




# Winning iPhone Strategies

*How to get your apps noticed!*

	Researched and written by Jonathan Deamer and Katie Lips at Kisky Netmedia	Version 1.0 17th November 2009 <a href="http://www.kisky.co.uk">www.kisky.co.uk</a>
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# Summary

There are over 100,000 iPhone apps in the App Store. That's a lot of apps! You'd never download or have a use for them all, indeed most iPhone users download apps in the hundreds not the thousands and many of us enjoy just a handful of favourite apps. It seems however that with over 2 billion downloads served from the 100,000 apps available the app store is keeping users well entertained and that with over 50m users the iPhone offers plenty of customers to app developers hoping for an App Store hit. Whilst there are indeed plenty of customers (90% of iPhone users download content via the App Store) attracting them to your app over the 99,999 other apps is the desire of developers the world over.

Even with 100,000 apps in the App Store, the apps that have been really successful are limited in number. Whilst early iPhone developers and prospectors believed that App Store may offer a meritocracy whereby the very best apps rose to the top, that hope is called into question. There are just too many apps and too much noise for you to get noticed unless you shout loudly. The App Store has evolved into a Hit Parade; the top 10 apps do really well but if you're number 100+ forget it, and the long tail? What longtail? There's no army of developers doing 'quite well' from modest sales; it's all or nothing.

So it's a crowded market place but one that has seen great success stories and offers huge allure for developers. With so many apps all competing for that all-important spot on the App Store feature page, what can developers do to give their app the best possible chance of success?

*Winning iPhone Strategies assesses the iPhone landscape from the perspective of developers: from independent lone or small team developers, to agencies creating apps for clients, to iPhone related startups. It aims to answer the question "how do I market my app?" by showcasing the strategies of developers who have seen recent commercial success.*

iPhone App marketing strategies vary developer to developer, but one thing's for sure, those that have done really well haven't left things to chance. As the iPhone ecosystem itself is still in its infancy, we're seeing a lot of trial and error, yet more and more services are emerging that aim to help developers get their app out there and into the Top 10. From Advertising to Social Media, from PR to publishers, we cover it all and show you how are developers are cleverly harnessing the power of a varied toolkit of strategies to gain App Store popularity and big profits.

We've got interviews with UK based publisher Chillingo including insight into how they work and what you'll need to do as a developer if you want to work with them. We've also got an exclusive interview with Russell Buckley of AdMob on how ads work for apps as well as a series of unique interviews with successful developers including those responsible for Rampchamp, Instapaper, and Pocket Alan.

As well as delivering up to the minute statistics we're focussed on bringing tried and tested developer strategies and opinion, and the iPhone app developers we've interviewed offer inspiring theories, personal insight and hard facts. We list a series of strategies for marketing your app; no developer now has an excuse to say "I make apps but I know nothing about marketing".

The report has been written by Jonathan Deamer and Katie Lips at Kisky Netmedia previously responsible for creating the Amazing iPhone report, which was a primer on the iPhone device, ecosystem and opportunity for business owners. Kisky Netmedia is a Social Mobile Consultancy and brings extensive knowledge in mobile strategy and social marketing to "Winning iPhone Strategies".

# Statistics

If you do a search for most iPhone statistics you'll find an array of different answers: from bloggers' predictions to the hard facts from Apple via their quarterly reports. One thing's for sure: as soon as this report is published, these statistics will be out of date as more developers submit their app to the App Store, new apps become top grossing and another Christmas delivers many more millions of new iPhone owners the world over. Here are the stats we found from a variety of sources (10.11.09).

## The Headlines

- 2 billion+ apps downloaded
- 100,000 Apps in the App Store
- 50m devices (iPhone & iPod Touch)
- iPhone owners download 10 apps a month
- iPod Touch owners download 18 apps a month
- 90% of users browse and download via the device<sup>1</sup>

## iPhone Sales

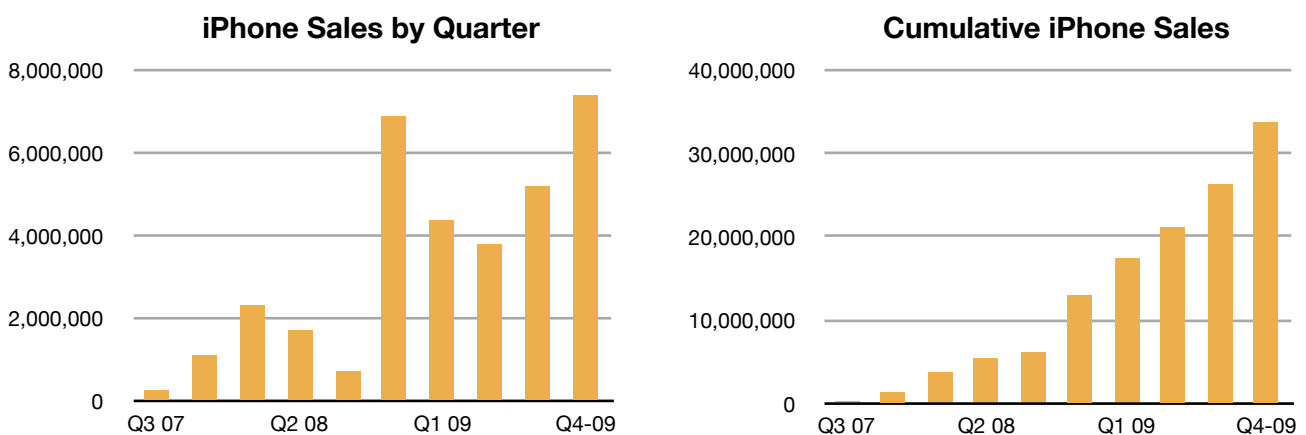
The following figures are taken from Apple's quarterly reports and show iPhone sales quarter on quarter since launch.

Units sold in Quarter	Q3 07	Q4 07	Q1 08	Q2 08	Q3 08	Q4 08	Q1-09	Q2-09	Q3-09	Q4-09
iPhone	270,000	1,119,000	2,315,000	1,703,000	717,000	6,892,000	4,363,000	3,790,000	5,200,000	7,400,000

The following table shows cumulative iPhone sales quarter on quarter since launch.

	Q3 07	Q4 07	Q1 08	Q2 08	Q3 08	Q4 08	Q1 09	Q2 09	Q3-09	Q4-09
Cumulative Sales	270,000	1,389,000	3,704,000	5,407,000	6,124,000	13,016,000	17,379,000	21,169,000	26,369,000	33,769,000

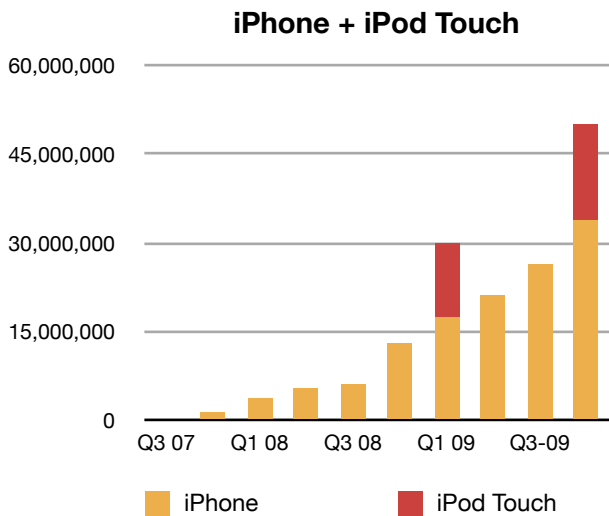
The following graphs show the same data.



<sup>1</sup>Stats via Stuart Dredge <http://www.slideshare.net/stuardredge/5-app-stores-under-the-microscope>

## iPhone and iPod Touch

Of course the “iPhone Market” is not just limited to the iPhone device itself. Indeed the addressable market right now is upwards of 50m when you include iPod Touch. Developers should not ignore iPod Touch as a sizable market especially seeing an iPod Touch users download more apps per month than iPhone users.



