

## **iPhone Application Development--A Reality Check**

**“Success will take money, patience and a lot of work.”**

*by Pete Choppin*

It's the same story I've heard dozens of times before, and it's called "get rich quick." This is really no different than the gold rush of 1849 or the dot-com boom of the 1990s. A simple Google search with the words "develop iPhone apps" will yield almost nine million results, most of which talk about how simple and lucrative it is to develop your own app, put it on the App Store, and in seconds you will be raking in thousands of dollars.

The reality, however, is a little more discouraging. Here are a few numbers taken from [New Mac Online](#) that ought to scare you, or at the very least cause you to raise an eyebrow:

- The number of active apps available at the App Store: 134,000.
- Every 2.5 minutes another iPhone app is submitted.
- If you spent five minutes on each app, it would take you a full year without stopping to try each one.
- 34.4 million iPhones are sold throughout the world (personally, I consider this a conservative estimate).
- More than three billion apps have been downloaded from the App Store by iPhone and iPod touch users worldwide.

But even with these statistics, developers are still developing apps—by the thousands. Maybe it is because there are apps they think you would need and could benefit other people, or maybe it's just the millions of dollars that are made from iPhone app sales.

A quick Google search will provide you with thousands of listings about iPhone app development, but there are very few that actually outline the positives. Apparently, the Web has become the biggest whining collaboration in history. Let's address some of the main complaints and what the real truth is so that you can see beyond the complaining.

### **The First Approval**

The first issue is that people are having trouble getting their apps past the first approval process. OK, this is fairly easy. Obviously, there is something wrong with the application to cause the rejection. Apple has specific policies that are meant to be followed, such as no foul language and no using the iPhone icon (or anything that resembles an iPhone icon—including a rectangle). It may seem stupid to some people, but the reality is that obviously there are other developers that are getting their iPhone apps approved because there is an unreal amount of apps to choose from in the App Store. Additionally, many people are ignoring the e-mail messages that they are getting from the reviewers. These messages are sent when an app doesn't get through the first stage in the review process, and are designed to help developers see the mistakes, correct them, and resubmit the app.

### **The Second Approval**

The next major issue is with the time that it takes to get an iPhone app approved. Well, quite frankly, you have no choice. If you think about the bigger picture, you will understand that Apple has an understaffed review department. The people they do have can handle only so much at once. Sending 50 thousand "What's going on?" e-mails does not make things any better. It is understandable that you are impatient, but only to a certain degree. Let's say, for example, that you submitted an app and a week goes by. You haven't heard anything, and you start e-mailing. It's only been a week. The review process for an app is rather lengthy; reviewers need to check out everything, down to the smallest details, such as loading times. Have a little patience. If two-and-a-half to three weeks has gone by without a word, then you can start politely sending requests for progress updates.

## **Cost**

The cheapest way to make an iPhone app is "Do it Yourself," and the second cheapest way is to "Do it with Friends." Otherwise you're going to have to use the services of a registered iPhone developer. Qualified registered developers are in short supply and programming costs are not cheap; some developers have long backlogs.

The real answer is that the cost for creating a new iPhone app depends on the features you need incorporated in the app and how you want the app to be used. Here are three levels of iPhone app development that illustrates this:

1. **Barebones basic iPhone apps** are simple applications that have minimal features. This type of iPhone app may be "similarly different" to another app already on the market. You can find thousands of apps in this category in the iTunes App Store—such as various clocks, bobbleheads, joke apps and many more!

Cost—\$1,000 to \$10,000 or more depending on the needed specifications.

2. **Mid-range custom iPhone apps** incorporate more features and therefore incur more programming costs. An example of a mid-range custom iPhone application would be a useful tool like Track My Shipments. These mid-level apps will have expanded features with multiple screens, interactive play, Web connectivity and maybe some simple social networking aspects.

Cost—\$15,000 to \$50,000 or more depending on the features.

3. **Upper level, more complex custom iPhone apps** are more sophisticated types of iPhone applications such as a multiplayer game with many levels. It could be a corporate promotional app such as Coke's Spin the Bottle Game, which leads players back to a dedicated Web site for a marketing campaign with user metrics. It could be a useful business tool such as the FedEx Mobile app that allows users to automatically find the closest FedEx location with the iPhone's built-in GPS function, as well as full tools for shipping and tracking for air and ground.

Cost—\$50,000 to \$75,000 to \$100,000 or more depending on the complexity and related tie-ins required.

There are many ways to keep the costs down on your iPhone app project. First is to have a well-thought-out plan with requirements for your application. Second is to work with a developer that has experience and has learned to save money through repetition. Third is to work closely with the developer to keep the timeline on a tight schedule.

If you're thinking about getting into iPhone app development, I would say proceed with caution. There are many things to consider when building iPhone apps and the harsh reality is that it will take money, patience and a lot of work. But definitely proceed. The gold rush should be going on for a while longer!