

Craig from Coogee rivals Angry Birds: a victory for the 'common man'

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Craig Barber of Coogee, 35. Photo: Supplied

Craig Barber is a chart-topping Apple app developer competing neck-and-neck in some markets with the popular *Angry Birds* game despite the fact the 35-year-old from Coogee doesn't even know how to write a single line of code.

Barber is one of a number of entrepreneurs who outsource the computer programming of their technology ideas online. His music app, [Car Audio Deck](#), was [funded \\$US6360 by backers on crowd-funding website appbackr.com](#) and made by a Chinese woman he's never met who bid \$US2500 on outsourcing site [Freelancer.com](#) to make his idea come to life.

Now the app is raking in thousands of dollars in sales, and has even some days ranked No. 2 overall in Greece on Apple's paid iTunes app store charts, competing head-to-head with *Angry Birds Space*. In other markets like in Australia and the UK it's ranking in the top 100 paid apps under the music category.



Barber's Car Audio Deck app.

Barber said: "It's not reserved for your Bill Gates or your Steve Jobs. The common man can actually make their own software and sell it right next to the big players in the market..."

The 99 cent app, which took about six months to create from idea to completion, displays large on-screen buttons that make it easy for people driving cars to control the music being played on their iPhone or iPod Touch while they concentrate on the road, something Barber claims makes his app safer and easier to use when driving when compared to Apple's pre-installed iPod app that has smaller buttons and is more fiddly to use.

"The level of concentration and the effort that it takes to use the standard music or iPod app [while driving] is a lot more difficult [than the Car Audio Deck app]," said Barber. "The buttons are smaller, the way that you navigate through the music is more difficult."

An art director at a marketing agency in Sydney by day, Barber wouldn't reveal exactly how much he had made from selling the music app - which launched globally in March - other than saying he had sold thousands of copies and made more money from it than he paid Kele Chaun in China on Freelancer to develop it.

It's the second successful app Barber has developed, **the first being Brief Buddy**, an app designed for those who work in marketing. He hopes to "transition" out of his day job and into app development soon, but said he would wait until his apps were earning him enough money to do so.

Freelancer.com CEO Matt Barrie said Craig's story showed how anyone could "turn the spark of an idea into a fully functioning app, product, or business" without any programming knowledge.

"You no longer need hundreds of thousands of dollars in venture capital funding to turn your dreams into reality," Barrie said. "We have countless stories of Aussie entrepreneurs and small businesses getting things done they otherwise couldn't have afforded. Many end up creating new jobs because their idea turns into a flourishing business, and they're able to reach a global market off the back of a credit card."

With no marketing budget for Car Audio Deck like Barber was used to with other projects, he said sending review copies of the app to bloggers was one of the keys to generating more sales of it on Apple's iTunes store.

"I contacted a number of major websites all over the internet ... and told them about my app ... and literally sort of started to spread the word via word of mouth online. I tried to engage people with Twitter. I setup a Facebook presence. So there's a certain push that you do in regards to getting it out there.

"I guess at the end of the day if it is a good app people talk about it. It will sell itself to a degree."

Some of the main drivers in generating sales of the app included having it profiled on sites like appadvice.com, trendhunter.com and smh.com.au. "The response from that was really good," Barber said of the SMH article which included his app.

He added that he would have found it "quite strange" if he had been told 10 years ago that he'd be making an app that would rocket to the top of the iTunes app store in multiple countries without promotion from Apple.

"A lot of developers will never achieve that," he said.

Some of the money made from his music app would now go to making improvements to it, he said.

"I will definitely be funding some updates to the actual app itself and I will sort of be making those with the same developer and actually pushing an updated app out into the world."