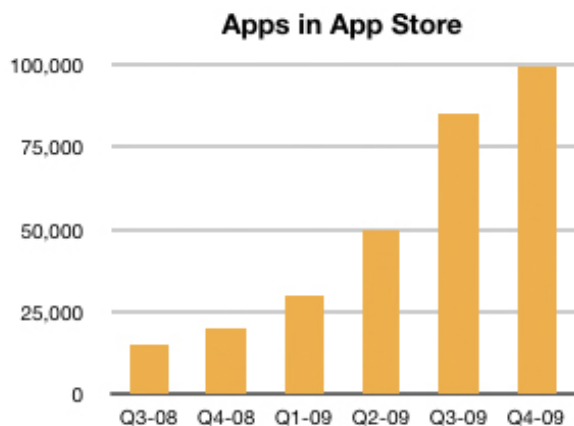
## iPhone ‘vs’ other smartphones (UK)

The best statistics on this are offered by Admob<sup>2</sup> which publishes regular reports on usage across devices and operating systems via their ad network. Using the UK as an example: whilst Apple accounts for 57.4% of smartphone devices (38.2% iPhone and 19.2% iPod Touch) the two devices together account for 71% of smartphone requests (traffic).

That means people who have an iPhone or iPod Touch use them more than users of other smartphones.

## Apps in the App Store

The following chart shows app in the App Store. These are estimated although based on data from a variety of sources and announcements. Apple recently announced 100,000 apps in the App Store<sup>3</sup>.



	Q3-08	Q4-08	Q1-09	Q2-09	Q3-09	Q4-09
<b>Apps</b>	15,000	20,000	30,000	50,000	85,000	100,000

Data (adapted to quarterly growth) on downloads is taken from Mac Rumors<sup>4</sup>.

	Q3-08	Q4-08	Q1-09	Q2-09	Q3-09	Q4-09
<b>Downloads</b>	0	0.3	0.5	1.00	2.00	2.30

2 Recently bought by Google: <http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/11/09/google-acquires-admob/>

3 <http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2009/10/19results.html>

4 <http://www.macrumors.com/2009/09/28/apple-surpasses-2-billion-app-store-downloads/>

# What makes us buy apps?

## Ask the audience

As research for this report we've conducted a survey asking "What makes you buy apps?", and while our survey is not particularly scientific or carried out in an academic fashion, it does provide a unique snapshot of the views of web and tech-savvy iPhone users.

## About the Audience

The chance to participate in the survey was primarily promoted via Twitter, and so this obviously biases the type of person that took part. The overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) were male, with an average age of 33, although there was a good range from late teens to mid-50s.

## Q1. Which methods of app discovery have most influence on your purchasing decisions?

Real-life recommendations proved by far and away the most influential factor in getting people to download iPhone apps. Our survey respondents gave such recommendations an average influence rating of 3.5 out of 5. The next most influential factor was online reviews, receiving an average rating of 3 out of 5, although this was only marginally ahead of both Twitter recommendations and browsing the App Store itself. This is an important point to note - not only was browsing the App Store only 3rd most influential factor in people's purchase choices, but has only very slightly more influence as Twitter recommendations. While it's worth remembering that our survey may have shown a slight bias towards early adopters, who may not rely on browsing the App Store as much as the average user, this shows the importance of social network word of mouth as part of an iPhone marketing strategy.

Respondents rated in-app advertising as having the least effect on their purchasing decisions, with 67% of them saying it had no influence whatsoever. No-one said it was the most important factor. Meanwhile, a surprising number of people suggested that existing brand relationships (such as downloading the Facebook app as you already use the website) having only marginal effect. Only 8% of people said it was the thing most likely to cause them to make an app purchase, while 39% said it had no influence at all.

Traditional media advertising, including that carried out by Apple, was also deemed to have only a mediocre effect. While 10% of people said it was the most influential factor in their App Store habits, 30% said it had no influence whatsoever. Again, this result is likely to be marginally biased towards an early adopter audience, and Apple's television adverts may play a much larger role in encouraging the purchase of iPhone hardware in the first place, rather than encouraging existing users to download new apps.

Overall, the influence of various methods of app discovery was rated as follows:

- 1. Real-life recommendations - 3.5**
- 2. Online reviews - 3.0**
- 3. Browsing the App Store - 2.9**
- 4. Twitter recommendations - 2.7**
- 5. Traditional advertising (including Apple's) - 2.2**
- 6. Through existing brand relationship - 2.0**
- 7. In-app advertising - 1.4**

## Q2. At what price point do you stop and think twice before making an app purchase?

Of course, the higher the price the more likely people are to think about whether they want to spend that money on your app. However, while there are a significant proportion (16.2%) of survey respondents who for whom paying anything (59p+) is a small barrier, almost a third (32.4%) of people make purchases up to a value of £2.99 without much thought and very much on impulse. This is a useful "sweet spot" to be aware in attempting to maximise download revenue.

- **£2.99 - 32%**
- **£2.39 - 18%**
- **£0.59 - 15%**
- **£1.19 - 10%**
- **£1.79 - 8%**
- **£3.99 - 7%**
- **£4.99 - 6%**
- **£5.49+ - 4%**

## Q3. Have you ever upgraded from a free or "lite" app to a paid version of the same app?

63% of iPhone users who responded to our survey had upgraded to a paid version of an app after previously using a free version. ngmoco:) game Rolando was the most frequently cited example of an instance where someone had done this, although this may be more due to the game's overall popularity than anything specifically related to upgrades. Instant message client IM+ was also received a relatively large number of mentions, which is especially noteworthy as its paid version costs £5.99, so it seems offering a free "lite" version has proved a successful strategy.

Just under two thirds of those who had ever upgraded an app had done so to get an increased number of levels or similar within a game, while the rest had upgraded to increase the functionality of an app they found useful or to remove adverts. There were also some interesting quotes that, while not necessarily representative of all users, show some of the attitudes towards free and paid versions.

*"I've made a point of not upgrading and deleting the app where there was a cynical exploitation of free, i.e. an unfinished story (for kids!)" - @MariaBarrett*

*"If a game looks good enough for me to bother downloading a lite version, it looks good enough for me to try the full version for a couple of dollars". - Anonymous*

*"For apps (not games), I use only the free versions, I'm ok with some advertising". - Anonymous*

*"I do upgrade lots, usually for additional content or an enhanced feature set. I never upgrade if the free app does everything I want. I have no conscience." - Andy Goodwin*

## Q4. Are developer or publisher brands an influence on your purchase decisions or a reassurance of quality?

There was a fairly even split between half of the survey respondents suggesting that the developer or publisher's brand influenced their purchase decisions, while half didn't care. Amongst those for

whom it was a factor, it tended to relate mostly to games, with Chillingo, ngmoco:) and Gameloft being frequently occurring names. Interestingly, the only mention of "big name" publisher Electronic Arts was to point out that they were not the sort of company a particular respondent had any brand loyalty for, preferring to focus on interesting "one to watch" indie developers.

It was also suggested a number of times that while a user might not care about the "brand" of a developer, they will pay more attention than usual when it is pointed out that a new app is produced by someone who has produced an app they previously liked. Atebits<sup>5</sup>, the developers behind Tweetie were given as an example of this a number of times.

## Q5. How much does the “star rating” of an app in the App Store influence your purchasing decisions?

30% of people said that the App Store's star ratings have no effect on them whatsoever, with 40% saying it has only a minor influence. The remaining 30% said it played quite a large role in their decision-making, although no respondent cited it as the most important element. Twitter user Paul Robinson (@p7r) sums up many people's views saying

*"Initially the star rating did have an effect because on other purchase platforms like Amazon, the quality of the rating is quite high. When you start reading the reviews though and realise people are giving 1-star reviews that are factually incorrect (competitors, perhaps?), or 5-star reviews that make no sense, I realised the star rating alone was not enough to make a decision. Simply, the people writing reviews - and more importantly giving high star ratings - on the App Store seem to be so far removed from the plane of existence I'm on, I can safely ignore the aggregate that is the overall star rating".*

Opinions on the influence of App Store reviews similarly leant towards taking them with a pinch of salt. There was some suggestion that the qualitative nature of reviews can be more useful than a star rating on its own, although potential purchasers would only bother reading through these for relatively expensive purchases. There was also a common view that many of the reviews are so poorly thought out as to not be of any use.

