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**The Green Robot**

**Guide to Creating and Selling Android Apps on Google Play**

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Foreword

People all around the world love Android.

Nearly fifty-one percent of Smartphone have gone with Android on their device. By early 2012, there were over three hundred million Android phones (we are not taking into account tablets) in the hands of consumers, with an added 850,000 phones and tablets getting activated each day.

Apparently, Android is doing something correctly.

However, that’s just individuals who like Android. A few of them might not even realize they’re running Android, however it gets the job done and they're not at all concerned about the nuts and bolts of what make their gizmos tick.

How come individuals love Android?

Apps are the life-blood of any of the phones and other gadgets. Even the greatest operating system won’t gain popularity if there aren’t any programs that make it do something.

Individuals have different tastes. For instance, I might not like Samsung, but like HTC. As luck would have it, they each make handsets that use Android. If I don’t love one, I may select a different one made by any one of numerous manufactures.

When the iPhone was brought out, it was available solely on one carrier. Android can link up to every single carrier on the globe, or so it appeared. Users didn’t have to switch their carrier if they wished to use Android like those who wanted an iPhone did.

Not everybody requires the same thing. I know, that goes against Apple philosophy. An iPhone is a “one-size-fits-all” answer where you are able to pick from basically one phone or one tablet — and until lately, basically one carrier.

Phones and tablets that use Android may be found on nearly every carrier and come in all forms, sizes, specs, and capabilities. You require a garden pink phone? No biggie, you are able to get a garden pink phone.

Do you need an inexpensive phone for the youngsters? No issue there’s an Android for that.

How about a super-high-end telephone? There’s and Android for you, as well!

Require a physical keyboard? Android’s got that, too!

Finally, there’s freedom. Android is open-source, which signifies developers may basically do whatever they wish with it. OEMs may tailor-make it to their hearts content.

Android isn’t simply limited to telephones. It operates on tablets, televisions, and even watches. You are able to run it wherever you wish! As it’s all tied together with your Google account, all the apps that you operate on one platform are in all likelihood found on all the others, without you having to buy them again.

While end-users might not take direct advantage of the open nature of Android, they get the payoffs of the OEMs and developers who do.

Chapter 1

Introduction

It’s a very exciting time to be an app developer with Google and Apple – two fierce competitors in the land of mobile applications – striving hard to one-up each other as to who gets to release the best operating system and which OS has the best range of applications to offer. In the past, lucrative opportunities could only be found in the iOS market but Google’s relentless pursuit, with its continuously evolving Android OS, have managed to change that.

Nowadays, there’s little that you can find in iOS which does not have its counterpart in Google Play or the App Store for Android users.

As a quick reminder for first-time mobile app developers or at least for those interested in building apps for Android for the first time, here are a few things you should keep in mind about Android apps.

* Every Android app is made up of at least one application component. There are four major types of components found in Android apps: broadcast receivers, content providers, services, and activities.
* Each component has a role to perform, and they may be controlled separately – even with the use of other apps.
* Developers must come up with a manifest file, which would contain a complete list of the components making up the application. OS and other types of requirements should also be included in the manifest file.
* Alternatives to non-code app resources like layout files and images must be provided for all types of device configurations (e.g. screen size).
* The Android OS is powered by Linux and each application gets a unique ID from the latter. However, there are also times when different apps are allowed to share the same ID as long as they are backed by one certificate. Each app is also given a virtual machine or VM of its own so that it can run independently from other apps.
* An Android app is only permitted to tap into the system resources that it specifically requires and nothing more than that. This is necessary to keep the OS as secure as possible.
* Apps must be programmed to require user permission during installation before it can obtain access to device data that include but are not limited to the SMS messages or photos stored in the device.

There are actually numerous resources online you can access for free to learn more about building your first Android application. As mentioned earlier on, the items above are just meant as a reminder with the purpose of educating first-time developers as well as emphasizing the similarities between how Android and iOS applications are developed. If you are already experienced with building an iOS application, then you will find few new things to discover and learn when building an app for Android.

