a fair offer—if they decide to make any offer at all.

# Capturing the Right Data for the Right Results

Capturing your users' information is just part of a successful data retrieval plan. You need to keep your users happy. Most important, you need to keep them using the app! I encourage clients to create a simple e-mail address for their app. With an e-mail address, users can contact you without ever leaving the application. I provide a few different options for e-mailing in my apps:

*Feature request*: This allows users to e-mail you their ideas for making the app better. Remember the saying "The customer is always right"? As mentioned earlier, this golden rule of business is true for your app's users as well. The best part of the feature request is that sometimes the greatest ideas are the result of input from your customers.

*Bug report*: With this option, users can tell you about any bugs and crashes they may experience. Generally, in your first version of the app there will be bugs. Taking heed of users' descriptions of glitches will help you and your developer improve the overall quality of your application. Adding this is a must.

> ***Tell a friend***: By far, this is one of my favorite e-mail features. Not many appreneurs include it, and why, I will never know. I can only assume they think people will not actually use it. This couldn't be further from the truth. One of our games generates more than 100 "tell a friend" e-mails a day! I have a few suggestions on how to get similar results. First, prepopulate the body of the e-mail with text such as this: "I have been using [App name], and it is a ton of fun. You need to check it out: [HTML download link]." You can also copy yourself in the e-mail so that you get a copy each time this is sent. With this data feature, the user e-mails someone he or she knows, using this e-mail template. The recipient opens the e-mail (you will have close to a 100 percent open rate because the e-mail is from someone the person knows well) and sees that it talks about an awesome app. Immediately, the  recipient notices the "Click to download" button and taps it. The link directs the recipient to the App Store to buy or download the app. Again, you have generated free advertising!

This feature is illustrated in the following example, the "Tell a friend" template for my ***Draw with Me*** app:
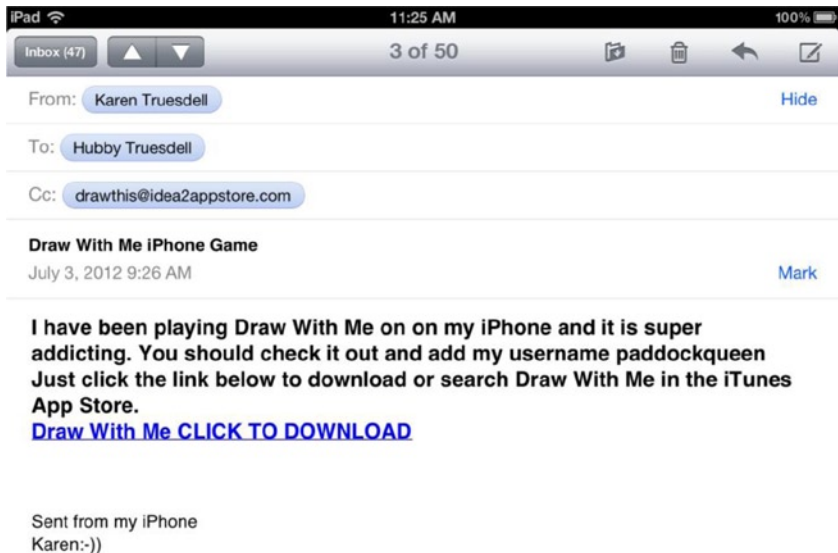
As you can see, the template contains a prepopulated subject and body. The body has the user's name so that the person the user is inviting can play with him or her. I also include the download URL, in addition to the app's title and how to search for it. The more information you can give on how to find the app, the better.

> *Rate the app*: This isn't exactly an e-mail, but it takes the user to the App Store to review the app. Reviews are more important than some appreneurs realize. Understanding the importance of reviews is one of my most treasured App Store secrets. Reviews count toward your App Store search number, the ranking for your app for a searched term (for more details, see Chapter 8); the more reviews you have (they do not necessarily need to be good reviews), the higher you will rank for a searched term. For example, let's say you have an app with the name *App Title—Fun App*. Also, you have a competitor with the very similar title *App Title—Awesome App*. Both of you have *App Title* as the app's name, followed by a subtitle. Furthermore, you and your competitor have keywords that are similar or the same. You even have the same number of downloads. Which app shows up first in the search? The deciding factor is the number of reviews. Knowing that reviews can give you an edge is a trade secret. Take advantage of your newfound knowledge.

# Social Network Dos and Don'ts

No instructions on how to manage users would be complete without considering the proper integration of social networks. Although social networks might seem to be the ideal method for obtaining user data, my advice is, do not ever require a user to sign in via a social network to use an app. There are apps that have lost more than half their user base because of imposing this requirement. Following are some reviews after a top 25 game made Facebook registration mandatory. The reviews displayed are not modified or staged; this is a screenshot right from the game's "Reviews" section.

**AT&T 4G**     **1:38 PM**     89%

Info     **Reviews (61)**

**20. Why facebook? (v1.1.1)**
★★★★★ by willybgood on Jul 6, 2012
I hate that you have to sign in with Facebook, it's stupid!

**21. Shame on EA (v1.1.1)**
★★★★★ by RalphDaddy on Jul 6, 2012
Never ever should an app require a social network account!!! Can we sue when r data is stolen by hacker!?!?!?!

**22. Wack (v1.1.1)**
★★★★★ by BigGee949 on Jul 6, 2012
No fb

**23. Facebook required (v1.1.1)**
★★★★★ by Pd1212 on Jul 6, 2012
Nice looking app but I don't use facebook. So I guess I don't get to see it.

Who requires facebook to play an app. Seriously....

Featured     Categories     Top 25     Search     Updates

Let users choose whether or not they want to use social networks. If you are able to successfully integrate a social network, then you will be able to market to an exponential number of users. If you neglect to use a social network, your users are limited to the linear form of communication when they want to share your app. The constraints of this form permit users to communicate with only a few people at once, and most users won't even do that. Integrating a social network allows hundreds of people to see your app for each person that posts to the social network, resulting in app exposure

to an exponential number of potential users. Each post a user makes to the social network referring to you app will be seen by most of his or her friends on the newsfeed or timeline.

To illustrate the social network's capability, let's say you have a photo-sharing app. A user of your app wants to share a picture via a social network. You need to do this in a way that advertises the app but that isn't blatant. *Instagram*, for example, has implemented this subtle technique. For each picture shared on Facebook, **Instagram** places a small image of its icon in the corner. The icon doesn't affect the quality of the picture and builds great brand recognition. **Instagram** also adds unique albums for the photos users upload from the app. To clarify how this exposure can help your app, let's look at what happens with each shared post. Our user has just posted the photo to a social network. The user has 300 friends, most of whom saw the picture and the icon. A few of them were so intrigued, they downloaded the app. Now, the new users have posted a picture, a few more friends download, and so on. This is how apps go viral. Exponential growth is very powerful; you need to take advantage of it and the free advertising it affords. Ignoring the possibilities social networking sites offer is forfeiting the chance that your app will go viral. Plain and simple, the more people that see your app, the better chances you have of its being successful. Social networks are all about fads. If something is viewed as the latest hot toy, people will not hesitate to download it.

Keeping your users happy is crucial for long-term app success. Maintaining user satisfaction will encourage your users to continue purchasing your apps, in addition to advertising your apps to their friends. Incorporate these tips into your application development, and I believe there is a good chance I will be reading about your app one day.

The next chapter provides a guide for determining which apps are hot and which apps are not.

Chapter 6

# What's Hot and What's Not

One trait that has allowed me to become a successful appreneur is my ability to generate ideas for apps. Granted, I am a very creative individual, but there is more to it than that. I have learned how to quickly and effectively find out which apps are selling and which apps are not. Researching the latest apps isn't as complicated as some people make it out to be. In fact, the only tool you need is a smartphone or tablet. I have discovered that the best way to come up with apps is to get out of your office and focus on your hobby. I am a car enthusiast, so when I need to generate ideas or get away from it all, I go for a drive. A good half of the apps I have brainstormed have originated while taking my car out for a spin on my favorite road. My experience has been that once the appreneur bug bites, it is hard to stop thinking about app possibilities.