## Q6. Have you ever made an “in-app purchase” (e.g. bought new levels or content from within an app itself)?

For all the fanfare that has been made around in app purchasing being a vital new feature of the App Store, even among a group that slightly leant towards early adopters, only 25% of people had ever made an in-app purchase. Boxcar (an app that enables push notifications from Twitter, Facebook and similar) was the most commonly mentioned example of an app in which people had done this, which may be as some of the app's core functionality is dependent on being enabled via in-app purchase.

## Q7. How regularly do you buy “expensive” apps, i.e. those costing £3.99+? What causes you to buy these?

The majority of respondents said they purchase this sort of app relatively infrequently (less than monthly). Some good insights were made into the mindset behind this type of purchase:

*"I'm usually one of those wait and it'll eventually go on sale sort of people, apps at that price-level generally do, even if its just for one day...then I pounce on it" - @OTGGamer*

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.atebits.com/>

*"I buy this sort of title once a month at best. I buy them either because I really could use that sort of functionality regularly (such as a time/billing app for contract work) or because it is a game that I am truly curious about (such as Doom Resurrection)" - Anonymous*

*"I buy something like 2 per month (most of the time, less than this). If the game seems gorgeous, it's not a problem to pay an expensive price (well, on the App Store, nothing is expensive)" - Anonymous*

*"One a month? Usually a premium game or something like a Sat Nav app. Usually it's because I recognise the brand, such as Star Wars, Doom or Super Monkey Ball, or because I really need the function (in the case of the Co Pilot live Sat Nav costing £25)" - @shaivure*

*"I've only ever bought 3 and they were all due to the fact I played them when I was younger and therefore they were trusted brands: Scrabble, Worms and Curse of Monkey Island" - @sentricmusic*

## **Q8. Roughly how many apps have you downloaded in total during the time you've been using iPhone? And how many are currently on your device?**

Answers to this question were spread across a huge range - while 28% of survey respondents had downloaded fewer than 50 apps, and 47% had downloaded less than 100, there was still 6% who had downloaded more than 300 apps. The average total number of downloads made was 160, and the most common (mode) number of apps was 100.

While these figures may seem quite high, it should be noted that the mean was likely raised by a handful of particularly ardent app fans who have in some cases downloaded as many as 800 apps.

Of these apps (excluding Apple's apps packaged with the device), the average number a user has on their phone or iPod is 72 (mean), although the most common number for a user to have was 50 (mode). Some users had as few as 6 (5% had less than 10) and some as many as 180 (8% had this number, the maximum allowed).

# Ensuring your app's a hit

Maybe your app's a core part of your business offer, maybe you're hoping it'll make you millions, maybe you're hoping for fame and glory; either way there are lots of tactics developers have employed to get their app to the top in the App Store. Some strategies are proven, others are more of an art than a science. From watching App Store trends and interviewing successful (and not so successful) developers we're highlighting key strategies here. Of course there's no one size fits all approach and what worked for one app may not work for another but at the very least this is food for thought.

## #1 You got form!

It would seem in the App Store, as in any market, that if you've already made a name for yourself, things are a lot easier. Leveraging an existing reputation certainly works in the App Store if:

- You already have a following like Jamie Oliver's app
- You already have a game on another platform like PopCap with the popular Bejeweled
- You use your web app / software to drive iPhone app sales and vice versa like Things which integrates with the online service
- You already have a reputation as a great iPhone app developer like Smule, the darlings of the App Store with truly innovative apps like Sonic Lighter, and Ocarina
- Your app is part of a wider service like Zipcar whose app unlocks the car you just rented

<http://www.jamieoliver.com/20-minute-meals>

<http://www.popcap.com/games/iphone/bejeweled>

<http://culturedcode.com/things/iphone>

<http://www.smule.com>

<http://www.zipcar.com/iphone>

## #2 Get lucky

We've noticed some key trends and some major anomalies. Luck most definitely plays a large part in the success or otherwise of your app. Here are a few examples which really couldn't be planned for (or could they?)

- Apple Features your app in print campaigns and TV ads (oh wow!) like Scrabble or Yell
- Apple Features Your App in iTunes like Twitterific
- You simply launch your app and cross your fingers like Tim Hugal whose first ever app Pocket Alan saw great success (probably due to the hilarious content taken from the TV show)
- You get featured elsewhere - you could ask an influencer on firststand20.com to place your app on their home screen
- You design your proposition around the idea that "Shit Sells" like iFart Mobile. This suggestion for getting lucky was brought to us by a seasoned iPhone user who's downloaded 800+ apps and has a possibly unhealthy App Store habit. Whilst we advise always investing in quality, hiring designers, going that extra mile and ensuring you make a 'Purple Cow'<sup>6</sup>, the truth is, in the App Store as elsewhere, sometimes the low culture stuff wins the day.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sethgodin.com/purple/>

<http://www.apple.com/iphone/apps-for-iphone>  
<http://appshopper.com/entertainment/pocket-alan>  
<http://www.firststand20.com/homescreens/john-gruber>  
<http://www.joelcomm.com>

### #3 Use Pricing Cleverly

Price can play a huge factor in app success. Here are a few pricing strategies that have seen developers do very very well in the App Store.

- Opt for “Outrageous Pricing” keeping your price high and promoting your high quality app like Beejive (£5.99), National Rail Enquiries (£4.99)
- Attempt to beat the competition by offering a cheaper solution like Copilot (£25.99) vs TomTom (£59.99)
- Entice users with a Lite App and entice them along the upgrade path like Geared and other games (Geared is free with 59p upgrade)
- Build your revenue model around in app purchases like RampChamp, Boxcar, and Little World Gifts (Ramp Champ in app purchases are 59p, Boxcar in app purchases are from 59p to £1.19, Little World Gifts in app purchases are anything from 59p)
- Charge your users twice for an updated app like Tweetie and Tweetie 2 (Tweetie 2 is controversially priced at £1.79 even if you already purchased Tweetie - there was no free upgrade. However controversial that may seem, Tweetie fans paid their money and are happy with the new Tweetie 2 app.)

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/iphone>  
<http://www.beejive.com>  
<http://www.apptism.com/apps/scrabble>  
<http://www.ljd-tech.com/copilot>  
<http://iphone.tomtom.com/en-us>  
<http://www.yell.com/mobilephones/iphone.html>  
<http://bryandev.com/blog>  
<http://rampchamp.com>  
<http://boxcar.io>  
<http://www.littleworldgifts.com>

### #4 Create Great PR

PR can play an enormous factor in App Store success. Our research shows that even if you only target a handful of tech focussed publications, with the extensive attention paid to iPhone, the tech PR eventually filters down to more consumer focussed publications. Our advice is to develop a simple and targeted PR strategy based on the focus of your app. Whatever the size of your company or even if you're a lone indie developer, you can afford to make friends with a few influential bloggers, writers and editors and do the leg work involved in ensuring you get a few write ups, reviews, and links. It all helps. In fact if you don't have a PR strategy don't expect to hit the big time with your app basically. Here are a few PR strategies from some of our favorite app developers.

- Offer plenty of prelaunch sneak previews like iBlast Moki. Offering sneak review content online on YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, and on Forums and so on will spark initial interest from the techie enthusiast crowd. They're likely to retweet, reblog and help you create a prelaunch buzz.

