How to Market an App (iPhone and Android)

In the summer of 2007, I was working on Keyprowler and people kept telling me I was wasting my time. I was told constantly by my friend's and relatives I was off base with this idea.

Also listen to what they say when you reveal your idea to them. Their criticisms might be valid and your second hurdle, after coming up with the idea, is measuring your idea against what the naysayers tell you.

Every time I mentioned what I was doing, they said, "oh, they already have that." Or "you are too late, no one will buy it." But what they forget is that the marketplace for any given application always has unserved or underserved positions.

For example, when Starbucks was created, people probably said, "oh, there is coffee in every gas station. In fact people give it away." But what they forgot is that there are many positions in the marketplace. (Remember this — there are many positions in the marketplace.) At that point in time there was no branded premium coffee. This mean that the coffee market was underserved.

The entire reason Facebook is successful is that they took the MySpace business model and figured out what caused problems with the userbase. They discovered that slow loading pages, no privacy whatsoever, and too much page customization were the big problems.

Facebook created an application that addressed these issues and before MySpace could respond, Facebook had taken over the marketplace .

In a given app marketplace there are several openings that an app developer could take advantage of. These are the leading ones.

Price. The price is too low or too high. Software is one of the few industries where people EXPECT to pay more for good software. Think Premium vs. Discount. Think Starbucks vs. McDonalds coffee

Ease of use. Some apps are bloated from years of adding features on top of features. Many users want a simpler, straight forward approach. This is one tactic that Apple has used for users, starting with the first iPod. Think Tinder as opposed to Match.com.

Niche marketplaces. Some users want an already existing app geared toward their lifestyle, and industry. Think Grindr, a dating app for homosexual and bisexuals.

After months and months of research, I began to develop Keyprower to serve the mid range ($29.99) ease of use market which I felt was underserved. There were dozens of similar applications from $9.99 to $199.99, what they all had in common was the difficulty of use and too many features.

Technology Research

When you are researching ideas, do not overlook the cutting edge in technology. Check out the news reports, technology blogs, and even the academic journals on the latest in technology research.

In the rapid-paced world of emerging technologies, there is always something new and it can be in any field from nanotechnology on up. The range of possibilities is unlimited. Even new technology in diet and exercise can be useful in feeding your app research.

I mention this so that you don't get caught up in thinking about the technology available for creating your app and extend your thinking to the possibilities in the types of apps that will be needed as new technology emerges.

Judging the Market

Ideally when you began thinking about your app, you had the typical buyer in mind. You could see that person and how he or she would use the app. You should think about this person and the segment of society to which this person belongs.

If you are thinking of a man in his early twenties, you need to start breaking down that segment into a smaller segment. Market segmentation is useful because it breaks the large groups into smaller groups which allows you to focus more specifically the distinct needs, characteristics, and behavior.

The better you understand their needs, the easier it is to reach the people in this group. People respond according to their buying habits and how they plan to use the product or a service.

Why do they want the app? To make their lives more efficient? To make their lives more fun? To help them break a habit?

The four primary segmentation variables are:

u Geographic

u Demographic

u Psychographic

u Behavioral

Where are you selling your app? Who in that geographical area will want to buy it? What kind of people are they? What do they do for fun and work?

Here are some ways to look at these potential segments. These five questions help you narrow your target market.

Measurability

Can you measure the number of people in this area with purchasing power and interest in your app?

Accessibility

Can you reach the people who would be interested in your app with your advertising campaign? Suppose they are students who do not listen to radio, watch television, or read newspapers? How will you reach them?

Substantial

Are there enough people in this area who would want to use your app?

Differentiable

In this market segment, can you separate out the people who would be interested in your app?

Actionable

Is it possible to deliver the app to meet the demand? Actually with an app, the strictures that are on a tangible product are not a problem. If you have a good delivery system with no downtown, you're good to go.