## Using the App Store to Make Apps

Even the most creative minds become blocked occasionally. So, when you are struggling to invent new ideas, what can you look to for inspiration? Because the best new ideas are often inspired by old ideas, the answer is simple: the App Store. With the App Store's structure, you can literally see which apps are selling and which apps are not. To ensure long-term success, make reading the App Store's top-selling apps part of your daily routine, much like traditional businesspeople faithfully read the stock reports. Wake up, and first check your app sales. Next, browse each category's top 100 apps. Here, you will see the best-selling apps, an invaluable tool overlooked by novice appreneurs. I have clients come in daily asking, "Do you think this app will do well?" I pick up my phone and find something similar (if applicable). By using the rankings of a similar app, I can give them a rough estimate of how much the app is making per day.

After browsing these categories, take a look at the top 200 overall paid apps. Most of these are large companies that are hard for independent developers to compete against. Keep an eye out for developer names you don't recognize. If you see a new app that has broken the top 200 and that is not produced by a major company, you are looking at a hot new market. Your diligence in recognizing new markets will provide you with guidance about which markets are doing well. With this information, you can consider making an app that is better than or similar to this popular app. Do not hesitate long if you hope to capitalize on the success of a hot new market. These types of markets are time sensitive; you need to get an app out to the App Store. Having a good developer is a key component in terms of speed. True, good developers may cost more, but they are generally much faster.

Steve Jobs once said, "Good artists copy, great artists steal" If you want to compete with these hot, or fad), market apps, you have to be able to not only clone the successful parts of the new app, but also expand on the app's capabilities. To do this, you need to download the app and use it. Also, you need to do your research (see Chapter 1). Investigate what makes this app popular; what are the users saying in reviews? Then, ask yourself the big question: "What can I do better?" If the answer is nothing, do not waste your time and money! Conversely, if you know there is something you can do better, it is time to hit the ground running. You need to implement the improved features and get the app out to the App Store very quickly. Each day you wait is a day your competitor further captures the market. At times, these replicated apps can be a gamble, but they can pay off. Compared with other app markets, these apps will not provide years of long-term, stable revenue, but you can make a lot of money fast by finding creative inspiration in existing apps. Don't forget to see if AppCodes (`www.appcod.es`) has your competitor's app's keywords so that you can know what the competitor is using and employ this knowledge to put yourself even further ahead.

# 'Tis the Season to Make Apps

Seasonal apps, such as the hot apps discussed in the previous section, are time sensitive. Although these apps have a limited sales period, some have been popular enough to rank among the top 100 sellers overall and can produce quick revenue. Examples of seasonal apps range from countdowns to important dates, to holiday cartoons for kids, to Santa trackers—the possibilities are as endless as your creativity and your ability to market for the appropriate season.

The season I like to focus on is Christmas. The Christmas season is the golden time of the year for an appreneur. My first Christmas in the App Store, I made $1,211 in sales on Christmas Day alone. Keep in mind that the

week prior, I was only averaging approximately $80 a day. Those Christmas sales were during my first year in the App Store, and I was fortunate to benefit from the valuable insights they afforded so early in my developing career. Here is why Christmas is such a powerful sales season for us appreneurs. You have kids receiving iPhones/iPads/iPods as gifts These "giftees" will usually get an iTunes card for the device as well, and they will be committed to spending every dime on this card in a matter of seconds. The ideal demographic for Christmas sales is children between the ages of 10 and 18. Because the age demographic is so broad, appreneurs have creative freedom in appealing to the diverse interests represented by this wide spectrum of ages.

One app that really did well in 2012 was a virtual Santa tracker. Hats off to the guy who made this; he is a marketing genius. I had been tracking his sales for the week prior to Christmas. He was ranked approximately 198 overall, which is amazing for any appreneur. When Christmas Eve arrived, he had managed to leap to number 21! I am certain this phenomenal jump in sales allowed him to buy a really nice present for himself. Seasonal apps are all about being in the right market at the right time. Finding popular seasonal apps can be done in the same fashion as outlined for other existing apps. A word of forewarning, though, about seasonal apps: give yourself at least a month before the peak holiday season to generate sales. In other words, if you have a cool Christmas app, you need to have it in the App Store by Thanksgiving. Do not plan on submitting the app on Christmas Eve.

# A New Idea for a New Market

A possible, but increasingly unlikely, scenario is that your app idea is not represented at all in the App Store. What does this mean? Some ideas are good, and some are bad. The first thing you need to do in this situation is talk with an experienced developer (make sure you have an NDA signed). Check to be certain your idea is a technical possibility and something your respective App Store will allow. If your app checks out in both of these areas, then you are in a gambling position. The app may do either really well or really poorly. How popular is the community for this app? If the answer is small, then the app may not do well. In contrast, if the community is fairly large, you could very well be sitting on a gold mine.

Just because there are hundreds of thousands of apps in the App Store doesn't mean all the good ideas are taken. New breakthrough apps hit the store every day, and this will continue for years to come. The more creative you are, the better. I have created a few apps for clients for which I sat in my office thinking to myself, "Is there even remotely a market for this?" The answer was yes. One of these surprisingly successful apps was an

interactive wildlife guide. Basically, this app provides information on anything you would need to know to identify a bug, plant, or animal in the wild. This kind of app sounds like something the majority of people would never download, and that is a reasonable assertion; however, there are enough enthusiasts to keep these apps in the top 25 of the reference category.

By keeping an eye on app trends and fads, you'll be able to understand and predict the app market. Once this happens, you will see your sales begin to climb. In time, you will even be able to accurately estimate what an app may make.

# Making the Most of Your Advertising Money

Experience has been my teacher concerning advertising of apps. I wish I could say that I nailed it on my first try, or second, or even third. Thankfully, I learn from my mistakes, because I made every advertising mistake one could before I became adept at using advertising effectively. One seemingly sound source of advertisement advice is ad agencies. They will likely contact you, pitching ad campaigns that are too good to be true. I fell for this a few times. I ran a massive campaign with one of these agencies and saw no increase in sales. I wasted thousands of dollars; I can tell you that something like that leaves a really bad taste in your mouth. After hearing over the years from all the fellow developers and appreneurs who have made the same mistakes, I am a little less embarrassed. By reading this book, I hope you can profit from our blunders and not have to go down the same path;I hope you can gain insight from my experiences and run successful advertising for your app on the first try!

Before we discuss what works for advertising, I want to tell you about the failures that I, along with other appreneurs, have had. One of the campaigns I quickly learned doesn't work for the app market is Facebook sidebar ads. These are very inexpensive ads, but the truth is, no one clicks them. I imagine most people just tune them out. Morever, because the majority of Facebook users use the mobile app, which doesn't serve any ads, app advertisement is missed by the largest segment of Facebook's audience. Recently, however, Facebook has started showing suggested apps on its mobile app. This is where you want to advertise your app, not as a sidebar on the web site. I have yet to meet a developer who has had success with the Facebook sidebar ad model, and I highly doubt I ever will. Another issue with cost-per-click ads and apps is that when a user clicks your app's

ad—and remember, this can only happen from the desktop version of the site—that person will likely be directed to your app's web site or App Store URL. Then, the user must grab his or her phone and search for the app name to download. I can assure you, this rarely happens. This business model works well with web sites whose goal is to gain more traffic but is just horrible for apps. If you use an impression model with Facebook, you will be dealing with the same problems. Unless your app's ad literally screams at users, they will probably never see it. If they do click it, we are back at where we started, facing the issues discussed here.