- Really harness Word Of Mouth by making sure your app is really good, then telling everyone you know about it. Ask them to help you spread the word. Things like Facebook Pages help for this too; Smule, Pocket Alan, and Minigore all harnessed WOM (Word Of Mouth Marketing). For some, Twitter has been their primary channel for kickstarting WOM hype. Most of the successful apps have Twitter accounts where the developer is active in conversing with (not shouting at) the community; if you are an active member of a community, you'll enjoy plenty of support from your peers. Other services allow you to harness a following; for example by sharing your apps via AppsFire. If you are new to Word of Mouth marketing, harnessing the power of your community and building 'social capital' Tara Hunt's book *The Whuffie Factor* is an excellent read.
- Tour the conference circuit! Whilst we can't all afford to travel the world with our apps, seek out local related events and conferences. Try iPhone Developer Meetups, Mobile Monday Chapters and Barcamps. We recently saw Dave Verwer of Shiny Development show his ultra new Balloons App at Barcamp Manchester; to a growing army of fans come evangelists. (Dave's Balloons App is today (17.11.09) a Staff Pick in the App Store!)
- You need reviews! Make sure you tell the (relevant) iPhone App Review Sites about your app. We say relevant as there's no point spamming an iPhone game site if your app is not a game. Gaining targeted reviews however is well worth doing.
- Tell the World via the Tech / iPhone / Mobile Press. If you have something new, the technology world will want to write about it and journalists will want to be first to break cool news stories. Make sure you target the right publications with the right story. Or hire a PR agency.

<http://godzilab-games.com>

<http://www.smule.com>

<http://minigore.blogspot.com>

<http://www.thewhuffiefactor.com>

<http://iphonedevgroup.blogspot.com>

<http://www.mobilemonday.net>

<http://barcamp.org>

<http://balloonsapp.com>

<http://www.appsfire.com>

## #5 Advertise your app

If you're serious about making money from your app and you know you need to reach new customers you could try that tried and tested concept of advertising. Investing in advertising works; some aspects work better than others and it is definitely fair to say that the jury's still out on what works best when advertising iPhone apps. Here are some advertising strategies.

- Advertise your app in traditional media (Newspapers, TV) like Apple does. Of course, you might need a big budget for this one.
- Advertise your app in other apps using services such as Admob and Mobclix. Such services require a much smaller advertising budget and are usually not cost prohibitive to indie developers. You can always do a trial campaign to see what works.
- Advertise your app to a targeted group of design centric users via services like Fusion Ads (this works really well if you have a design centric app).
- Swap Ads with friendly developers like Digital Chocolate does to promote its apps. Services such as Purple Talk offer ad swap services.

<http://www.admob.com>  
<http://www.mobclix.com>  
<http://fusionads.net>  
<http://www.digitalchocolate.com>  
<http://www.purpletalk.com>

## #6 Get expert help

In addition to some of the things you can do yourself, you can of course always bring in the experts.

- Bring in the reviewers - perhaps a controversial strategy is to invest in paying for reviews. That's not paying for *good* reviews, that's just paying for reviews, although some developers believe such a tactic is a dirty trick. It depends on your morals, but you can rest assured plenty of people are doing this, and services like RateMyApp from Appency are there to help.
- Get help with iPhone App PR from a specialist company such as Appency. Appency will help you with Research, SEO, PR, Social Media and Media buying.
- Get help from specialist Tech PR Agencies. One example is Best PR, a Californian based agency specialising in helping the hottest tech companies get noticed.
- Work with a Publisher. If the thought of marketing your own app is filling you with dread but you are serious about ensuring it's successful, consider working with a publisher. Publishers will ensure your app is up to scratch, generate buzz around it, and ensure you have enough launch and ongoing hype that makes your app a hit. The model works brilliantly for developers who have no marketing budget and publishers are likely to take a significant revenue share in your app (for its lifetime). The publisher model has come from the games industry rather than mobile or desktop software so it won't fit all apps, indeed publishers seem most capable in the iPhone games arena. Publishers you may know include US based ngmoco:) and UK based Chillingo.

<http://theappencypress.com/ratemyapp>  
<http://theappencypress.com>  
<http://www.bestpr.net>  
<http://www.ngmoco.com>  
<http://www.chillingo.com>

# Case Studies: Services

This section profiles services that are likely to be of use to developers when devising their iPhone App Marketing Strategy. We have conducted interviews with the best in the business to bring you insight and inspiration.

## Publisher Spotlight: Chillingo

[www.chillingo.com](http://www.chillingo.com)

### What does Chillingo do for developers?

Chillingo is an iPhone games publisher based in North West England. They've released a large range of popular iPhone titles, including well-known games like Zen Bound, Toki Tori, Inkvaders and iDracula.

They define themselves as offering “triple-A, wow-factor, in-depth game play”, with innovation a key factor. They also run a sister company, Clickgamer.com, focused more on the “casual, pick-up-and-play mass market”, offering apps like Stick Fu and Parking Mania.

According to Chillingo co-founders Chris Byatte and Joe Wee, their developer offering is 3-pronged, consisting of PR/marketing, a renowned brand name and a stringent quality control process. They generally tend to work on a revenue-share basis with developers, although exact splits are decided on a case-by-case basis.

### What did Joe and Chris have to say? Quality control

Of course, one of the key things that any developer may need is objective feedback on what they're producing. Joe says

*“We vet content that comes to us, and when we're happy that there's potential and the game meets our criteria of quality, polish et cetera only then do we decide to publish it. And if we decide to greenlight a project we commit to helping a developer with the final mile of development - and that final mile is as important as all the rest of the work that's already been done. Some developers fail the test at that stage, and only very rarely, if someone on our team has got real faith in a release, will we publish one of them”.*

Chris explained that some developers come to them saying they've been working on a game for a year and just want to get it out, and finished with but

*“If you don't do that final mile the whole thing's not worth it. Show it to your friends, show it to your family, do some peer reviews, think about the user experience. Look at other games - because it's easy to get tunnel vision”.*

### New market, but a traditional role

Joe believes that while the App Store is a new market, Chillingo actually undertakes a very traditional publisher role.

*“Marketing is something that is very mature as a process and is needed for any business, and iPhone apps are no exception. That's one of our main roles as a publisher - making noise about it and maximising the number of eyeballs in order to maximise sales”.*

Chris continues

*“So really that is our proposition - to maximise sales. A lot of developers are good at that, but not everyone is. There’s a ‘fire and forget’ mentality where you can do that, but it’s getting more and more risky to see a return on it. Just like any industry really when it grows up”.*

## The Chillingo brand

Given their aforementioned experience with a number of popular apps, it would seem that they’re a good name for game developers to be associated with, and according to Joe

*“It’s hard to quantify how much the Chillingo name means to consumers, but definitely if you read forums and so on you see there is some sort of consumer gravitation, as well as developer gravitation, to the stuff that we publish. We’ve gained a lot of trust with the press as well - already they associate quality and polish with Chillingo”.*

## A fair deal for developers

We finish our discussion by asking about the about the financial arrangements they have will developers. Chris answers that

*“Our percentage really varies from deal to deal, but suffice to say we have developers coming back on a regular basis, so you can see we’re not ripping anyone off. It’s very important to say that we’re not out to hide the developer - we’re very transparent about who made the game, and we’re happy to build their profile. The more we do that, the bigger they’ll become and the better games they’ll produce. And we know they’ll come back to us, because we’re creating a great service”.*

## Chillingo success story: Toki Tori

<http://www.tokitori.com/en/iphone/introduction/>

Toki Tori is 2D puzzle/platform game developed by Two Tribes in the Netherlands. It had previously been published by Capcom on the Gameboy Color, as well as Windows Mobile and Nintendo’s Wii via the console’s download platform WiiWare. Given Two Tribes’ experience in working with other publishers and releasing on other platforms, it’s especially interesting to look at how they found publishing an iPhone game via Chillingo. After widespread online reviews, the game was featured prominently in Apple’s “App Store Turns 1” promotion alongside titles like Flight Control, Rolando and The Sims.