Ultimately, the key thing to remember when developing an application for Android is that you are *not* dealing with just a single device-making company. In iOS, you only have to be familiar with the device configurations used by Apple. But in the Android empire, you need to be familiar with how device configurations of, say, LG, Sony, Samsung and of course Google can affect your application.

Also, there is a significant difference between how the app markets for Android and iOS are run, and you need to take that into account when it’s time to market your newly developed app. At the end of the day, the best thing you can do is to *never* make any assumptions as a one-time Apple app developer or even as a mobile app user.

Chapter 2:

What Are the Trends with Android Apps?

As with any business or marketing project, it’s always a good idea to study the lay of the land before doing anything concrete or attempting anything that could cost you money, you might not be able to recoup.

According to AppBrain.com, there are 676,129 Android applications in the market as of April 2013 – a considerable leap from the 400,000-plus apps in the Android market about the same time last year. Other interesting statistics provided by the site include the following:

* 22% of the total number of Android apps in the market is considered low quality. Over 535,000 of those apps are also free.
* USD is still the most commonly used currency for purchasing Android apps. Distant runner-ups Euros and Yen are at neck with each other, followed by the British pound.
* The top 5 Android phones today are all from *Samsung,* with the Galaxy S3 leading the pack.
* The top 5 app categories are Entertainment, Personalization, Books and Reference, Tools, and finally Lifestyle.
* The average rating for apps is *4* but with a little over 43% of Android apps rating below three stars.
* Apps with the highest amount of in-app purchases are *Subway Surfers* and *What’s App Messenger.*

From the statistics shown above, you should already have several good ideas of what kinds of trends are likely and unlikely to be very popular in the market.

* You can enjoy the highest earning *potential* if you target markets that pay in USD – North America – and if you decide to develop mobile games and other types of entertainment apps.
* You are more likely to derive more profit from in-app purchases if you offer your app *free to download.*
* You need to get users to rate your app at least 4 stars.
* You should think of a way to attract more *Samsung* users to your app.

Upon reviewing additional market reports on how Android apps are doing, your future application is more likely to earn lots of money as well if you can answer ‘yes’ to any of the questions listed below.

* *Can your application help businesses generate more sales or profits from mobile users?* It can be something as simple as providing GPS services for a particular industry or anything else that can turn a Smartphone into a virtual credit card.
* *Does your app have a viable use for NFC?* Short for Near Field Communications, NFC technology basically works faster than barcode scanning in yielding certain types of data. If you can think of a way to make good use of NFC with your app then you’ve likely hit the jackpot.
* *Have you based your app on doing the “opposite” of what your target market is most complaining about?* Basically, this is all about looking for feedback from your target market and applying what you’ve learned to your own app.
* *Have you thought in terms of cross-platform designs?* Simply put, more users will love you more if you do not make it hard for Android and non-Android users to communicate or play with or against each other through your app.

Chapter 3:

Why Android Apps Are Highly Lucrative

This is not to say that the App Store of the late Steve Jobs is no longer a gold mine. It still is, but the only difference is that nowadays iOS apps are no longer the *only* way for an application developer to make money.

Android apps are definitely lucrative as well and they will only be more so considering how Android is an open-sourced software and any other new mobile company can tap into it. The more phone models designed for Android there are, the more potential customers there will be for your application.

One good example of how lucrative Android apps can be is when you look at what Rovio did with its *Angry Birds* franchise when it became available on Android. While the game is available for purchase in iOS, it is downloadable for free with the latter.

Rovio realized that the game could be a target for piracy if it were released as a paid app in Android. From there, they came up with the brilliant solution of offering the game for free but with in-game apps. The result: the company earns about $1M every month from every version or installment they release.

Another reason why you should target Android when developing apps is because it has a wider reach than Apple. In many cases, certain apps can’t be made available in certain countries when you are using an iOS device. There’s no such problem, on the other hand, when you’re using an Android device.

Thirdly, Android devices – both Smartphones and tablets – have outpaced the sale of Apple devices in different markets. This could change in the future, of course, but for now, it’s safe to say that no one can write out Android as a potential usurper of Apple’s throne in the mobile industry.

Lastly, Android apps do not have to undergo any kind of review process. Once it’s good to go, then you can have it published and available for download right away.