What I do recommend for social networks is to use them to interact with your users and talk about your app. Take my app *Secret Happy Hour*. We started building the Twitter, Facebook, and *Instagram* pages months before the app was even out. Why would I do this? The answer is simple: I am making a nice little teaser for the app, and I now have a few thousand people ready to download the app the day it goes live. The key to building followers quickly is to focus on posting quality content and engaging with your users. Don't just make your social page a huge billboard for your app; people will get tired of that. Ask your followers questions, mention features you are implementing, and request input; make users feel involved. Be certain your page reflects your app's design look and feel so that you can really brand the entire app. The Twitter for *Secret Happy Hour* is a perfect example of how to do this. In only a few months we gathered a few thousand followers and have more and more people asking about the app each day.
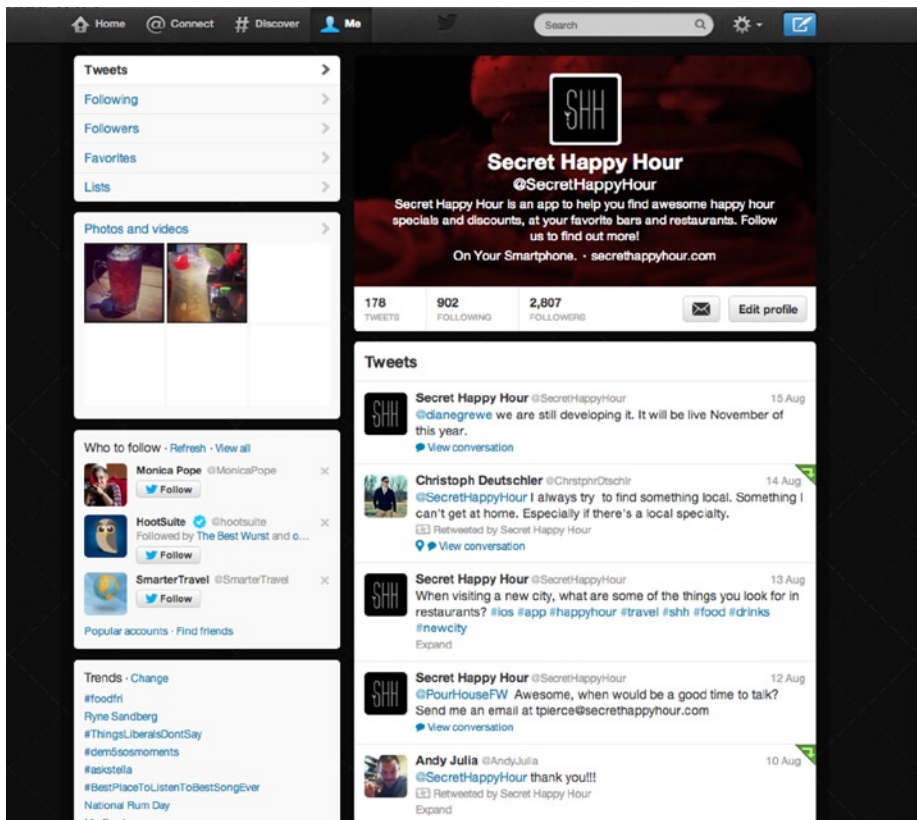
Building followers for your app on social networks isn't as hard as one might think. Most important, you need to make sure you are targeting your specific demographic; there is no point in gathering tons of followers who will never download your app. Let's look at how I handled social networks for our app *Secret Happy Hour*. *Secret Happy Hour* is an app that allows users to get discounts at their favorite bars and restaurants. The discounts are served as happy hours that are available only to app users. The demographic here is people who like to go out to eat and drink, specifically people who want to get discounts while doing so. I quickly began following a lot of the hot bars and restaurants around the United States. Then, I started to follow and "favorite" users, based on specific hashtags. Hashtags are used on Twitter, Facebook, and *Instagram* to tag a work that users can search. I would follow and favorite users who frequently hashtag "happyhour," "drinks," "food," "discounts," and "coupons." Next, I began posting once every few days about what the app will do. Keep in mind that this is months before the app was released. I would then ask users what kinds of features they would like to see. To fill in the gaps between these posts, I posted interesting articles

and stories about happy hours and restaurants. When you post or tweet, be sure to use the hashtags you are targeting in your post. By so doing, we were able to get approximately 2,000 followers in a month.

Recall the discussion in Chapter 4 of integration of social networks within apps. hashtag This is the most effective method of advertising on Facebook; best of all, it is free and works on mobile devices. I am a big fan of free advertising, as you will soon learn, and have found ways to market apps without spending a fortune.

The next advertising failure is banner ads. Granted, they are more productive than Facebook ads, yet they still will produce minimal results, and it is unlikely you will break even. I have tried advertising apps on a wide array of web sites. In one of my many failed banner ad ventures, I ran an ad on a popular app review web site, hoping to get great results. To my chagrin, even the popularity and content of the site did not increase my sales. Take a look at my numbers:

> 255,862 impressions
>
> 117 clicks
>
> 0.05 percent click-through rate
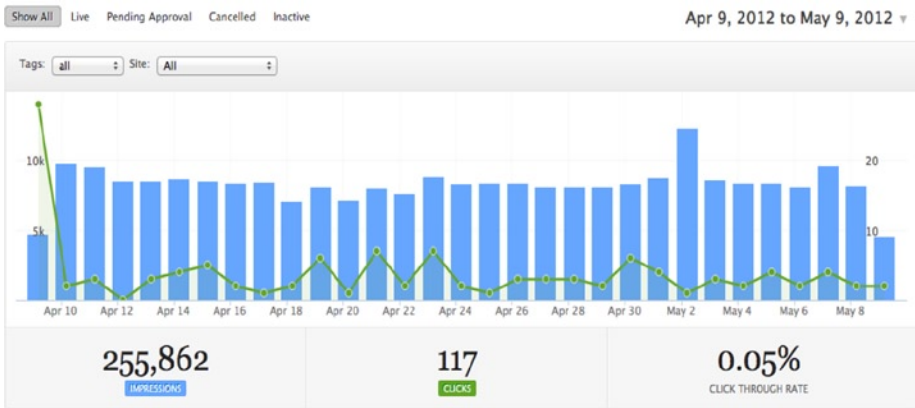


I paid almost $400 for the ad and saw no increase in sales. Obviously, banner ads were not worth the expense. This type of ad was also one recommended by a "big" ad agency. The issue with these agencies is that they are made up of salespeople. These people are not trying to make your app do better; they are trying to sell you something.

# Advertising Methods That Work

The failures would not be so easy to share if I couldn't also share the good advertising moves I have made. This may sound a bit unconventional, but Twitter blasts are becoming a good, direct form of advertising. I ran a few of these and had some great results. Best of all, these ads are super cheap! Here are some statistics from an ad I ran at the same time as the banner ad mentioned earlier.

Now, the number of impressions is a little harder to gauge with tweets. For this, I am going to assume that all 9,000 followers saw the tweet, which isn't the case, but just humor me.

> 9,000 impressions
>
> 161 clicks
>
> 1.8 percent click-through ratio

| Show All  Live  Pending Approval  Cancelled  Inactive | | | | | | Last 30 Days ▾ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tags: all  ⇕  Site: All  ⇕ | | | | | | | |
| **0** IMPRESSIONS | | | **161** CLICKS | | | **0.00%** CLICK THROUGH RATE | |
| Placement | Status | Renews | Tags | Cost | Clicks | Impressions ↓ | CTR |
| AppSafari | Inactive | -- | tweet ✕ | $29.00 | 161 | 0 | 0.00% |
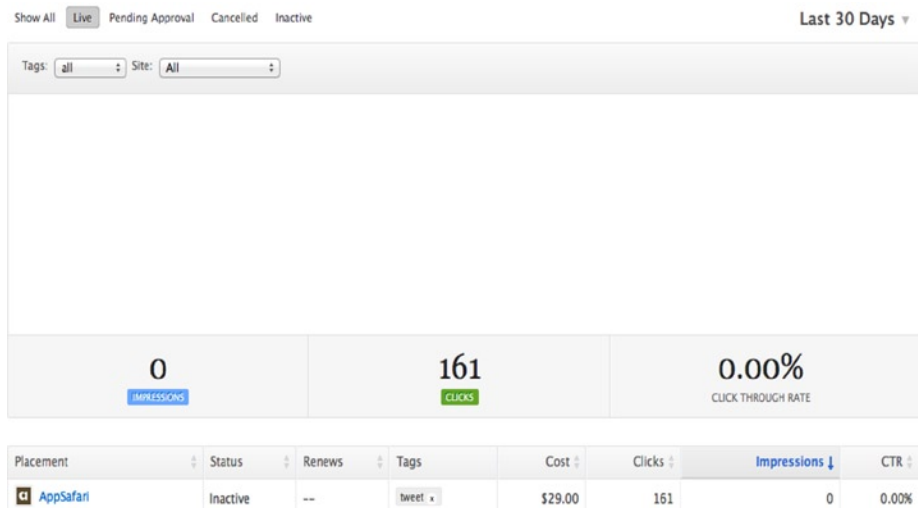
From an advertising standpoint, the percentage shown is a low click-through ratio. I am fairly sure not all the followers saw the tweet. I did, however, see approximately 80 more downloads that day. At a mere cost of $30, the tweet was a beneficial advertising choice. The Twitter ad was considerably cheaper than Facebook ads or banner ads and yielded far superior results. These packages can be found on various advertising web sites or can be purchased directly through the Twitter holder's account.