## We do games, not marketing

Martijn Reuvers, business development manager at Two Tribes, spoke of how they first came to use a publisher:

*“When we published on WiiWare, we thought the game would sell itself simply by being available there, so we didn’t do any marketing. But it didn’t sell, and we didn’t want to make that mistake again, so got Chillingo involved. We’re a game developer, we’re not necessarily a very good marketing agency, and we hardly knew the iPhone market. Chillingo offered us a very good deal, and we said they could do it as we’d seen the successes they’d had previously”.*

However, at first he was reluctant to go with Chillingo because they had a large catalogue of games and Two Tribes felt:

*“ours was special. But in the end they managed to convince us, and we’re definitely happy that we went with Chillingo on this one”.*

## What’s in a name?

On the issue of whether a brand name publisher helped, he said

*"I'm not sure if the name Chillingo means anything to the average user browsing the App Store. Perhaps more now than it did a year ago. But Chillingo does focus on releasing really good games, so maybe people will notice when there's another Chillingo game".*

## It's still a mystery...

Although Martijn was sure that working with Chillingo had caused Toki Tori to be successful, he believed this was due to the package as a whole rather than pinpointing individual strategies. He acknowledged that having 'lite' and paid versions of the app was also useful. He believes that exposure within the App Store itself was the most important factor.

## Chillingo success story: Minigore

<http://minigore.blogspot.com/>

Minigore is a simple-but-addictive survival shooter game by Finnish developers Mountain Sheep. Kimmo Vihola of Mountain Sheep found Chillingo to be a vital part of marketing his app, although said that his company did a lot of the "grass roots" online marketing themselves, providing early sneak previews via forums and similar. Some key insights he had based on this experience were that:

- **Screenshots are vital! Much of the early interest in Minigore came from images of its distinctive and polished graphic style which immediately communicated what the game was about.**
- **Key to the popularity of Minigore was the fact that there was significant interest before it was released - simply waiting to get coverage on release doesn't work.**
- **"You can be successful without getting featured by Apple", citing the game Geared as a great example of this.**

## Services Spotlight: Admob

<http://www.admob.com>

Although Admob offers advertising solutions across a range of mobile platforms, their two core offerings to iPhone developers are promoting your app via paid ads in other people's apps that can click through directly to your App Store page, and an ad marketplace that allows you to monetise your app by including in it 3rd party adverts. As part of the former offering they can provide detailed analytics including information on the conversion rate (i.e. how many people download after seeing one of their ads) using the Unique Device ID of every iPhone and a few lines of code inserted into your app.

## Success stories

Admob has carried out case studies on two apps for whom in-app advertising has proved a successful strategy. London station "95.8 Capital Radio" carried out a location-targeted campaign to promote their iPhone radio app, which according to Admob saw the app's ranking rise from 10th to 5th in the UK App Store's music category. This was coupled with an average click-through rate of 1.35% which resulted in 24,000 visits to their app's download page. 8% of these visits ended with a download. However, one should bear in mind that this was a free app with an pre-established regional brand that was already doing relatively well in the App Store.

A similar campaign for film guide app Movies by Flixster drove “18,000 downloads during the 48 hours the campaign ran” according to Admob, although the app was already at position 51 in the top overall free app list. During the 48 hours of the campaign the app rose 14 places in the rankings.

## Our chat with Admob

We spoke to Russell Buckley at Admob about his views on the importance of advertising for app developers. A key belief of his is that

*“the trick to promoting any app is to get to the top of your category, or even the top 100, and once it’s there a lot of the further growth comes organically”.*

This has resulted in the popularity of what Russell called “burst campaigns” - short, concentrated periods of advertising, as much as \$15,000 over 2 days, to get a place in the charts, after which app growth continues organically.

However, he also said that Admob promotes various different types of iPhone apps; apps such as the Capital Radio app come from large companies with existing marketing departments of savvy promoters. They also have existing channels with which to promote the app, and so are not coming to the App Store from a standing start, which of course helps in promoting once they reach the App Store. A distinction should be made between these and apps launched, as he described it “off the developer’s own back”.

*“A lot of developers are very small companies with low overheads, so they’re able to make what they regard as good money from the iPhone”.*

This isn’t always true though with big companies, so they often use apps as marketing tools rather than products in themselves.

We spoke further about whether in-app ads could be a profit strategy in themselves, or if they’re best used simply as a way to get people to upgrade from a free version to a paid version. He said that while it’s difficult to generalise,

*“some apps are inherently more ‘clicky’ than others - in some apps people are more likely to click on an ad than in others, in the same way some print media is far more valuable to advertisers than others”.*

In particular, he suggested that ads are sometimes less well received in games as in other apps because

*“people are pretty immersed in what they’re doing, and they don’t want to leave that environment to click on an ad. It’s a question of knowing your audience and making sure you’re trying to engage in the right place - at the end of a level for example, and so there’s less likely to be resentment towards the ads. People are quite happy to be exposed to advertising and to engage with advertisers as long as they’re done in a sensible, intelligent way”.*

On the subject of PR, he said that he did think running a PR campaign alongside paid advertising was a good idea, emphasising the importance of carrying out PR via traditional channels, giving the example that a cookery app may well be better promoted offline as that’s where its audience may be. He again stated though that all this should still be done with the ultimate goal of getting a good placement in the App Store charts.

## Services Spotlight: Appency

<http://theappencypress.com>

Appency offers a full-featured app PR and marketing service including App Store search engine optimisation, social media marketing, media planning/buying and the running of promotional competitions. They have a further service called "Rate My App", which consists of a team of unbiased reviewers who can give feedback and act as a focus group before release, and then give honest reviews and star ratings in the App Store to aid purchase decisions of real potential downloaders.

We spoke to Aaron Watkins, founder and president of The Appency Press, who said that

*"no consumer wants to be the first person to spend hard earned money on an app, only to find out it wasn't what they were hoping for"*

and while there are plenty of app review sites online, the majority of consumers still discover new apps in the App Store itself - so reviews and ratings here are vital.

He also said that there's a surprising amount that can be done with search engine optimisation, not only for the purposes of the App Store but also 3rd party websites that use App Store data to populate their own catalogues and directories. This involves knowing and using the right sort of keywords and potential search terms not only in an app name but also its description as it appears in the App Store.

# Case Studies: Developers

Definitely the most fun we've had in ages as been interviewing our favourite App Developers. Here are some "real life story" style case studies.

## Case Study: Ramp Champ

### Developer: Iconfactory & DS Media Labs

<http://rampchamp.com/>

#### Painstakingly-designed...a new twist on a classic game

Iconfactory & DS Media Labs describe Ramp Champ as "A new twist on the classic boardwalk games skee-ball and pinball, Ramp Champ will delight and challenge players young and old. Flick your finger to roll balls down each of the themed ramps to earn virtual tickets which can be redeemed for prizes and digital loot".

Part of the game's appeal is its painstakingly-designed graphical look and feel to recreate the retro "class boardwalk" atmosphere. Key to this was the ability to redeem tickets won in game for virtual prizes (images of teddy bears, furry dice, even a toy of Iconfactory's Twitterrific icon) that appeared on an in-game shelf. Attempting to win and collect these prizes brought an element of re-playability to the game, as did the ability to purchase new levels (or "ramps") through in-app purchase.

#### Great reviews, but disappointing sales

On launch, Ramp Champ peaked at number 56 on the top paid app chart. It was well received by those that had played the game, receiving rave reviews from Macworld, Gizmodo and iPhone gaming blog Touch Arcade, as well as garnering praise from prominent tech/design bloggers such as John Gruber (Daring Fireball)<sup>7</sup>.

Within days, however, it had disappeared from the top 100, losing the vital visibility that this gives in the App Store. After launch it was also found that the app had a sporadic bug that caused crashes on 3G iPhones which, although corrected quickly, took two weeks to be reviewed by Apple and made available as an update. This is despite the fact that, according to Ged Maheux, co-founder of Iconfactory, they

*"pulled out all the stops to not only make it beautiful and fun, but also something Apple would be proud to feature in the App Store".*

At the time of release in-app purchases were relatively new, owing to the release of iPhone OS 3.0, and it had been hoped that Ramp Champ would act as something of a showcase for this new feature of the iPhone. However, Ged suspects it is these in-app purchases that actually held up Apple's approvals procedure, rather than encouraging them to push the game into the App Store. Once the fixed, updated version of the app went on sale it did receive a placement in the "What's Hot" section of the store, but not the full front-page fanfare that had been hoped for. Ged suggests the delay in getting this update into the users' hands resulted in a loss of momentum for Ramp Champ and its marketing, which in part led to sales below expectations for both Iconfactory and DS Media Labs.

