Storyboards – Importance in App Development

What are Storyboards?

Generally, storyboarding is used in software development as part of identifying the specifications for a particular aspect of the software. When it comes to iOS development there are two definitions of storyboards.

The traditional definition

The first is in the traditional sense – that is, a graphical representation of the journey through a product's 'story' or scenario. For example:

A customer logs into the application, searches for an item, chooses it and places an order using a credit card.

This is a very specific sequence of events, and one that would allow us to 'storyboard' the process from the user perspective. It allows the functionality of the product to be defined without the secondary issues of form, which can be dealt with at a later date.

There are some key benefits associated with using a storyboard in the development process:

- Helps to confirm that you've chosen the correct navigation model
- When working in a team, allows for the discussion and creation of a singular vision for the product
- By using proportionally sized paper and diagrams you are able to accurately map out the design of the application, once you've decided on the basic design.

It is an iterative process, intended to be revised as the project continues.

The iOS-specific definition

Storyboards in relation to iOS take on a slightly different meaning, in that it is a tool provided by XCode in order to provide a graphical representation of the relationships between views as well as a development tool – in the first instance it is similar to the traditional definition in that it allows a developer to 'see' how the application travels through it's journey from input to output. As a logical progression from the Interface Builder that allows a developer to graphically

design a single view, the Storyboard allows you to design the transitions between views. Some advantages of using a storyboard are:

- Simplifies interactions between controllers
- Working with tables, especially static tables, is much easier
- Allows for rapid creation of the workflow that can be supplemented with mock data in order to get feedback from the customer at an early stage of development.

There is an issue in using storyboards in a multi-developer team, as no more than one person can edit the storyboard at any one time. This can be tackled either by designating someone to oversee editing of the storyboard or by using multiple storyboards for different 'stories'. It is highly recommended that a storyboard is not used to create a representation of an entire application and should instead be used for specific flows, like the example given in the tradition definition.

Information Sources

Information on the use of traditional storyboards in app development was read from http://answers.oreilly.com/topic/1904-the-importance-of-storyboarding-your-iphone-app/

Information on the use of Storyboards was read from http://www.peachpit.com/articles/article.aspx?p=2168989&seqNum=2 and http://www.toptal.com/ios/ios-user-interfaces-storyboards-vs-nibs-vs-custom-code