Now that you understand just how golden an opportunity the Android market is for application developers, here are several ways for you to make money with your application.

* In-game advertisements – If you are offering your app as a free download, this is one of the quickest ways for you to earn money.
* Notifications – It’s basically a pay-per-click variation of in-game advertisements.
* Freemium – The game is free to download and it’s also free to play. But some in-app purchases require real money and these typically offer premium items or services.
* Paid applications – You earn money from every download.
* Pay per download – Users need to pay extra for every out-of-app service that they require.

In many cases, application developers come up with two versions for their applications. The *Lite* or *Free* version of their app is meant to work as a teaser, offering only a limited range of features or offering additional services for separate purchases. In such cases, you may get to save more money by paying for the *Paid* version of the app, as you’ll get all those additional services included in your purchase.

Chapter 4:

Figuring out the Best Market for Android App Monetization

When building an application, the first thing you need to do is to choose the market that your app would be categorized as a part of.

**Popular versus Unpopular Markets**

There are several pros and cons that come with each type of market. If you opt for developing an app for a lucrative and immensely popular market, you need to be prepared for the following:

* Higher competition, which could mean lesser revenues if you are unable to beat your direct competitors
* Higher and possibly costlier server and hardware requirements since you would have to accommodate a larger customer base
* More entry barriers, such as figuring out a way to make your new application stand out in an extremely large and heavily active market

But of course, there’s the other side of the coin to consider. If you make it big in an already popular market for Android apps, you get to enjoy the following benefits.

* Revenues are likely to be more than what you could earn from smaller or less popular markets for apps
* The opportunity for a “crossover” by developing its iOS version for Apple users

If you opt for a less popular market for Android apps, you need to adjust your strategies accordingly.

* Focus on niche marketing. With a smaller market to cater to, you must be able to offer *personalized services.* You can increase revenues by charging more than usual for personalized services.
* You can afford to experiment with a smaller market, which may pave the way for newer and better apps to develop and perhaps even sell in more popular markets next time.

**Choosing the Right Method for Earning Revenues**

The way to earn money from your app should be based on the way your market typically spends money.

* Do your users prefer free apps or are they more than willing to purchase paid apps given the right incentives?
* Will they mind in-game advertisements or would they rather pay extra for premium services?
* How much is the income range of your target market? What is their age group?

When choosing a market for your app, the revenue potential should *never* be your *only* concern. Just because a lot of money is being spent in a particular market doesn’t mean you get to enjoy a slice of the pie as well. Before that can happen, you need to ask yourself one important question:

***What do you know most about and what do you love most doing?***

You must have one answer for both if you want to enjoy maximum success from your app. If you like reading romance novels and you like playing RPG then you could perhaps combine both and create an *otome game –* something that is very much popular in Japan and is slowly making its way to other parts of the world as well.

To create a perfect otome game, you need to be familiar with what its diehard fans want from a game. You also need to be good at storytelling and – if you are not an artist yourself – then you need to find an artist who can complement your story.

People always earn more when they’re doing something they love, and it’s no different when you’re hoping to make money from an Android app.

Chapter 5:

Finding Product Ideas that Fit the Market for Android App Creation

If you already have an idea about what kind of app you should develop for your target market, then that’s great! But there won’t be any harm either in looking for more ideas to complement your own, which is why you should still perform the exercise listed below.

* List down the top 5 applications in your target market category. What are the strongest and weakest points? What can you learn from these apps? How can you use such knowledge to improve your own application?
* Do the same for the top 5 applications in other equally popular market categories. There may be something you could learn from them and apply to your own app.
* Read the most popular reviews for the apps you are directly competing with. Are its reviewers looking for something that no other apps are able to offer yet? Is there a way you can offer it?

After this exercise, you need to consider the usual factors that businessmen and marketers consider when choosing which product or service they’d like to sell.

***Competitive Advantage***

Every good product should have its own competitive advantage no matter how small. If you can’t figure out what your product’s competitive advantage is then it’s definitely not ready to be out for sale.

***Features or Services***

Can it do basically everything that its competitors can do? This is especially important if you are developing a non-game app and it’s meant to be functional rather than entertaining.