#### Our interview with Ged - PR and the approval process

When asked about his general views on the importance of PR and press coverage around app releases, Ged says

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<sup>7</sup> <http://daringfireball.net/>

*"We made a mistake building up pre-release hype. When we submitted Ramp Champ to the App Store it took longer to be approved than we expected, so we had already started to hype it, which in retrospect was a mistake. We learned from our mistakes, and it didn't work out too badly, but in looking back at it I wouldn't have started hyping it as soon as we did. It took about a month to get approval".*

On the subject of whether there was any particular reason he could see for this delay, he said

*"The in-app purchasing was the only thing we could think of that could explain it. It's difficult to say, there's no way to predict".*

## How to reach the mainstream

While he felt certain that gaining reviews online was vital in promoting an app, he replied "probably not" when asked if this sort of coverage on blogs influences the mainstream purchaser.

*"The more experience I get with, and the more I understand the App Store, the more I get the feeling that the vast majority of the people who buy these apps are buying them based on word of mouth either from their friends, or their family, or maybe a social network like Twitter or Facebook. They're not getting that recommendation from a blog. I don't have any data to back that up, but that's my feeling [...] I think it's safe to say that the majority of people who buy apps do it on a whim, either they spot it on their phone, or they hear something and go 'I gotta remember to buy that'. Or it's free and they go grab it. There's data definitely that says most people go for the free stuff over the paid stuff. If they like it they keep it, if not they ditch it. There's this huge attitude of disposability that goes with the App Store".*

We wondered if there was anything that Iconfactory tried in order to get around the fact that mainstream users don't read blogs, to which Ged answered:

*"One of the things we learned was that, if you're making a game you need some sort of in-application system to let other social network users know about the game. It's almost like de facto now that you need tweeting and Facebook built in to these apps. We learned that with Ramp Champ and we're learning that with our latest game, Pickin' Time. [...] The only problem is, there's a fine line between tweeting and spam. Ramp Champ 1.1 is coming up, and you can boast a prize or a score or whatever via Twitter, which we hope helps keep it away from being spammy".*

## Bugs in the App Store

Ged also said that although Pickin' Time's development was partly under way before they were able to implement most of the lessons of Ramp Champ, one thing they did decide to do was keep Pickin' Time's development process short so that if it wasn't a success it wouldn't have been as much of a loss. He went on to say that

*"there's this bug in the App Store where if you set the release date for an application to be ahead of its approval date, that is the date that the store sees as its release date: when it's approved, not when it's released. So if you don't release it immediately when it's approved, you don't get to the top of the 'what's new' list. I consider that to be a bug in the App Store. We have to work around that, and it's tricky because if you have to release the moment it's approved, you have to time your teaser campaign carefully, because if the app's rejected for some reason, you risk getting too much hype too soon. It's a big big shell game".*

## The developer's brand

We thought that the fact that Iconfactory has an established brand amongst App Store aficionados would be a key benefit, but Ged found that

*"the Iconfactory brand only helps somewhat. People know we've been around forever, but there are always fewer people who know about you than you think. We have kind of a significant reach, but compared to the App Store it's only a slither of 1%. The people who are aware of us are those who*

*are online all the time, but they're not the people you wanna reach, it's the huge masses out there who have no clue about our existence".*

## Price drop promotions

And finally, on price-drop promotions, which Iconfactory tried with a previous game, Frenzic he says

*"they help. It helps you get more users, but is the ratio in price drop equivalent to that increase in users? With Ramp Champ, theoretically we could make a loss on the game and hope people would purchase the in-app content which would make up for it. And we may do something like that in the future, it's an experiment, and there's no way to know unless you try".*

## Lessons from Ramp Champ

- **Design alone doesn't sell**
- **Don't rely on getting featured**
- **Don't focus your PR too niche**
- **Bugs can cause long term problems**

Outstanding design alone doesn't sell. The very similar Skyworks Bowling had been around number 50 in the top games list for almost 6 months, and a game titled Skee Ball, based on the same concept has since sold especially well. Yet Ged himself says "Ramp Champ is essentially the same game with about 20 times more content and attention to UI".

Being a "featured app" can't be relied on as a marketing strategy. On the surface, Ramp Champ would appear to be exactly the sort of product that Apple would want to promote, showcasing the iPhone's unique capabilities. Even this coupled with Iconfactory's previous App Store success (Twitteriffic) didn't result in a Featured App placement.

Positive online reviews in tech and design circles don't necessarily filter down to sales with a mainstream audience. The vast majority of people who download iPhone apps don't read Touch Arcade, Gizmodo or similar blogs. They download what is visible in the App Store. Some developers adopt a strategy of using good initial reviews to gain sales among early adopters and a high ranking in the App Store charts, hoping this ranking will provoke further sales with a mainstream audience. Despite plenty of positive PR, this does not seem to have happened with Ramp Champ.

Early bugs, despite quick fixes and updates, can be fatal. Ged suggests that removing Apple's limit of 100 beta testers per app may go some way to fixing such problems, but until this happens extra efforts should be made to test apps on a range of different iPhone and iPod Touch hardware in various situations. While bug fixes can be made quickly, getting them to users may be a more lengthy process.

## Case Study: iBlast Moki

### Developer: Godzilab

<http://godzilab-games.com>

Produced by French independent developers Godzilab, iBlast Moki is a colourful physics-based puzzled game in which you have to propel small, round characters called “Mokis” towards an exits by using bombs to ricochet them around corners and off walls. It’s also an interesting example of a game that despite receiving critical acclaim and being loved by iPhone gaming aficionados, the developers don’t deem a success, saying it hasn’t yet covered its production costs. This regardless of a 4.5/5 star review from Touch Arcade, full marks from 148 Apps<sup>8</sup> and being featured in Gizmodo’s top ten iPhone apps of October 2009. iPhone game review aggregation site even suggests it is the 4th best iPhone game ever. It also appeared at number 9 in the App Store’s paid games chart for the UK and similar throughout Europe, yet interestingly only 51 in the US.

### Getting the community involved...

The game’s designer Thomas Lachartre says

*“We didn’t really think about marketing...we just wanted to get people to talk about the game, mainly using forums like Touch Arcade’s as well as Twitter. The great thing about Touch Arcade is that the community is really willing to help you”.*

He went on to explain that although they didn’t get replies from Touch Arcade after a number of e-mails, once the Touch Arcade community became involved the forum members themselves suggested to the site’s owners that they cover iBlast Moki. Despite this press coverage, he’s not how much effect it really has, saying

*“It’s difficult to know how much of an effect reviews have. A similar game, Souzis, by another indie developer game out a couple of weeks ago and hasn’t had many reviews yet. But they’ve done much better than us”.*

### Featured by Apple...

Interestingly, Thomas notes that the game was featured in the “New and Noteworthy” section in the UK and Europe, but not the US. While it’s not possible to say whether the inclusion in one place and not the other is what caused the disparity in sales, or is because of the disparity in sales, it does show that even being featured by Apple is not a magic bullet for App Store success.

### What we can learn from iBlast Moki

- **Work the community**
- **Press does not always guarantee success**

Get the community on your side. Even if your own press releases don’t help you get reviews, work the community; talking to people in forums can have the same effect in the end.

Press coverage doesn’t equal success. While we don’t know the exact costs of iBlast Moki’s development, Godzilab weren’t able to cover development costs with a seemingly successful press campaign. So this could indicate the vital importance of keeping development costs down, or that online press coverage doesn’t always translate to sales!

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.148apps.com/>

## Case Study: Instapaper

### Developer: Marco Arment

<http://www.instapaper.com>

The core idea behind Instapaper is very simple: it “facilitates easy reading of long text content. We discover web content throughout the day, and sometimes, we don’t have time to read long articles right when we find them. Instapaper allows you to easily save them for later, when you do have time, so you don’t just forget about them or skim through them.”