Below is a promo video of Car Audio Deck:



This reporter is on Facebook: [/bengrubb](#)

74 comments

«»«

»In a way its kind of sad that the idea is worth so much more than the work. The chinese programmer takes home \$2500 but this guys raking in the big bikkies. «
»cest la vie«

»«

Jack | Erskineville June 01, 2012, 9:38AM

«»«

»Yeah whats free market capitalism ever done for anyone eh? Except for wealth creation, high income & skills growth for chinese programmers (they'll be making their own apps btw), reward for entrepreneurship, and an app benefitting thousands everyday.
We should ban this practice, all parties will be worse off but we'll feel better.«

»«

rob | melbourne June 01, 2012, 10:05AM

«»«

»Jack,

All ideas are worth more than the work to bring them to life. JK Rowling is paid for her idea of Harry Potter not for the printing of books.«

»The developer bid and won the business to write code. She put a value of her time to the development and was awarded the contract - a simple business model.«

»If the developer wanted to earn more money then they needed to have the idea, develop it and market it.«

»Your comment suggests that the developer is being ripped off when in reality a value was placed on the development.«

»«

The Economist | Sydney June 01, 2012, 10:05AM

«»«

»Craig wasn't guaranteed 'the big bikkies' but the programmer WAS guaranteed \$2500. Bigger risk = bigger rewards. I reckon a lot of app programmers sourced thru freelancer.com would make more money on the app they write than the person who commissioned them gets in profit.«

»«

DY | June 01, 2012, 10:10AM

«»«

»Hey guys, my comment wasnt meant to incite the proletariat against our borgious masters. I am well aware we have a capitalist system, and I benefit from it pretty well, I am just pointing out the percularity of our systems in the digital age.

Your Harry Potter analogy doesnt work either, if JK Rowling had called a ghostwriter to say, "hey I've got this idea about a wizard, he looks like this and then all this magic stuff happens, flesh it out" that would be a more fitting analogy. «

»and Rob, the specialisation of ideas from implementation is a relatively new phenomenon, at least at a micro level. Artisans used to design and create goods, and I think thats particularly relevant to the itunes marketplace because most app makers are artisinal, with only the minority of apps created by big firms like Zynga«

»«

Jack | Erskineville June 01, 2012, 10:24AM

«»«

»Jack, it's the idea which is the important thing.

They blokes who poured the concrete for the Sydney Opera House did good work, but it was the Architect who rightfully got the credit for the design.«

»My sister invented, designed and patented a popular leisure item. She deserves more of the financial rewards than the people who assemble it according to her plans.«

»This bloke had the idea for the interface but wasn't so au fait with the programming interface, no problem, he contracted and paid someone to do that part of the work.«

»You get your accountant to do your tax returns and pay them a fee. They don't get to keep all your the tax refunds, eh ?«

>><<

JohnB | Melbourne June 01, 2012, 10:42AM

“”>><<

»Jack didn't say it was wrong, it should be band or anything other than it's sad. Lighten up, why does everything have to be turned into political statement, this politics as a team sport attitude is pathetic. Economics is and ends to a means and not something blow you air horn over.«

>><<

Uranium Willy | Sydney June 01, 2012, 10:56AM

“”>><<

»Ideas are cheap. Execution is paramount. It's a copout to say he had only 'an idea'. He was project manager and designer. So what if he didn't write the code. Design is the hardest part. Plenty of programmers out there, it's like cheap labor. And I'm a programmer!«

>><<

c1ee | June 01, 2012, 11:08AM

“”>><<

»@The Economist, your underlying point is a good one - ie that there is a value to be put on creative work as well as the labour of producing and reproducing it.«

»However, your literary analogy is slightly misleading. JK Rowling is not paid for her 'ideas', but for the text she uses to express them. Mere ideas are not property. The text is protected by copyright - and represents significantly more labour than simply dreaming up an idea. (Thus reinforcing your main point).«

»It's beside the point, but her ideas were fairly obviously ripped off existing ones anyway (Google it). The system wouldn't function if people could sue each other for infringing 'ideas'. There's no art, literature or music of any kind that isn't derivative of something!«

>><<

alan | melton June 01, 2012, 12:03PM

“”>><<

»How does he protect himself from the programmer stealing or improving on his idea?«

>><<

cli | June 01, 2012, 3:32PM

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Deputy technology editor

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