

Add software to iPhone with 'App Store'

Apple's iPhone came out the summer of 2007 and I snatched one up right away. After falling in love with it I bought another one for my wife.

In July of this year I wrote a column on the new iPhone 3G that I am using now. Since then I have staged numerous iPhones for clients and converted many Treo and Blackberry loyalists over to the iPhone world.

Older phones like Razors and original Blackberries were static in their abilities due to the fact that they were never updated dynamically and had no downloadable applications. In other words, what you first bought on the phone is what you were stuck with like most plain or non-smartphones now.

That is the beauty of the



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iPhone with the operating system being updated every couple of months bringing new features, capabilities, and bug fixes. My iPhone 3G is at the latest revision of the firmware (iPhone Operating System) at 2.1. These upgrades are automatically downloaded and installed through iTunes by syncing up the iPhone to a PC.

This way the iPhone keeps growing and improving with these free software upgrades and system updates. Microsoft provides free updates and patches to your Windows operating system, but major new features are withheld until the next full version of Windows is released like from XP to Vista.

Apple's iPhone firmware upgrades can contain complete

new applications or new abilities to existing software platforms.

The original iPhone runs the same latest 2.1 version of the firmware that operates the iPhone 3G. That means you have about 95 percent of the capabilities of the 3G minus the faster Internet connection and GPS capabilities.

One of the biggest new features of the 2.1 iPhone firmware is the "App Store" which is an online application store operated by Apple through iTunes. Hundreds of professional and amateur programmers have developed over 1,000 small applications specifically written for the iPhone.

On the iPhone you will see the blue icon for the App Store. Starting this up will make it communicate with the Apple's online application store and display the featured "apps" that are new and popular at the time. Many apps are free but most sell for 99 cents each. Some more specialized and useful ones can go for \$3-\$5.

You can browse the hundreds of little programs either on your iPhone's App Store interface or by iTunes running on your computer which is the way I like to do it. During the sync operation of iTunes you click on the iTunes Store link on the left and then App Store link in the Store box.

This way you can see more applications better and browse quicker through the hundreds of available handy programs. I usually browse via the categories path under Business and Utilities.

Once I find a neat program to use I jump over to the App Store on the phone, search to find that app, and directly download it. After entering my iTunes pass-

word the download starts and automatically installs the new little application.

Now that we know how the App Store works let's look at a few of my favorites. I have spent hours, yes hours, browsing the App Store, buying them, and trying them out over the past year. I now have three full screens of apps that I have downloaded.

There are numerous versions of voice recording applications available and my favorite is the "Recorder" selling for 99 cents. It acts as a digital recorder showing sound levels and saving the digital sound files on your iPhone.

This can be very handy during meetings or interviews. This version of the Recorder enables the digital files to be synced wirelessly to your PC.

The "Conversion" app makes me look brilliant at times since I can quickly perform mathematical calculations on the fly with my iPhone. How many yards make up a mile? With the Conversion app it quickly tells me 1,760! Keeping that running under the table on my iPhone during meetings gives me the Einstein presence.

TipCalc is a fast way to calculate the tip at the end of a big meal out. Simply enter the price of the meal, tip percentage and number of people in the party and you will instantly have the exact amount to tip.

Coupling the GPS function of the new 3G iPhone with the app "Where To Go" provides an ability to find any goods and/or services nearest to you. By starting up the green icon for "Where To Go" it give you a choice of 10 categories like airports, dining, groceries, schools, movies, medical facilities and more.

Then it provides dots on the

Maps application showing the nearest providers. This is a "must have" for travelers.

Utilizing the iPhone's accelerometer the app "Level" provides a graphical digital version of a leveling tool. You rest the iPhone on a surface and see an air bubble in red liquid rocking back and forth as you adjust the level of that plane. Lay it down flat and you will see a red dot float on a two dimensional leveling scheme.

To verify my new Honda Civic Hybrid's onboard computer telling me I was averaging 38 miles per gallon around Brenham and 45 on the highway, I downloaded the "MPG" application from the App Store and tracked both my and my wife's Honda Pilot's mileage.

That handy little program was easy to enter the required numbers and show us some neat

MPG statistics on both of our vehicles. I was bummed that our Honda Pilot SUV only got 18 mpg.

For fun I downloaded the game "Vector Ball" which acts as a three-dimensional tennis game that can be played as just one player or against another person on their iPhone wirelessly. By simply tilting and tapping the phone time, you can try playing this neat little App Store game.

Bottom line: Visit the App Store on your iPhone and grow the capabilities of this technological wonder.

Next week's column: E-mail wars.

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