It does this by coupling its iPhone app with a web interface and backend, as well as a bookmarklet that allows you to easily add items to your reading list. The iPhone app presents the articles in this reading list in a text-only format, saved to your device for offline reading (e.g. on an iPod Touch or when no mobile signal is available). It also includes features such as tilt scrolling and the ability to subscribe to friends’ reading lists, while retaining a simplicity and ease of use that led Wired magazine to say Instapaper is

*“so useful that it just about justifies the phone’s purchase price all by itself”.*

Instapaper also placed 7th in Time magazine’s best iPhone apps of 2008, as well as being featured in Macworld and O’Reilly’s “Best iPhone Apps” book amongst other plaudits.

### In the App Store from the start...but a slow burner

After Marco joined the first beta of Apple’s iPhone developer program, the Instapaper app was available to download from the 3rd day of the App Store’s existence. It instantly received a significant number of downloads simply by virtue of being amongst the then relatively few apps available without a huge pre-release promotions push. Within a couple of months of this the app was selected as a “Staff Pick” in the App Store, which led to a further uplift in sales (about double normal sales for its duration of a week), although Marco says this is “nowhere near being in the top 25 list”.

Throughout the next year, the app saw slow but steady growth, partly owing to word of mouth and partly due to mini sales spikes around upgrades, which Marco attributes mostly to the press that accompanies an upgrade, but also to the fact that this results in the app re-appearing in the “what’s new” lists. It is worth noting that some developers have found constantly updating their app as quickly as Apple’s approval process will allow can lead to increased sales. As the app became more popular it received some coverage online, but there was little concerted PR or advertising effort.

The next key growth point for the app was when Apple ran their “one year of the App Store” promotion, in which Instapaper was featured 8-10 apps from the top. This generated what Marco called “the biggest spike in sales” he had ever seen, although he has no idea how his app came to be chosen for this list, having had no particular contact with Apple beyond that which any iPhone developer has.

Sales of the app were also vastly increased by halving the price of the Pro version. Although there is of course the question of whether the increase in sales will cover the decrease in revenue from decreased price, this particular price drop led to two and a half times the normal sales, making it worthwhile. This was the app’s second-highest sales period, after being featured by Apple.

### Our interview with Marco - price changes

Marco started our interview by explaining that, while parts of Instapaper’s marketing were planned and thought out “parts of it were just luck. Or just responding to what was happening in the App Store”. Significantly though, there was no major PR strategy behind the app. One of the ways he has successfully responded to wider trends in the Store is through pricing and Free/Pro versions:

*“When I first launched the app, it was free. But I eventually made Pro and I priced that at \$10 - this was the end of July or August '07, a couple of months after the App Store launched. And most of the premium apps were charging around \$10, where I'd intended to charge \$15. So I thought that was a really bargain price, which is ridiculous now.”*

As detailed above Instapaper is now priced at \$5, which Marco dropped in line with general trends in the App Store. He has a good theory on why such price drops work - not just the obvious point that more people are willing to pay a lower price, but that people have a very relative view of app pricing. Marco believes that even after the price drop, people still thought of Instapaper as a \$10 app, so even though \$5 was still dear compared to some of the other Apps in the store, relative to Instapaper's previous price users felt they were getting a steal.

## Converting Free users to Pro users

Marco continues

*“But there are always going to be a lot more people using the Free version than the Pro version if you give them that choice. And the Free version has to have some sort of pain point in order to have a good conversion rate. I know a lot of applications where the only difference is that the Free version has ads, and the Paid version doesn't. And that yields very poor conversion rates from Free to Paid, so just having ads or not can't be your only differentiation. First I thought 'I'll just make Pro have a lot more features'. But even additional features themselves aren't great converters either, as people convince themselves they don't need those features”.*

Marco went on to explain that while people who used the Free version “kinda liked” the app, those who used the Pro version “really love it”. So he had to find a way to get people to upgrade, and did this by limiting the amount of articles one can save to read offline in the Free version - the “pain point” he spoke about. He was careful about doing this in a way that did not create a backlash, and found that, in his view, people understand that there are a lot of Free apps in the App Store and accept the need to pay something for a higher quality, more useful app.

## Mainstream press isn't everything...

One of the things that impressed us most about Instapaper is the amount of coverage it has received in consumer publications outside of the tech world, most recently in a “best iPhone apps” supplement in UK daily newspaper The Independent. However, Marco says that

*“mainstream press, like being featured by Time magazine, Newsweek, Macworld, didn't have that big of an impact on sales. I think we've found the same thing with coverage of Tumblr [of which Marco is also lead developer] - a lot of it's just the audience. When you're linked to by John Gruber's Daring Fireball site, for example, a lot of his readers have iPhones, so that's very relevant. Macworld, many of them do. Newsweek, it's a lot fewer. So once you get to the mainstream publications, there are very few people it's applicable to. And then, it's also context sensitive. It sounds really good to be in a magazine, but then there's one extra step for people to get to the App Store, and people often don't follow up on it.”*

## ...but it can help your reputation in the long run.

However, he added that

*“it does help though when you can say 'Instapaper was Time magazine's 7th best app of the year'. That lends credibility to it, and so when I mention it on the website, somebody sees it and they might say 'wow, if that major publication likes it...there's something there'. That's why application download pages always have review quotes on them. It lends legitimacy to it, and that does increase sales. But it's not a sudden thing like an App Store promotion is. It's more of a long-term, brand-building kind of thing”.*

## Growing slowly

Towards the end of our interview it was apparent that the success of Instapaper wasn't down to any particular magic bullet - a fluke bit of press coverage or clever use of advertising - but instead simply building a product that people want to use regularly and share with their friends, and building said product in a sustainable way with a view towards the long-term. Marco concluded:

*"When you grow more organically it allows you to develop the application as you go, but when you're going for that top-list, big hit app, you've pretty much got one shot. You've got to make something that's pretty much complete and done and your final version. You put it up there, it rides the wave for a while, you might issue a few minor updates, but then it falls off the charts and it never goes back on again. If that's what you're going for, there's not a lot of room in that schedule for a lot of up-front development, or a lot of maintenance after release. Whereas if you grow like Instapaper did, organically and more slowly...if everyone thought what Instapaper is was what I had after 1.0, it wouldn't be as popular. Because 1.0 wasn't that good. It worked, but it was very basic. And I don't want it to grow any faster really - it's growing right at the pace where it sustains development and keeps me going, but not so quickly that I feel like I'm showing people something that's not done yet."*

## What we've learned from Instapaper

- **Apps work as part of a wider business**
- **Price matters**
- **Carefully position your Lite app**
- **Success doesn't have to mean top 10**

A business outside of your app can help. Instapaper isn't just an iPhone app - it's an ecosystem and infrastructure that people use in its web app form at their desk or, indeed, on other mobile devices. Consequently some of the success of the Instapaper iPhone app can be attributed to the growing user base of its web presence - an advantage over other, standalone apps. And on those occasions that the iPhone app brings in little to no revenue (i.e. with downloads of the free version), the alternative revenue stream of a web presence with advertising can continue to sustain the app's development.

The App Store is highly price-sensitive. Marco's experiences in the first months of the App Store show how easily pricing of apps is effected by user demand and trends elsewhere in the Store. Developers need to be aware of these, and that price is relative - not just to other similar apps, but to what you may have previously charged.

Your Free version can't just be "Pro with ads". Unless you're happy with the income that ads in the free version bring you in addition to that provided by paid downloads, you'll want to give people a reason to upgrade to the paid version. Most people don't mind enduring adverts, and don't know what they're missing with Pro features that they haven't yet tried. So what "pain point" in the free version gives them cause to upgrade?

You can be a success without being a hit. Marco himself says that he may "never be profiled in Newsweek for making hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few months with the App Store". But by organically growing over time rather than storming the charts he's developed a respected and successful app.

## Case Study: Pocket Alan

### Developer: Tim Hugall

Pocket Alan is a novelty soundboard featuring British comedy character Alan Partridge. Pocket Alan is a very simple soundboard app that triggers audio clips of a range of catchphrases by BBC TV comedy character Alan Partridge. It was produced by Tim Hugall as an exercise to learn Objective C, having never done any serious programming beyond hobbyist projects and not intending to make any money. Further, he had no association with the BBC or Talkback Productions who own the intellectual property in the Alan Partridge character.