Targeted tweets/Facebook blasts are especially useful advertising tools with specialty apps. If you have a niche app (see Chapter 1), focusing on its market population will allow for more effective advertising. I would stay away

from the mass tweets mentioned earlier and try to enlist a niche celebrity to create the tweets. This may cost more, but you will see substantially better results. With this method your market is targeted; the majority of the people that follow your niche celebrity belong to the same niche population your app targets. Is the power of niche apps beginning to sink in? By working directly with popular people in your niche, you will be able to work out new and innovative approaches to advertising that can help your app sales reach their full potential.

# The Power of YouTube

YouTube is a very influential form of advertising that many appreneurs simply refuse to use. I am not talking about the ads before a video or the ads that appear in the corner of the screen; instead, I propose using videos as ads. The more video ads you have, the better. I have yet to see a video on YouTube with zero views. In fact, I cannot find a video, as I am writing this, with fewer than 500 views. Because I love free advertising, I find it wasteful not to capitalize on the free YouTube advertising market. If you do not have one, create a YouTube account. Create an account for your app, your development studio, even your cat; it doesn't matter. YouTube lets you have as many accounts as you want. If you choose to make multiple videos of your app, be sure to use a different title and different keywords for each video. You don't want to appear to be someone who is just spamming YouTube with videos. Change them up a bit, and you will be fine. Next, contact a few of the big YouTube app review channels. CrazyMikesApps, UniqueApps, AppStoreReviewer, TechTechManTV, Appolicious, and AppVee are all good ones to reach out to. They will likely take a while to get back to you, but if they do, try to get a video review. This may cost you between $150 and $500, but it is money well spent. These channels have hundreds of thousands of subscribers, and their subscribers look up to the reviewers like gods. If they review the app favorably, their subscribers will buy it. Finally, try to enlist a few people who are popular in the niche, and have a video done (for tips on how to do this, see Chapter 1).

Although I have not had success with large advertising agencies in general, there are a few marketing firms out there that can produce successful results. These places do not come cheap, however. You aren't paying for their time; you are paying for their contacts, and believe me, they have some good ones. One company I recently used was APPSPIRE.me (http://appspire.me). These guys really know their business, and they have some amazing promotional contacts. What they do is make sure your app gets visibility and in the ways I have mentioned here. They will send press releases to the media, review web sites, and YouTube reviewers. They will also do Facebook and Twitter blasts for you. They specialize in advertising

your app during the different life cycles, which is a huge plus; they can handle everything from prelaunch to postlaunch. If you have an app that you think has the potential to be the next big thing, I would highly recommend trying a marketing firm.

# App-to-App Advertising

App-to-app advertising is a unique form of advertising that is very effective. With app-to-app advertising, you show a list of your other applications in your app. The reason this method works so well is that you have already proven the quality of your apps to the consumer. For example, let's say a user has downloaded one of your apps; it would be reasonable to assume that if the user likes it, he or she will have no problem downloading other apps you have created. There are two styles you can use to implement this function: *simple* and *designed*. Simple is a line of code that, when tapped, directs the user to the App Store with a predefined search for your publisher name. The simple plan works well if you don't have anyone "squatting" on your name (using the components of your publisher name as keywords in an app to gain publicity). For this reason, I like to design my own "My Apps Screen." You can either mimic the look and feel of the App Store or create something completely different; it all boils down to how creative you can be. As with screenshot design, you should remember that creative ideas need to be executed professionally. The last thing you want is for someone not to check out your other apps because your page is poorly designed or hard to navigate. If you are ever unsure of the execution of a design choice, stick to the plain style.

# Advertising Your App in Other Apps

There are basically two methods of using other apps for advertising purposes. The first option is to contact the developer of a popular app who is willing to run your app ad in his or her app. This type of arrangement will likely cost a fair sum of money, but it can achieve fantastic results. A second option is a service called Tap for Tap (www.tapfortap.com). Tap for Tap employs a unique form of advertising. Essentially, you install the company's SDK in your app, and it will create an ad banner for other developers' apps in your app. Each time this is done, you earn credits; these credits allow you to advertise your app in the same manner in other developers' apps. Using this service is an excellent way to garner exposure for your app without excessive expense.

# Cross Promoting User Bases

Cross promoting user bases essentially involves using networking contacts. Through your adventures as an appreneur, you will likely meet other appreneurs who have great apps that do not compete directly with yours. You can approach these appreneurs and propose an advertising trade agreement: you can advertise to their user base and, in return, you will advertise them to yours. Again, cross promoting provides another free advertising opportunity that typically yields excellent results. I have done this a few times over the years and found it to be one of the better forms of advertising. To foster a mutually beneficial advertising relationship, you must choose the right person or app for cross promotion. I am a firm believer in the motto "It's not what you know, it's who you know." Consequently, if I find an app that I like, I try to reach out to the appreneur and let that person know that I, as an appreneur, enjoyed his or her app. To me, it is the highest form of compliment when another professional within the craft expresses appreciation for your work. Generally, I'll then proceed to talk about one of my apps or anything that might start a good conversation. By the end of the e-mail exchange, I usually have a new appreneur friend. In fact, this is how I met most of the people whose stories you have read in this book. Branch out; don't be shy and sheltered. Most appreneurs are just like you and love meeting new people. You also have something in common: you both sell apps! No matter how much you think you know, there is always someone who knows more. Find the experts, cross promote your apps with them, and learn from them.

To maximize your app's popularity, exhaust the recommended advertising markets: social networks (as integrated into your app, not Facebook sidebar ads), promoted tweets, and videos on YouTube. Then, wait a few days, and run a Google search for your app's name. Because of your advertising diligence, you will probably have more results than just the standard App Store URL. This is what you want to see. The more results that appear in your search, the more web traffic your app is generating. Ideally, this data will also reflect an increase in sales, so now you can pat yourself on the back. You have just successfully advertised and marketed an app, with low risk and expense.

Chapter 8

# Plan to Scale, or Your App Will Fail

The first big success I had with an app was an interactive guide for the popular video game **Halo 3**. Because I was a fairly amateur appreneur and developer, I needed app content that was relatively simple. Also, The app market was already stocked with guide apps, so I needed to make mine better. I partnered with one of the top professional gaming teams, OpTic Gaming and KontrolFreek, and had them advertise the app in a lot of different ways: run ads on their YouTube channels, post on their Facebook and Twitter, talk about the apps at events, and e-mail their followers. This was a fantastic way for me to maximize my exposure with absolutely no out-of-pocket costs. Of course, not every app will allow for this scenario, but if you think outside the box, you can always come up with unique marketing techniques. The app reaped great results: number 2 in reference and number 188 overall! I had tens of thousands of users, and for an app in a market this specific, it was about as viral as it could be. I did everything in my power to keep my users happy and engaged. I was able to keep this app at the top for almost a year. Of the scores of lessons I learned from this app's success, how to handle the viral potential of an app would be the most crucial.

Going viral is when something becomes immensely popular at an exceedingly fast rate. In the app world viral apps are a developer's dream because of the huge profit margins gained. However, as an amateur appreneur, if you do not know what to expect and how to prepare for this good fortune, you may not reap all the benefits possible. You will need to plan for this in the beginning by devising strategies to handle the potential immense amount of downloads. I neglected to do this  for one of my games, and this oversight sure came back to bite me. In the spring of 2012,

*Draw Something* took the App Store by storm; you literally couldn't open a blog or e-news article without reading about it. I decided to have my team at the Idea 2 App Store (`www.idea2appstore.com`) develop a spin-off of the game. Everything went smoothly, and in approximately two months we had a nice working version. Recall my warning in Chapter 5 against requiring your users to login via Facebook. Zynga purchased *Draw Something*, and, within a few weeks, I saw that Facebook login was now required in order to play. I was amped! Normally, my development team doesn't bother going up against the big companies, but this opportunity was huge. I took a look at the reviews for *Draw Something* in the App Store. Just as I had expected, the game was getting slammed with one-star reviews by annoyed users. This was our opportunity, something I had dreamed about for years. Before I continue, I want to underline a difficult lesson I learned from this adventure: if you have an app that uses a database, buy quality hosting. Sadly, I did not do this, and because I don't want to be accused of libeling anyone, I will leave the guilty party unnamed. Basically, the company offered dirt-cheap hosting, which was something we initially saw as a good move, as the game we made sends and receives tons of data. Assuming we only had a few hundred users, our hosting choice would have been a nonissue; instead, we had tens of thousands of daily active users within a few hours. I was very excited—until I played the game. Everything was timing out;essentially, the puny virtual servers couldn't handle the load. I was beyond upset. In retrospect, I should have planned for the possibility of going viral instead of trying to save a few bucks. The game is now hosted on a dedicated server and has no issues; unfortunately, it was too little, too late. Our chance to take down a big name had passed. A positive aspect of this missed opportunity is that I am able to pass on the valuable lesson I learned to you today.

