

Develop, publish your own apps for iPhones



John Deans

For many years now I have been accumulating information on historical events, famous quotes, government statistics, poll numbers, and crime studies to bolster my political debating skills.

I have been depositing this information in a large MS Word document and in the notes area on numerous contacts within MS Outlook for quick access during a heated discussion.

When the App Store opened last year, I had the idea to take my vast collection of data points to create an iPhone application called Conservative Talking Points (CTP). The goal today is to explain my journey of developing and publishing an iPhone application so you too can take a neat idea and hopefully turn it into cash.

My CTP App became available on iTunes just last week and we'll see how it does over the next few months.

The first thing I did was to scour the iTunes App Store to see if what I wanted to create was already out there being sold. To my surprise nothing even close to my idea was on the

App Store so I was encouraged to begin the processes of development about six months ago.

Since I already had an iPhone and a iMac in the office, I thought that I would just have to simply download the iPhone

SDK (Software Developer's Kit) and start coding the program. Wow, was I blown away by the complexity of the C++ programmer's environment.

Though the iPhone SDK platform was understandable, had plenty of templates and even had an iPhone simulator in it, the sheer learning curve was daunting. I have been a programmer since the 1980s but this was going to be a multi-month process just to develop the basic program to navigate and display my topics, positions, talking points, and supporting facts and figures.

After a couple of weeks of hacking templates and debugging code, I realized it would be the next congressional election before I was ready to have anything decent to submit to iTunes. So, I decided to outsource the iPhone App pro-

gramming freeing me up to focus on the compilation and development of the 50 CTP topics and their content.

Within literally hours of placing a \$30 help wanted ad for an iPhone app programmer in CraigsList.com, I started getting e-mailed responses from iPhone programmers all over the world. At least two-thirds of them were from India and they were all very eager to work on my CTP project.

I reviewed well over 50 programmer applications and finally chose one who turned out to be the most professional software programmer I had ever met. Akil Franklin, software consultant and owner of Unlikely Pear Inc. out of Austin, and I worked up a deal to develop and submit the iPhone App Conservative Talking Points to iTunes by the end of the third quarter of this year.

Akil agreed to work for a cut of the income instead of my having to pay him up front. Since we are targeting an initial conservative iPhone user population of over 4 million in the U.S. alone, we both could come out of this in good shape. We signed a business agreement, he started coding and I started working on the CTP content.

By the start of September, I had finished the 31,500-word document that was basically a huge outline with 50 political topics filled with 205 talking points backed by over 965 supporting facts and figures.

Akil finished his coding about the same time and after he reformatted my MS Word document to a generic text file, he was able to have the program read in my talking points and display them in a browse-able format on the iPhone.

He shipped me the beta version of CTP in August and I was able to view it on a jail-broken iPhone. After a few tweaks and modifications we were ready to submit it to iTunes on Sept. 11, 2009.

Even with over 65,000 iPhone app now in the App Store and 8,500 new and updated app being reviewed by Apple every week, we got our app reviewed in only eight days instead of the two or three weeks we were expecting. It hit the iTunes App Store last Saturday and now the ball is in my court to perform the marketing.

With all those tens of thousands of app out there, Akil and I cannot just wait on iPhone users to stumble upon our program, so I am now running a multi-phase

marketing campaign to get the word out first to conservative bloggers and contacts so they can build up our review and rating statistics.

Having numerous positive reviews and good ratings helps an app be more easily found in the App Store with the possibility of it becoming a coveted "Featured App" on iTunes.

That is one of the main points I want to get out there in this column is that if you want to create a new app for the iPhone, you will have to get ready for the second half of the project and that is the marketing phase. It will take almost as much time, money and effort to market the app as it will to write, debug and submit it to iTunes.

Time will tell on our CTP iPhone App project but since this is the most heated political climate in my lifetime, we are betting that our little \$1.99 program could do very well.

Bottom line: You don't have to be a programmer to put an iPhone app on the market so

get a good idea, a programmer, develop a marketing plan and become the next App Store millionaire!

Next week's column: Computer usage policy

John Deans of DeansConsulting.com is a Brenham area computer networking consultant who can be reached at 289-2233 or John@DeansConsulting.com for questions and comments.