### A surprise hit!

While the app sold only 38 copies on its first day of release, Tim says that every morning of the subsequent couple of weeks was like Christmas, with him waking up to check how many copies had been sold. The second day of sales saw 200 downloads at 59 pence each, rising to £1500 worth on the third day and £3000 a day after that. Sales averaged at around £1000 per day for a couple of weeks after that, slowly declining to £50 per day about 3 months later.

### Our interview with Tim - tell people about your app in bars!

As you might expect for a hobbyist developer, there was no real strategy behind the app's release, with Tim saying

*"the success of Pocket Alan came as a bit of a shock. In terms of marketing the only things I really did to push it were using Twitter and Facebook, plus word of mouth. Every Alan Partridge forum or Facebook group I pushed it as much as possible. I work in a bar, anyone I saw with an iPhone I had no problem going up and telling them about my app".*

### Celebrity endorsement!

*"The only PR I did was on Twitter - when app review sites found and followed me by searching for app developers, I'd just plug my app. Though one thing that was quite effective was that I looked out for celebrities tweeting about the app, and then sent them a thank-you comment with the name Pocket Alan encouraging them to re-tweet it."*

### Getting into the charts

*"What I did notice was that on the first day I only sold 38 copies, yet those 38 copies immediately got me into the top 100 entertainment apps, so I guess once you get that sort of exposure it's pretty much self-propelling, especially with something as well-known as Alan Partridge. But the strange thing is, a few months later I made iPocket Brent with a friend of mine [using sounds from TV show The Office], and we followed all the same tactics. We hit the same amount of sales on the first day, but it didn't enter the top 100."*

### Legal repercussions?

Tim didn't initially consider that there might be any legal problems with releasing his app - he didn't expect to sell many copies, and simply put it in the App Store to see what would happen". However, once sales picked up he realised he could be in trouble, and paid for a media out of some of his earnings so far. He was told he should be fine, but it was very much a grey area, in which his biggest risk was being held liable for damage to the brand reputation of the owners of Alan Partridge. There was also another close call:

*"Armando Iannucci, the writer of Alan Partridge tweeted about the app and got in touch. At first I was a bit scared, because if there were going to be any legal consequences of using the Alan Partridge intellectual property, it'd be down to him. But he was very complimentary and sent his best wishes".*

## What we can learn from Pocket Alan

Sometimes App Store success is just fluke. While there seems to be a very reproducible formula behind Pocket Alan, it proved difficult to replicate its huge sales with a very similar follow-up app.

- **Trusted content works**
- **Get in the charts by focussing on achieving one big spike**
- **You can just get lucky!**

It helps to have well-known content. Tim makes the fair assumption that most of the people who downloaded the app did so after recognising the name and icon when it surfaced in the charts, or by searching for the Alan Partridge TV series in iTunes. Of course, independent developers do not often have access to well-known entertainment franchises around which they can build apps, and it is much more difficult to develop your own intellectual property for an app than using some with an established audience.

It can take very few sales to appear in the App Store charts. But looks as though this is not always the case, and again is often down to luck.

App Store sales are largely driven by what appears in the charts. With little external PR, an initial appearance in the App Store chart was, as Tim says, further propelled by its own momentum.

# Directory

This Directory is aimed to offer a starting point for iPhone App Developers when it comes to developing a Marketing Strategy for your app.

## Advertising

Admob <http://admob.com> In-app ads to monetise or promote your app

Mobclix <http://www.mobclix.com> iPhone app analytics and mobile ad exchange

Pinch Media <http://www.pinchmedia.com> Analytics and advertising

The Deck <http://decknetwork.net> Boutique web-based ad network targeting creative professionals

PurpleTalk <http://www.purpletalk.com> Swap ads with other developers to promote your app

## PR

Best PR [www.bestpr.net](http://www.bestpr.net) Boutique US Tech PR Agency

Fuel My App [www.fuelmyapp.com](http://www.fuelmyapp.com) Automate the process of giving away copies of your app in exchange for unbiased reviews in the App Store

Agency [www.theappencypress.com](http://www.theappencypress.com) A full-featured marketing service for your app, including PR, SEO and social media

## Publishers

Chillingo [www.chillingo.com](http://www.chillingo.com) UK-based publishers of Toki Tori, Minigore, iDracula

EA [www.ea.com](http://www.ea.com) "Big name" publishers who also release console titles FIFA and The Sims

ngmoco [www.ngmoco.com](http://www.ngmoco.com) Behind flagship iPhone games like Rolando and Topple

Gameloft [www.gameloft.co.uk](http://www.gameloft.co.uk) Publishers of Assassin's Creed and GT Racing

Clickgamer [www.clickgamer.com](http://www.clickgamer.com) The "casual gaming" sister company of Chillingo

## WOM via Developer Communities

iPhone Developer groups (LinkedIn)

<http://j.mp/4ishvT>

<http://j.mp/araZG>

Mobile Conferences

Heroes of the Mobile Screen [www.mobileheroes.net](http://www.mobileheroes.net) Mobile Industry Event

Open Mic [www.openmicamp.ning.com](http://www.openmicamp.ning.com) Mobile Innovation Camp

Mobile Barcamps [www.barcamp.org](http://www.barcamp.org)

Mobile Monday Chapters - an opportunity to meet other people who work in mobile in your area:

[www.mobilemonday.org.uk](http://www.mobilemonday.org.uk)

[www.mobilemonday.net](http://www.mobilemonday.net)

[www.mobilemondaybelfast.org](http://www.mobilemondaybelfast.org)

[www.mobilemondaybarcelona.com](http://www.mobilemondaybarcelona.com)

[www.mobile-monday.de](http://www.mobile-monday.de)

## WOM via User Communities

iPod Touch Fans Forums [www.ipodtouchfans.com](http://www.ipodtouchfans.com) Active community of casual games fans

MacRumors Forums [forums.macrumors.com](http://forums.macrumors.com)

Touch Arcade Forums [forums.toucharcade.com](http://forums.toucharcade.com) Community known to demand coverage of apps

148 Apps Forums [forum.148apps.com](http://forum.148apps.com)

Slide to Play Forums [www.slidetoplay.com/forums](http://www.slidetoplay.com/forums)

## Top iPhone App Blogs

148 Apps [www.148apps.com](http://www.148apps.com) One of the first and most popular app review sites

AppVee [www.appvee.com](http://www.appvee.com)

AppCraver [www.appcraver.com](http://www.appcraver.com)

Appmodo [www.appmodo.com](http://www.appmodo.com)

## Top iPhone Games Blogs

Touch Arcade [www.toucharcade.com](http://www.toucharcade.com) “Keeping you in touch with the latest in iPhone gaming”

Slide To Play [www.slidetoplay.com](http://www.slidetoplay.com) Very popular iPhone-specific gaming site

Pocket Gamer [www.pocketgamer.co.uk](http://www.pocketgamer.co.uk)

TouchGen [www.touchgen.net](http://www.touchgen.net) Formerly “iPhone Games Network”

The Appera [www.theappera.com](http://www.theappera.com) “Where iPhone gaming takes the spotlight”

# About the Author

Kisky Netmedia is a consultancy which develops its own mobile services. Set up in 2002 the company has grown a reputation for creating unique and award winning consumer facing mobile 2.0 services such as Treasuremytext.com and for instigating and evangelizing technology community events and conferences across the UK and in Europe.

Having worked with Apple technologies for many years, the Kisky team began working with iPhone as soon as was possible and cut their teeth creating 'Coffee Buzz App' and 'Booze Britain'. In 2008 Kisky's Director Katie Lips wrote 'The Amazing iPhone Report' a primer on the iPhone ecosystem for business owners and set up Appostles a pan-European iPhone development agency. In 2009 Kisky embarked on a new project 'Little World Gifts'. Little World Gifts is an iPhone startup launching late 2009; focussed on redefining digital gifts.

"Winning iPhone Strategies" is written by Founder Katie Lips and Community and Communications Manager Jonathan Deamer.

## Credits

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