# Tracking Trends and Producing Results

You need to keep an eye on your trends. As you start to see a rise in downloads, you have to prepare yourself. Not all apps have servers and databases, but that is just a minor part of the overall scheme. Before you get too excited about the prospect of low-maintenance apps' equaling no responsibility, let me correct your thinking. With a large influx of users, you are going to be bombarded with e-mails, Twitter and Facebook posts, and publicity. To the inexperienced, this may sound like no big deal, but it is super stressful and, at times, overwhelming. The added responsibilities will test your time management skills. In addition to dealing with the publicity and inquiries from reviewers, you will still need to interact with your community in whatever way you can. Be sure to continue your communications with any users asking questions via e-mail. If you neglect this commitment to users, your app will not be popular for long. A key

component of business longevity still applies: if you are able to keep your users happy, your application will continue to trend upward. Once users feel neglected, interest will wane, and your app will inevitably trend down.

Tracking trends is a requirement for any successful appreneur. Fortunately, there are a variety of tools available for tracking necessary app data. Expect a short-lived appreneur career if you think tracking trends consists only of logging in and downloading sales. These are some of the categories you need to track as an appreneur:

> *Downloads/Sales*: This is fairly self-explanatory. You need to know how many people either purchased or downloaded your app.

> *Ranking*: This is the rank of your app in its respective category. Rank is determined by the number of sales, or downloads. These numbers will fluctuate daily. Keeping a close eye on rank will help you know if any new changes you have made are working in your favor.

> *Reviews*: The review system is a bit flawed. Typically, happy users don't leave reviews as often as unhappy users. If you are getting bad reviews, take note of what the users are saying. You will always have users who leave one-star reviews saying, "bad app" or "stupid app." Generally, these are comments generated by competitors. You can always submit these reviews to your respective App Store and have them removed. To do this, simply contact Apple with your app's name and app ID and ask that the review be taken down. Apple is usually pretty good about dealing with this issue. You should pay attention if you see a few one-star reviews pointing out the same problem, and quickly address it.

> *Keyword search ranking*: This is similar to download ranking; however, it is purely based on how your app stacks up for searched terms. The majority of the users who download your app will have searched for a particular term to find it. Knowing what number you come up for a search term is valuable information (for information on how to effectively track this data, see the next section, "Tools for Tracking Keyword Rankings").

> *Featured in the App Store*: If your app is doing well, there is a chance it will come up in the "What's Hot" or "New and Noteworthy" section of the App Store. This is a major accomplishment, so if your app gets one of these mentions, take a second to congratulate yourself. Usually, you will only be able to track this manually for your country of residence.

Remember, the App Store reaches more than 150 countries, each of which has its own rankings and featured sections.

*Featured on the web*: Many web sites feature and review apps. In the event that, fortuitously, your app becomes featured on one of these sites, you will see a sizable jump in downloads. You need to know if and when your app has been featured on these sites. From what I have seen, there is not a better tool for this than a simple Google search. Search your app's name, and run through approximately four pages of results. If your app is not listed, then you know it has not yet been featured.

The sheer magnitude of app data available makes tracking it all manually impossible. Lucky for you, my appreneur experiences have led me to discover some awesome tools to help you do this. Best of all, most of them are free, and the ones that are not are well worth the investment.

# Tools for Tracking Downloads

Here is a listing of some of the best tools available for tracking downloads.

## AppViz (www.ideaswarm.com/AppViz2.html)

*AppViz* is a tool I have been using since I first started selling apps. It is a powerhouse for collecting data, providing you with the following results:

Rankings

Downloads/Sales

Reviews

*AppViz* keeps all your data in one place and allows you to create graphs. Especially helpful for tax purposes, it quickly figures out weekly, monthly, or yearly sales. Moreover, this app can track your rankings in any country that has the App Store and even translates your out-of-country reviews. At the time of this books printing, *AppViz* will cost $49, but, like I said, it is worth every penny.

## Distimo (www.distimo.com)

*Distimo* is an easy-to-use tool for tracking your daily, weekly, and monthly sales. All you have to do is register for an account on its web site, and you will receive an e-mail each morning containing your sales numbers. The interface is also really approachable. I highly recommendthis tool, which, unlike some, is completely free and takes no time to set up and use.

## AppSales Mobile (github.com/omz/AppSales-Mobile)

*AppSales-Mobile* is an open-source app that you can download and install on your device. You will need the most recent copy of Xcode to make this work. Most developers will handle installation if you request it. This app is probably one of my favorites. It is super easy to use and lightning fast. You can track downloads/sales by country or app. Furthermore, just like *AppViz*, *AppSales-Mobile* collects all your reviews and translates them and allows you to view daily, weekly, and monthly sales. Another cool feature is the data display: color-coded bar graphs for each individual app (again, like *AppViz*). Color coding provides you with a clear visual of which of your apps are selling well and which are not. *AppSales-Mobile* is also free!

# Tools for Tracking App Store Ranking

Next are tools you can use to track App Store ranking.

## App Annie (www.appannie.com)

*App Annie* is one of my favorite tools for tracking app ranking. This app offers a wealth of useful data. One of the many powers of *App Annie* is the ability to track competitors' rankings. The site is very simple to use; just search by app or publisher name, and you can see current and past rankings. With its valuable data and ease of navigation, it is hard to believe this app is free!

## MajicRank (majicjungle.com/majicrank.html)

*MajicRank* is a unique app, as it is the only one that allows you to track real-time current ranking. Most sites, such as *App Annie*, have a lag time of appproximately 24 hours. You can also track competitors, but you have to have their app ID. To obtain the app ID, simply run a Google search for the app's name, and copy the ID from the App Store URL. For example, here is the URL for one of my apps:

http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/caption-me/id528817199?mt=8

The highlighted portion is the app ID. Plug this into *MajicRank,* and you now have the real-time ranking for my app. An added bonus is that *MajicRank* is free to download and use!

# Tools for Tracking Keyword Rankings

Following are great tools for tracking your keyword rankings.

# AppCodes (http://www.appcod.es)

A recent discovery, AppCodes has definitely shown to be a helpful data-tracking source. This web site offers some of the best search engine optimization available for apps. AppCodes lets you track your competitors' keywords, which is very important information to have. The site also has some unique features for keyword optimizing, allowing you to test keywords for your app's ranking. Because keywords are so integral to app sales, this feature gives you invaluable information, which could be a deciding factor in your app's success. AppCodes was only $14.95 a month in mid-2013, and for the services it provides, it is a bargain.

# Search Man SEO (www.searchman.com)

*Another valuable tool is Search Man SEO*. If you use it in combination withAppCodes, you will be able to dominate the keyword market. *Search Man* tracks all the keyword rankings for you and any competitors you choose. As you will discover, keyword rankings are similar to download rankings, in that they fluctuate greatly. Knowing where you stand each day is crucial, from a marketing standpoint. You will receive a user-friendly e-mail from *Search Man* each day around lunchtime. The e-mail update will contain detailed information regarding your app's keywords. Preemptively, *Search Man* also tracks new, potential competitors for you, based on keywords. At the time of this writing, *Search Man SEO* costs $20 a month per app. To ensure your satisfaction, a trial version is also  offered so that you can become comfortable with the product before buying.

# Parting Thoughts

Of all the data responsibilities, tracking keywords is probably the most tedious. It doesn't help that Apple is notorious for changing the search algorithm, with no advance warning. Consequently, I try to check my keywords daily to make sure nothing has happened that could cause my apps not to show up in the rankings. The moment I notice an app's drop in rankings, I respond by either advertising more to push it back up or choosing a new keyword. Remember, if users cannot find your app, they cannot download it.

The sheer number of tools available for data tracking might seem overwhelming. You will probably ask yourself, "Which should I use?" The answer is *all of them*. There is no one tool that does everything. Each one  discussed here provides something of use that the others do not. Use them all in harmony, and you will be satisfied with the results.