***Price and Profit***

You need to consider the price point of your app. Nowadays, Android apps sell anywhere between $.99 up to $200. If you are not going to offer your application for free then how much would be a reasonable price for its download?

If on the other hand you would like to offer your application for free download, then you need to consider how to make money out of it. While your users are downloading your application, you’ll be paying for the maintenance and server operations necessary for keeping the application alive. You need to find a way to pay for those expenses *and* hopefully gain profit from it.

***Convenience and User-Friendliness***

With applications so easy to install and uninstall, users have come to expect a lot from developers. If your application is inconvenient and not user-friendly in any way, expect your download figures to dwindle to nothing. Here are a few questions to consider when evaluating how user-friendly and convenient your application is.

* Does it load instantly? If not, how much waiting time is involved? Is it comparable with other competing apps?
* Does it require users to register for an account *outside* the app? This is a huge no-no as far as most users are concerned.
* What kind of payment options do you accept for in-app purchases?
* Do you offer users a lot of opportunities to save their data? This is essential if you are thinking of designing certain types of game.
* How often does it have to be updated?

Once you consider all the factors listed above then you should have a pretty good idea by now about what kind of app you have shaping up in your mind.

Chapter 6:

The Best Way to Get Started in Creating Your Own Android Apps

This chapter won’t be highly technical. More likely than not, you already know all there is to know about developing Android apps and what you don’t know is best explained by Google itself. You’ll find all the necessary learning resources for application development at *Developer.Android.com.*

Rather, this chapter is all about the business and organizational side of application development. So many brilliant application developers fail to make it big in this business not because they designed poor apps.

They ended up losing money in their first – and usually only – venture in application development simply because they didn’t take the time to come up with a good business plan.

To make sure that your application has the best chances of selling in the market, here are a number of things you should do.

***Who Does What?***

If you’re not running a one-man company then you need to agree among yourselves as to who is responsible for which tasks. You have to be as specific and as concise as possible so that there’s no need for finger-pointing at the end. You also need to come up with a list of steps to perform if something does go wrong. It’s very important that you have a Plan B for everything so that operations will continue to move forward even with a few setbacks here and there.

***Keeping to Your Timetable***

Be reasonable but don’t be lax when creating a timetable for your tasks. Give yourself deadlines and be very strict about keeping to it. You need to make it clear to among yourselves that missing out on your deadlines will cost you money. It may not feel like that right now, but it will cost you in the long run. The more days the release date of your app is delayed, the more chances your competitors have of beating you to the finish line!

***Cost Management***

The amount of time needed for an application to start making money varies from one market to another. You need to figure out what the average waiting time is before your initial income kicks in for your market. Let’s say that in your market it takes about three to six months for an application to launch properly. If so, you need to make sure that you have the necessary money to keep your application running for all six months.

You also need to be practical with your expenses. Be ruthless if necessary when trimming down costs. Eliminate what you can do without but never at the expense of quality! The first few months of your application’s release are always the most crucial. It’s the make-or-break period literally so give it your best shot!

***Marketing Strategy***

One common and costly mistake of newbie application developers would be their belief that their application will sell itself. Yes, that does happen once in a blue moon but it won’t do you any good to hold your breath for it. If that happens then good if it’s not it’s better to have a market plan in place and ready to be put into action!

Chapter 7:

Android App Users and Building a List of Customers

Getting people to try your application for the first time will be an uphill struggle, but if you are patient and strategic with your efforts then your app will get the support it deserves one way or another.

**Sneak Peeks**

Make a list of websites and maybe other forms of print media – news and magazine columnists – that review applications regularly. Send them your best marketing copy and ask them if they’d be interested in enjoying a sneak peek of your app. Keep the number of sneak peek offers small and limited so that people will think it’s a fairly “exclusive” offer.

**Advertise**

Look for advertising opportunities that you can afford and which would provide your app with exposure for your target market. Hire a professional if you don’t have an in-house marketing specialist to work on your graphics and ads. The best ads are those that show up on apps that your target market also uses. You typically get a banner with in-game or in-app advertisements and a few seconds of viewing before your ad is replaced by another.

