

Needle in an Appstack

Insight from the iTalk Online Research Community

Apple's iTunes App Store has in excess of 100,000 apps across a multitude of categories. There's apps for fun, for making your life easier, for saving time, for sleeping better, for unleashing your creativity. Basically, there's an app for just about anything you can think of doing via your iPhone (and for many things you've never thought of doing).

The problem is, how do we find these apps when there's so many of them in there? It's like being in the biggest shop in the world, but all products fit into 20 simple categories. For new apps, whether free or paid, branded or unbranded, the real challenge is being found in the first place. In a digital shop where browsing is very linear, from one click to the next, it's difficult for apps to rise to the surface so that they are found before 'shoppers' move on.

Latitude Insights conducted an online research community amongst iPhone users from March to April 2010, in which finding apps was an interesting topic of discussion. The main method used to find apps were the Top 25 lists, and word of mouth recommendations from other iPhone users.

| Methods of finding apps |
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| Top 25 lists |
| Recommendation/Word of mouth |
| Browsing App Store/Category Search |
| Keyword search |
| Forums/Mac sites/Blogs |
| Media reviews/articles |
| Apps about apps (e.g. Pandora's Box, App Sniper) |
| Advertising |

App downloading can be either planned or spontaneous. Sometimes people will specifically look for an app they know the name of, or a type of app (but do not know its name) by using a key word, or category search. Other times, browsing the app store may be like window shopping – purposeless, but sometimes resulting in a new acquisition.

iPhone users recognise the inherent problem in relying on the Top 25 list to find new apps. Following the 'crowd' when it comes to apps means that the most downloaded apps, continue to be the most downloaded. There's a certain level of 'cred' associated with having a more unique or rare app.

"I would imagine that there are a lot of great apps that never make it into the Top 25. Especially, considering that most of the apps in the most popular list are so amazingly stupid"

Branded or commercial apps need to utilise other communication channels to promote their apps, to facilitate uptake/downloading. Ironically, it may be that non-mobile media, particularly websites and print in the form of both advertising and reviews, are the best way to tell the target market you have an app for them. And then a good app can begin to rely on recommendation to build its fan base.

Ultimately, a good recommendation or a positive experience with an app on someone else's iPhone is the strongest driver of app selection. That's why 'what apps have you got?' could be the universal catch-cry for iPhone users.