The next topic of interest to a successful appreneur is the life cycle of apps. This is discussed in Chapter 9.

# The Life Cycles of Apps

Much like a living entity, apps have an expiration date for success, or what I like to refer to as a life cycle. No two apps have the same life cycle. With all the information presented to this point, it should be easy for you to predict where you app is in terms of its life cycle. A flawed assumption some people make is that if you create a popular app, it will sell at the top forever. This is not true even with the top-selling games. **Angry Birds** serves as an excellent example. When this app is trending downward, the experienced developers make a new iteration of the game or launch a major update to counteract the downward trend. If they did not make these changes, in all likelihood, the game wouldn't even be in the top 200 today. Not all apps have the same time frame when it comes to cycles, but they all generally trend the same. Understanding trends requires that you be aware of the App Store's three distinct seasons: pre–holiday (September–November); holiday, or peak (December-February); and slow (March–August). An unwise appreneur will only look at sales numbers (the amount of money he or she is making) to determine trends and cycles, but it is imperative that you consider all the information at hand to make the best decisions for your app.

## Tracking the Right Data

The only effective way to track your app's trends and life cycle is by App Store ranking. The reason is that during the different app seasons, the volume of apps varies greatly. For example, if you have a top 200 app during the holiday season, you will see approximately 750 paid downloads. Conversely, during the slow season this number can be as low as 500. If you were tracking your app purely on revenue, you might logically assume your app is trending down; however, it is not. Keeping a close eye on ranking provides the most accurate data when tracking an app's cycles.

# App Launch Life Cycle

When you first release your app, you will likely trend upward that entire week. Your app is automatically featured in the App Store's "New" category for the first few days. In addition, many third-party sites will scrape (pull data) from the App Store for apps to showcase; therefore, your app will likely show up in some *Google* searches as well. Statistically, your new release trend will reach an apex four to five days after your app has been released. What you do next will determine if you continue to stay at the top or plummet to the bottom.

# Postlaunch Life Cycle

If you have applied all the strategies covered thus far, your app is doing well. You are reading your reviews and tracking rankings and other important data. To remain viable in the app market, it is now time to start thinking about how you can add or improve features. Leonardo da Vinci said, "Art is never finished, only abandoned." This is my favorite quote for underlining the mistake amateur appreneurs habitually make with their first few apps: they abandon them. They think that just because the app is launched in the App Store and is doing well, they can rest on their proverbial laurels, getting paid forever. Unfortunately, the notion of the App Store as an easy, get-rich-quick road to riches is a misconception that has been perpetuated by many authors and bloggers. The truth is quite the opposite; being an appreneur is a job like any other. If you start a successful soft drink company and never go to work after the first day, how long do you think the company will keep making a profit? I tested this theory with an app not long ago. A few days after the app ranked among the App Store's top 200 overall, I decided to see how long I could ride the wave. In January 2012 the app was generating more than $1,000 a day. I didn't maintain contact with my community of users or add any updates. Not surprisingly, I was correct in my hypothesis. After only two months, sales plummeted. In the summer of 2012, the app, which is still in version one, made a paltry $8. Simply put, if you do not continue to work with your apps and customers, you will eventually trend down into the dirt. To avoid this scenario, take note of the secrets and tips I have learned.

# Updating Apps to Keep Users Engaged

Users love updates (this should be imprinted into your brain by now). Updates are the single-best way of keeping your application from trending downward. Types of updates can vary from huge new features to simple bug fixes. As long as you are doing your best to keep your users happy, they will

continue to download and use the app. If you let your app become stagnant and boring, your users will leave and never come back. Usually, when users become bored with an app, they delete it. To avoid deletion disaster, you must keep your current users using the app. There are a few ways to do this:

**Push notifications**: Push notifications are messages sent to your users from the app. The cool thing about push notifications is that they have close to a 100 percent open rate. Because they pop up on the main screen of a user's phone, they are difficult to ignore. Use these sparingly; the last thing you want to do is spam your users. I generally send these notifications when I add a new update.

**E-mail notifications**: If you have a good e-mail list for your users, you can send the same types of notifications via e-mail. Unlike push notifications, e-mails are not opened as often; in addition, you may anger some users, who view these notifications as junk mail. I only use this method if I don't have an app with push notifications.

**Social network pages**: Make sure to chime in on your social network pages. Let your users know you are listening and working on the app. Feel free to use your own app and post some of your own content. Users love to see the developer using the app.

**Facebook/Twitter posts**: Be sure to use the social media outlets associated with your app. These are fantastic ways to interact with your users. I usually make posts when a new feature has gone into development, when it is submitted to the App Store, and when the update is live for download. This will keep your users up-to-date and, in a sense, include them in the development process.

# Generating New Sales

In addition to maintaining your current user base, any wise business plan will also include new customer generation. To generate new sales, you should continue to advertise (see Chapter 6). Advertising is not a one-time deal; to keep your app business fresh, make sure you always have ads, videos, and promotions going live. Most of these ads will run for an allotted time, so make sure you don't let them all expire at once. Inexperienced appreneurs typically make the mistake of only running one ad campaign. Can you imagine what would happen if major companies did this? My guess is that they wouldn't be major companies for long. Continue to find new and

innovative ways to advertise your application, and you will always be ahead of your competition. As the App Store continues to grow, those who can effectively advertise and market will come out on top.

Seasonal iterations of apps can be a huge sales boost. Observe the App Store around Christmastime; often, the most popular apps have a Christmas version. Typically, only the big companies do this, but more independent appreneurs need to be informed. Adding a new version of your app with a Christmas or Halloween theme to it can drive up your sales exponentially. *Angry Birds* did this with its *Angry Birds* seasonal game. It is the same game, with a few new levels and a Christmas theme. The seasonal version also turned a considerable profit; users did not mind paying again for basically the same app.

Partnering with affiliates can also be a good way to make a new version of the app. Imangi Studios, the creators of *Temple Run*, provides an excellent example to follow. Imagini created a similar version of the game that featured characters from the movie *Brave*. The original game had been trending down for the past few months; however, as soon as the *Brave* movie version hit the store, *Temple Run* was back at the top.

Sometimes, you need to think creatively to prevent your apps from trending down. There is no one way to accomplish this, but by using all these tricks, you will have made a great effort. Remember, if you abandon your app, your users will abandon you.

# Chapter 10

# Selling the Rights and Cashing Out

You have undoubtedly heard of people selling successful businesses, making millions, and instantly retiring. Apps are no different. With the market growing the way it is, investors are always looking for new apps to buy. Because the app market is so young, buyers will pay top dollar for rights. The times I have sold the rights to apps have been fortunate circumstances that netted me lucrative profits. When I have wanted to take on a new project or adventure, selling a particular app's rights has provided me with both the capital and the freedom to pursue other options. No matter the app, there is always a buyer out there. I know some appreneurs who have retired at a very young age simply by selling the rights to their app at the perfect time.

Because of this emergence of a new market from the buying and selling of the app rights, it is important that you know the process and expectations. In the event that a buyer wants to procure the rights to your app, these will include, but are not limited to, source code, user base, future revenues, and development team. Think of someone's purchasing the rights to your app like buying a web site domain. Basically, once the transaction is complete, the app is no longer yours. You may wonder why you would ever want to give up your creative work, but you will learn that once the app bug bites, it is hard to limit your app creation. Likely, you will start with one app and then quickly make another. The creative process will continue, and before you know it, you will have a plethora of apps. Having multiple apps is a great business model for sustained revenue, but it is also very time-consuming and stressful. The purpose of this book is to guide you in making an app successful. So, can you imagine carrying out all of the steps I've outlined for you for all your apps? Hopefully, your answer was yes, but once you reach

10 to 15 apps, this is simply unfeasible. Hence, selling the rights to an app is a wise business move that will free up some time and make some quick cash. Until recently, only large companies sold app rights, but thanks to the appearance of some very good web sites that act as brokers, this is now a possibility for all appreneurs. I have sold a few individual apps as well as my entire game guide company.