In designing your ad, remember to include the following:

* Target release date for your application
* Name of the application
* A one-liner description of what users can expect from your app
* A single graphic that fully explains what your application has to offer
* Introductory price or – if it’s not for sale – then indicate it’s free for download

**Free Versions**

It wouldn’t hurt to offer a free version of your application if you intend it to be available only for purchase. With free versions, you have to be very strategic about what you would and wouldn’t include in it. The best free apps are typically characterized by the following:

* Capable of performing basic tasks or completing at least a single stage of a game
* Includes an in-app option to purchase the full version of the application
* Offers full range of services or features but also requires users to make do with in-game ads

**Introductory Offers**

Another way to encourage users to download your application – especially if it’s a paid app – is by offering your application for a lower price as an introductory offer. It’s up to you if you wish to indicate up to when this introductory offer will last. In most cases, you’ll create a stronger sense of urgency if you specify the exact date the introductory offer will end.

**Press Releases**

As they are generally free to distribute, you should definitely take advantage of press releases and come up with several ones for your application. Be sure to choose strategically which places or cities the press release would be targeting.

**Reviews**

Try to get as many people to review your application. Reviews need not appear on Google Play but it would be better if so since those are the first reviews that your target customers would be seeing. On this note, you should configure your app to come up with notifications that invite users to rate or review your app.

Chapter 8:

Pre-Selling Your Android App to the Market

Pre-selling your Android app won’t be possible within Google Play, but you can do it *outside.* The best way to do so is by developing a *Kickstarter* project or campaign for your application.

Keep in mind that the website does have a few restrictions about what’s eligible for soliciting funds. They want something *creative,* for starters, and – at present – they are also only available for users living in the UK and the United States. If you live elsewhere, you would probably need to find a partner from either country to qualify for the Kickstarter project. Lastly, you need to start this *early.* It is supposed to be a *project –* one that will be completed in time.

***Choose an effective name for your project.***

With just your title alone, people should already know what you are trying to sell and why they would want to patronize it.

***Take the time to explain what your project is about.***

If what Kickstarter is providing is not enough for you to fully describe what your application has to offer then you can always add links that will redirect interested and potential customers to your blog and site. Either way, you must be very clear about what you are offering, what makes it unique from the competition, and of course what you would require from your would-be sponsors or patrons.

*Use screen shots and embedded videos.*

Never underestimate the power of photos and videos. They still do speak a thousand or even a million words in just one second. It’s even more important to describe your project or application in a visual way if you are targeting a market that is not exactly inclined to reading.

**Look for Other Sites Where You Can Pre-Sell Your Product**

Of course, Kickstarter.com is not the only way you can pre-sell your application to the target market. There are many other alternatives for you to take advantage of and especially if all you are after is their pledges or a head count of how many people are likely interested in what you have to offer.

One good alternative for Kickstarter would be participating in seminars where application developers can meet with potential investors and venture capitalists. When pre-selling an application, the key to success is offering potential customers specific benefits for paying for your application *now* rather than later. Here are a few examples of what those benefits can be.

* *Discounted prices –* Pre-selling prices or offers should be lower than the introductory or retail price of your application.
* *Exclusive access –* In other cases, application developers offer potential customers with access to exclusive benefits or services that other users would either not be privy to or would have to pay a higher price for.
* *Bonus content –* This is especially popular for those developing and designing mobile games. Customers who support you during the pre-selling phase of your application may be provided with bonus content that would allow them to enjoy your application more.

Don’t be afraid to think out of the box during the pre-selling phase of your application. If at this stage, you require substantial help in terms of funding then there’s all the more reason to go all out with your ventures.

Chapter 9:

Building a Long Term Relationship with Your Android App Users

Customer service between developers and application users is not really that different from how companies from other industries operate or manage customer relations. At the end of the day, there are only two things you should remember: always keep client satisfaction a top priority and remember that the Internet is the preferred platform of application users for customer support.

**Website and Blog**

These two are essential not just for marketing your products or services, but you also them to give your users a “place” to visit you if they have something to talk or complain about. Most people are reassured just by knowing that they have a URL to type in their browsers if something wrong does happen.

