

THE COMPANION TO
THE COMPLETE WEB DEVELOPER COURSE



How to make **\$10,000**
while learning to code

By Rob Percival

Chapter One: Finding Profitable App Niches

Earnings Summary

Before This Chapter	After Chapters 6 & 7
TOTAL EARNED: \$5,000 TIME SPENT: 4 months	TOTAL EARNED: \$9,460 TIME SPENT: 6 months

Building HTML5-Based Apps

The great thing about building HTML5-based apps is that you can (in theory) build once for all platforms: web, Android, iOS, and all screen sizes. In practice, the more your app uses platform-specific features, such as cameras or gyroscopes, the harder it is to build a single code-base for each platform.

I'd recommend focussing on simple apps that are text-based, without too much animation or reliance on device-specific features. Avoid resource-intensive apps like games and video players, and instead consider information apps, integration with web services, and online sync. Make the most of the fact that your app is cross platform by providing something that users will want access to from all their devices, such as a shopping list app or reminder apps.

Use a mobile framework like jQuery Mobile, Sencha Touch, PhoneJS, IonicFramework - check out a full comparison at <http://mobile-frameworks-comparison-chart.com/>. The frameworks make your life much easier when developing for many platforms, and usually provide all the standard pages and widgets you might need.

You definitely need to focus on a niche: don't try building the next camera or email app. But do consider building an app marketed at fishermen, or ballet dancers,

especially if you have some expertise in the area.

For full details on actually building mobile apps with HTML5, check out The Complete Web Developer Course. In this chapter I'll focus on finding profitable niches for which to build income-generating apps.

Generating Ideas

Much like the web as a whole, the app stores are not the free-for-all they once were. There are a large number of developers, so you need to work harder to find gaps in the market and lucrative app opportunities.

To develop your app ideas, follow the same path as with the previous chapter. Are there any apps that you'd love to have, or your friends or colleagues have suggested? Once you have some ideas, follow the steps in the next section to see if they are worth continuing with. If not, bin them and move on.

If your idea fountain runs dry, try some of the following ideas.

Search the app stores for apps which have large numbers of downloads but poor reviews. It's likely that if you build a better app that provides the same features, their users will migrate to your app.

Find popular apps which are only in English, and consider producing a similar app in a different language. Increasingly, non-English speakers are looking for apps in their own languages, especially if the content is tweaked to be more relevant to them at the same time.

Similarly, look for opportunities to create location-specific apps, such as City Guides, discount card apps or local messaging-based apps. How about an app for people to find tennis partners near them, or a Tokyo-only lonely hearts app?

Search for apps that are successful, but only available in a particular geographical area. Lots of apps start out in San Francisco only as a result of the Silicon Valley effect. Replicate the functionality and put a local twist on it to make it work even better in your city.

Look for companies that have a website with a customer login area but no app. Build an app which provides a better experience than the website when on mobile. Not only will you have easy search visibility, but there is a chance the company will buy your app from you!

Challenge: Generate 5 Ideas

As in the last chapter, try and come up with at least 5 solid ideas for a great app. The functionality should be minimal, and the benefits clear. Then ask your friends and family which they think is best (it's always preferable to offer a friend a choice between several ideas rather than asking them if they like a particular idea).

Testing Your Ideas

You should go through a similar process to that described in the previous chapter to test your ideas: create a simple landing page with a signup form, drive traffic to it using Google or Facebook ads, and analyse the conversions. If they look good, go for it!

Having said that, in the early days of your development career, you will learn a huge amount just going through the process of developing, managing and marketing an app. So you don't necessarily need to fully validate every idea. Make the most of the learning experience, and just build something. If it fails, no-one will judge you and your second idea will be the better for the failure.

Simplify your app down to the bare bones - what is the killer feature, the one thing that it will do better than any other app out there? Make it awesome at that task, and don't spend too long on the bells and whistles.

Challenge: Build An App

Once you've sifted through your ideas, commit to one idea and make it happen. Create a minimal viable product and submit it to the app stores. Your first app store presence is always an exciting moment - share it with us on the forums (and get a few early downloads!).

Look in the Further Reading for tips on marketing your app and creating a great user experience.

Further Reading

Finding app ideas:

<http://freelancedoodle.com/app-dev-2-finding-a-killer-app-idea-and-defining-guidelines/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/shortcuts/2013/mar/26/how-to-become-an-app-millionaire>

Marketing your app:

http://www.brandchannel.com/images/papers/531_apppli_wp_mobile_app_marketing_1011.pdf

<http://mobiledevices.about.com/od/marketingapps/tp/Top-10-Tips-To-Market-Mobile-Application.htm>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/top-app-store-marketing-tips-2013-10>

<http://blog.kissmetrics.com/master-mobile-marketing/>

<https://blog.kissmetrics.com/mistakes-in-app-marketing/>

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/228328>

Designing a great app:

<http://mashable.com/2012/04/11/mobile-app-design-tips/>

<http://www.creativeblog.com/tag/App-design>

<https://developer.apple.com/library/ios/documentation/iphone/conceptual/iphonesprogrammingguide/AppDesignBasics/AppDesignBasics.html>

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/08/11/how-to-create-your-first-iphone-application/>