You should set a goal and then proceed accordingly when trying to sell rights. Decide whether you want to sell one app, an entire series, or a developer account. If you are trying to sell individual apps, your best option is the web site Sellmyapplication (`www.sellmyapplication.com`). I have had some great results with Sellmyapplication, which charges a very reasonable fee to post an ad for your app on its site. One of the key benefits of the site is the size of its community. I have listed quite a few apps on the site, and I usually received inquiries within a day. Furthermore, the seller also gets to interact directly with the buyer, eliminating the need for a go-between and saving you money. This direct buy system works well because no one knows his or her app better than the person selling it. I have not found a better platform for selling an app. Sellmyapplication also has a great market for buying preexisting apps and code snippets. I have purchased, for an extremely reasonable price, some awesome code snippets that I was able to use in my own apps.

# Selling the Rights at the Right Time

If you do decide to sell your app or app company, you need to make sure it is a decision you will not regret. Usually, appreneurs who sell their rights do so when they want to move on to a new series or project and do not have time to maintain their current apps as well. Finding buyers on your own is almost impossible and is more of a headache than it is worth. When selling my first company, I initially tried to take on the task of finding buyers singlehandedly. It was a daunting and frustrating process that could have been made easier had I known about the team at AppBusinessBrokers (`www.appbusinessbrokers.com`). I have found this group to be knowledgeable and professional. What they do is gather all the information a potential buyer of your app/app company will ask and serve as a broker. They have a wide client base and can help you sell your apps to investors in a timely manner. In addition to their large client base and extensive knowledge of the market, they are also accessible; they even take the time to talk to you on the phone before beginning the process. This is the kind of customer service that makes selling apps less of a hassle.

# Buying Preestablished Apps

As an appreneur, you may also be approached to buy an app. Buying apps is generally a business risk, as the majority of apps for sale are those that are trending down despite the efforts of the seller. For the appreneur with a knack for generating sales, what would otherwise be a business risk may be a business opportunity. Before buying, or even considering buying, an app, ask yourself a few simple questions:

> How well established is this app?

If the app has been around for a while, has been ranked fairly consistently, and shows up high in search results, then buying the app may be a great investment. If the app's ranking is way down from its initial release (remember to use **AppAnnie** to track this data), then you are taking a huge risk. Buying the latter type of app is equivalent to salvaging a leaky boat while it is in the water. Sure, you could try to plug the holes and do repairs, but it may be sinking so fast that any patch efforts are in vain. The most important factor to consider when buying an app is how well its keywords rank. If an app has established keywords and shows up high in the rankings, then buying the app could be a great move.

> How much is the app selling for?

Price will determine if buying the app is more logical than developing, or having someone develop, something similar. Most studios can give very accurate quotes on what it would cost to build an app like one that is already in the App Store. Remember, the only thing you cannot buy when having an app developed is rankings. If the app is ranked well, then do not bother trying to compete and develop your own version.

> Do the users like the app?

A cause for concern is if the application is flooded with bad reviews. In that case, you need to be very wary. Recently, some appreneurs developed fake fingerprint scanners, ghost finders, and lie detectors. These apps are just scams, and some poor person downloaded the app, thinking it did these things. ***Do not buy these—ever!*** Apple is cracking down on fraudulent apps and removing them from the App Store; likewise, the company is blocking new ones. You will be disappointed when you spend thousands for this app, only to have it taken down by Apple or not approved at all. If a seller is willing to scam users, then that person will have no quams about scamming you.

# Selling Apps That Have Never Been Listed in the App Store

In addition to buying and selling preexisting apps, another app opportunity may present itself: flipping apps. **Flipping** is a term that originated in the dot-com era and denotes the buying or building of a web site in order to immediately sell it. Although flipping has not yet gained popularity in the app world, it is an inevitable eventuality. Already there are a few appreneurs who make apps similar to ones that are popular in the App Store and who sell them without ever uploading them to the store. This is a huge gamble; you will not know how well the app has done. You won't be able to know if Apple will accept the app or if it will sell as you anticipate. Flipped apps are generally less expensive than preestablished apps because of the risk involved. I personally have never flipped an app. It is too much of a risk for me. I have bought and sold plenty of apps, but only when I know what to expect. If flipping catches on, then I will adjust my business model, but until then I will stay away from this practice.

Now, I will reveal with hesitancy a well-kept secret of mine. Because I decided to hold back nothing in this book, I will tell you how I maximize profit by selling an app's rights at the perfect time. If you are able to successfully follow the trends of your apps and anticipate what will happen well before it does, you can make a considerable profit by selling the rights before an app begins to trend down. One consideration of buyers is how the app is trending. They will usually only be interested in the app if it is trending up or flat. If your app is trending down, and you sell it, you will receive fewer offers and less profit. The previous chapters painstakingly described the importance of trend data. To be a successful appreneur, it is imperative that you learn how to read this information. Once you become adept at data analysis, you can make serious money in markets people didn't even know existed. When I foresee that an app is about to trend down, I put it up for sale at a high price. Ideally, you will have a few very interested buyers soon after, because the app is doing well. By using this strategy, you are maximizing two things: time and money. If you do not have to worry about remarketing, repromoting, and readvertising an app, then you will have more time to devote in other places. I have found that the best time to sell the rights to an app is in late February, when holiday season sales begin to slow. Typically, your app will trend up during the holiday season; it will likely come down in the spring. If you are able to sell your apps before they trend down, you will make money, and fast. This template, of course, will not work with every app, but it is a good starting point.

This chapter is probably one of the most complicated in the book. There are many risks associated with buying and selling apps, risks not advisable for the amateur appreneur. I would highly recommend getting some experience under your belt before attempting buying or selling. The app buying and selling world is comparable to the stock market. Do it right, and you can make a fortune. Do it wrong, and you will lose your fortune—fast.

# Keeping Piracy to a Minimum

Over the last few years, piracy has become a major problem in the App Store. In 2011, for instance, I had twice as many apps pirated as sold. You will hear a lot of naive appreneurs say, "Piracy is not a big deal; people who pirate would not have bought your app anyway." This is just flat-out wrong. Consider the following illustration. A user pirates the paid version of your app. You are making nothing from the user. Following the logic that this person would never have paid for the app allows him or her to download your free, ad-backed, version. You will now generate revenue from the user by serving him or her ads. Users who pirate apps are much less likely to buy them; however, there are plenty of users who will download a free app with ads. If you have an application that has server costs, make sure you do something to prevent piracy, or pirates will eat up a ton of those costs. Believe me, it is a dismal feeling when you search for your app's name, followed by dot-ipa, only to see it all over the Internet in every cracked app store. You basically have two options: manually send each cracked app store and hosting site Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) notificaton, instructing that the app be taken down, or prevent piracy from occurring in the first place. My first reaction was to serve DMCA paperwork to each offender. This was the most time-consuming and tedious task I have ever taken on. In the end, I  gave up on trying to prevent piracy on my own. I was approached by the company AntiPi (`www.antipi.net`), which claimed it could prevent piracy. I was skeptical, to say the least. I decided it would be worth a try, though, and I was very happy with the results. This company literally takes down all your pirated apps from the cracked app stores. The AntiPi software inserts within the pirated versions of the apps a legal message, followed by only one, clickable button: "Buy the app in the App Store."

This was exactly what I was looking for—a way of converting pirated apps to sales. Obviously, not every person who pirated the app is going to buy it; however, I have noticed that approximately 1 in 50 does. Although this may sound like a relatively low conversion rate, these numbers can add up drastically when you consider the thousands of copies being downloaded a day.

Some people tend to minimize the issue and contend that pirating actually serves as a form of free advertisement. I disagree wholeheartedly with that notion. First, any time your app is pirated, someone has gotten it for free. Second, people who pirate apps are proud of what they do and will often brag about it in your app to other users. I had an app that had a lobby chat room that allowed users to chat interactively. I noticed that once my app became readily available in the cracked app stores, hundreds of people in my chat room were boasting about how they got the app for free. As you can imagine, the users who paid for my app were quite upset with this. Third, the people who were using the pirated version of my app were also using features that required server calls, which cost money. Finally, the increasing ease with which pirates are able to jailbreak is worrying. Recently, jailbroken devices have been enabled to download in-app purchases for free. Many developers took the route of adding in-app purchases in their apps as a way of preventing piracy. This no longer is a viable option. The only in-app purchases that cannot be cracked are those that are server validated, so if you decide to use in-app purchases to fend off piracy, make sure they have this feature.

No matter how big or small your app, piracy will always be a problem, and that is why you should do your best to prevent it. Again, I highly recommend AntiPi for this. The company charges very reasonable rates and takes care of all of the grunt work. You also will get a monthly report showing how many copies of your app were kept from the pirates. My first month,  more than 150,000 copies were prevented from being pirated. Prevention did not result in 150,000 extra sales, but that is still a lot of people who won't be using my app for free and costing me money and headaches.