Use your website and blog to update your customers or users regularly as well. Let them know about the latest changes or updates you’ve made to your application and give them sneak peeks whenever you can.

**In-App Help**

There are several ways you can offer customer support through your application.

* Help – Virtually all applications have a help button that provide either online or offline help for its users. Some even offer both. When creating your Help file, you should determine whether it’s better to come up with text-only support or if you should include additional photos and videos for instructions as well.
* Message – Another way to provide in-app support is by allowing users to send a message directly to your system. Make sure to stick to a quick response time for answering such messages.
* Live Chat - A few applications are capable of offering live chats to their users, but this would require a huge amount of investment in terms of hardware and software needs. Make sure you only offer this if it is what your target market is used to.

**Social Media**

Nowadays, it’s imperative to include social media in your marketing plan, which customer support and relations is a large part of. After all, pleasing your customers and getting to know them is part and parcel of marketing your product. With social media, it’s best to concentrate on a few well-chosen platforms and build your network from there.

It’s typically a good idea to start with Twitter and Facebook, as these two are the most popular social media sites today. These should be linked each other so that cross posting is allowed, which should save you time and effort.

Eventually, you can expand your social media campaign to include other popular sites like Instagram and Pinterest. These two are actually great platforms for promoting applications since they are photo-oriented and photos are one of the best ways to show users what they can expect from your application.

When building and managing your social media campaign for managing customer relations, here are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

* Talk to them instead of simply “informing” customers what new things you have to offer. Greet them like they’re long-time friends.
* Always take the time to respond to their comments. If that’s not possible, always provide a window or a specific time period wherein customers can expect you to reply to their comments.

Chapter 10:

*Conclusion*

As you may have learned for yourself, developing and marketing an Android app takes a lot of work. But the key thing to remember is that neither is it an impossible accomplishment. A lot of people have earned a respectable amount of money from Android applications because of pure luck. While that can certainly happen to you, that shouldn’t be your end goal! If you must dream then dream big! Your application can do a lot better, but you need to believe in it first.

As a recap, here is a list of your objectives for building an application for the Android market.

***Take the time to review the market and industry you will be a part of.***

Find out about the latest trends, changes, and policy updates affecting the mobile market and industry. All these will have a bearing on how your application would be received by your target market.

* What do developers charge in average for paid apps?
* What is the average percentage for profit margins and operational costs?

***Study your competition.***

It never pays to be blind where your competition is concerned. You should know what they’re currently offering and what they’re planning to offer in the future. You need to figure out what they’re doing right and what weaknesses they have you can exploit on. Just remember that you do not need to resort to dirty tricks to beat the competition. Ultimately, it’s all about designing the best possible application available for your market.

***You need a lot of funding.***

Many applications sink and fail before they see the light of day simply because of lack of funding. It’s for this reason that you seriously need to consider your alternatives for pre-selling. Basically, it’s all about finding either potential customers who are willing to pledge money in support of your application or investors willing to put up capital for your application.

You must have enough capital to keep your application running for a few months. As you cannot expect money to come in right away, you must have enough set aside to pay for operational and non-operational expenses for the first few months.

***Remember to court your target customers for reviews.***

Reviews make and break an application so be sure to get the positive reviews in first using whatever strategy you can think of. In most cases, developers offer game items or application features for free or for a discounted price in exchange of a review. You *cannot* ask them to leave you a good review, though. You just have to keep your fingers crossed that they’ll have something nice to say about your application.

***Stay organized to hit the ground running!***

Last but not the least, it’s important to stay organized from start to finish. Even if you see the process for developing applications a *creative* venture, it’s still essentially a business project. Delays will always cost you money so you need to come up with a timetable for your work and stick to it.

Hopefully this book has given you lots of information on how to get going with Android apps.

***All the best in your ventures.***

***OTHER RESOURCES:***

Pillar Apps Charter Launch WF

<http://scgoldmine.com/go/?q2lu>

Rights To Riches - The Mobile Edition  
<http://scgoldmine.com/go/?ww31>

[Mobile Video Explosion](https://www.jvzoo.com/affiliates/info/24043)  
<http://scgoldmine.com/go/?whim>