Piracy has the ability to crush industries (look at what Napster did to the music industry). Whatever the size of your app, it is only a matter of time until it gets cracked. Heed my advice, and take action to circumvent this.

# Evolving with the App Store

Here, Randal Higgins, the founder of Touchmint (`www.touchmint.com`), shares his story, highlighting, among many things, the importance of adaptability for an appreneur:

> *My path to developing started approximately a year after college. I graduated with degrees in computer information systems and computer network administration. During college I took a few programming classes, such as Java and Flash, but I was far from good at them. During school I always wanted to develop iPhone apps, but I did not have a Mac and could not justify the cost at the time. Not long after I graduated, I moved to Arizona, sold some electronics and online game items on Ebay and Craigslist, and, finally, bought a MacBook Pro.*
>
> *Being a Windows person for most of my life, it was a little hard to figure out the file system and a few other things on the Mac operating system. I began learning Objective-C by reading Programming in Objective-C, by Stephen G. Kochan, through Safari Books Online. The book was a great starter, and the Safari Books membership is a must; the site has every programming book you can think of. After reading Programming in Objective-C, I started Head First iPhone and iPad Development. Head First is a great hands-on book. It made Xcode very easy to understand.*

*As I worked through the Head First book, I was thinking about an app I wanted to develop. I have always been a huge fan of playing sports, especially enjoying the statistics involved. I play quite a bit of softball and had been trying to keep my stats, but all the programs out there were lacking. I decided that my first app would be a baseball/softball stat-tracking app. Because I had already downloaded all the baseball stat apps in the App Store, I knew what worked and didn't work. I analyzed user reviews and learned what others liked and didn't like. I cannot stress enough how important it is to know your market and competition. Not everyone's goal is to make money, but if you do plan on earning some cash, you had better know the market and your competition.*

*Nowadays, I see so many talented people pouring time into an app that is likely to fail because the app market is flooded with similar apps. Like I said, I am nowhere near to being a good programmer, but I would argue that it's more important to know the market.*

*When I built my first app, Baseball Stats Tracker Touch, I created it as a framework for other apps. Although it took me approximately five to seven months to learn Xcode and to build that first app, it was worth the investment of time. I have built seven other apps on that framework in just four months. All but two have reached at least the top 200 in sports. Baseball Stats Tracker Touch reached number 10 overall in sports and grossed more than $6,000 in its first six months.*

*Approximately halfway through development, I found a site, iPhoneDevSDK (`www.iphonedevsdk.com`), that really helped out a ton. To this day, my favorite online forum is its "Business and Marketing Forums." The community is great, and if you want to learn the ins and outs of the App Store, that is the place to go.*

*Just because your app is released does not mean it is done. A web site is a must, something that I learned the hard way. I originally built my web site, Touchmint (`www.touchmint.com`), on Google Sites, which was great because it is free, but my site lacked customization, causing me to look unprofessional. I recently moved to Namecheap, where I have a Wordpress theme; it is just as easy as Google but looks a lot better.*

*Ongoing communication is another key to being successful. I make a habit of responding to questions and complaints within an hour, if possible. It blew my mind that users had never heard back from developers, and the users could not believe that I was writing to them, and so quickly. If you really want to keep good reviews, put a support button in your app so that people can get support right from it. I also like to give out promotions to my other available apps when someone takes the time to report a bug.*

*Updating and design are very important factors as well. When your app is targeted at kids, it had better look appealing, and the icon had better be cool. Updates are also great, not only for adding new features, but also for reminding your users that they own your app. When they are reminded, they will spread the word.*

*Overall, I don't think there is a clearly defined path to success. Rather, success results from a combination of many factors. There is a reason why people who know Objective-C and Xcode inside and out have never had a successful app to date. To be successful in the App Store, you need to know a little of everything. Also important is the ability to adjust to App Store changes very fast. Apple will change its system, and it is your job as a developer to figure out how to adjust better than others do.*

The App Store is evolving every day. It is your job as an appreneur to evolve with it, as Randal explains in his testimonial. Keeping up with the App Store's changes will prepare you for navigating the app market and making informed appreneur decisions. I have found that the best way to keep updated is by having a good community. As an active member of the forums on iPhoneDevSDK (www.iphonedevsdk.com), I connect with talented developers and appreneurs, including several of the people whose stories I share in this book. Appreneurs who are willing to learn are going to be much more successful than those who are inflexible. In this profession, I have found that if you ask for help, people will be happy to assist you. In particular, the iPhoneDevSDK forums have given me information on everything App Store–related. There are thousands of threads available that can answer any type of app-related question. My primary use for the forums is to gather other developers' opinions about my ideas. If you are unsure as to why your app isn't meeting your expectations, simply ask the community. They are fairly blunt, but criticism is what you may need to improve your app.

As you are nearing the conclusion of this book, you should now be equipped to successfully handle every aspect of creating and selling an app. Once you have mastered the tips and techniques I have provided, you will have no trouble adapting to the ever-changing App Store. Evolving with the App Store can be as simple as switching your keywords to optimize a new algorithm the App Store deploys (as with the drastic changes in 2012) or as complex as completely changing your application line to better suit new users. One year, photography apps may be hot, whereas the next year they may not be. You need to be able to transform products as new market trends emerge. Among the many lessons I have learned from the App Store is not to bank on one app forever. If you examine closely how the top independent developers have made money, it becomes apparent that they have a wide array of apps, not just one. Going with one app is a gamble, a risky business move. If a competitor makes a better app than the one you have on offer, you are in a very bad position.

Technology is always changing, and you must constantly be thinking of new and innovative ways to incorporate these changes in your app. One story that represents innovation is that of MobGen's **_Alert Tone Creator_**. MobGen expertly timed his super simple app, which came out with the release of iOS 5. This appreneur did his research and knew that Apple would be allowing custom text tones in iOS 5. Therefore, he integrated this new technology into an easy-to-use app, which became wildly popular. In another example, a few appreneurs made apps that optimized photos for Facebook's timeline feature. Once again, these appreneurs knew of a new technology and were able to integrate it at the right time and achieve outstanding results.

Timing is everything when it comes to adding new technologies to apps. Generally, if you're not one of the first to do it, then you will not make much money. I like to keep up with current events just for this reason. You don't have to survey technology companies in order to invent new and innovative apps. If you know of something that is hot, or popular, make an app for it. Apple's App Store slogan is "There's an app for that." My favorite part of being an appreneur is the personal and creative freedom I have. Not many jobs afford such freedom. As an appreneur, I am able to work doing what I want, when I want.

I am thankful every day I have the opportunity to be an appreneur. You will come to find out how truly awesome the job is. You are on the frontlines of the most cutting-edge technology our age has seen. Mobile software is not a fad; it is a new market. Since the invention of the smartphone and tablet, software has been moving from computers to mobile devices, a transition that will only continue through the years. Are you ready to seize the opportunity?

# Index

# Appreneur

Secrets to Success in the
App Store

Taylor Pierce

**Apress**®

**Appreneur: Secrets to Success in the App Store**

*I dedicate this book to my parents, Bobby and Gina Pierce. From a very young age, you taught me that hard work and dedication would take me far in life. You have supported me through all the ups and downs I have had. I also want to dedicate this book to my girlfriend, Jennifer Henley. You have helped me further myself in more ways than I can name; without you, I would have never written this book.*

# Contents

# About the Author

**Taylor Pierce** has been developing apps for the Apple App Store since 2009. In the summer of 2010, Taylor was awarded an internship at Apple's headquarters, in Cupertino, California. He has developed more than 60 apps, many of which have ranked consistently among Apple's top 200. As the CEO and founder of the mobile development studio Taylor Pierce Apps and of Secret Happy Hour, Taylor has firsthand knowledge of what makes apps marketable and profitable. His studio deals with a wide array of clients, from individuals to Fortune 500 companies. Taylor's understanding of clients' needs, the specifics of app design, and the ever-changing app market has allowed him to create a valuable reference tool for the appreneur. The book was inspired by a desire to offer exceptional consultation services; a wish to help his clientele obtain the knowledge necessary to maximize their apps' profitability. After noticing the vast improvement in his clients' capabilities, Taylor decided to share his secrets to success in the App Store with the world at large.

www.taylorpierceapps.com
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