

# Pathways to Success: Software Sales

## Marketing and Business 'Best Practices' for Palm OS Independent Software Developers

You've written the perfect application for Palm OS. So what's next? Well, if you're one of 400,000 developers creating solutions for the most popular handheld and wireless operating system, it can be a bit daunting to get noticed.

*Knowing which strategies are important and which are a waste of time and money, can make all the difference when it comes to success. Here are some practical, clever, and surprisingly unconventional tips from mobility marketing maven Michael Compeau of Compeau-Fawkes Mobility Consulting that will help your company, and that great new app, get the attention—and sales—it deserves.*

There's nothing quite like the excitement of compiling an application you've written and loading it up on a real device to test out. What really makes all of those long hours of code-writing and debugging worthwhile however is the thrill of seeing sales for that application grow steadily day after day!

The following tips provide insight concerning the tactics and methods used by the most successful handheld software development firms and will help you to plan effectively while avoiding the same costly mistakes they made, or spending years in search of winning strategies.

### 1. What's in a Name?

When choosing a company name or a product name, choose wisely. Check for trademark availability through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Web site—you never know how successful you will be, and as we have learned from the Pilot and PalmPilot, re-branding is a pain. Make sure you check for available domain registrations, too, not just for your company name, but the product name as well since it helps with search rankings immensely. Make the name memorable, relevant, and easy to spell.

**Shining Examples: Pocket Tunes, MyBible, Documents To Go, SplashData**

### 2. Create a Personality

Think of some great companies and products you love, like the iPod, or your Treo. The most memorable, preferred brands have always fostered the creation of a distinctive 'personality' for their firm and/or product. The particular 'look', 'feel' and 'voice' that works best for your firm and/or product might depend on what you are selling, but whether it be light-hearted games or serious business tools, take the time to be explicit about managing your 'brand personality.' The Web site of your product or firm generally provides the first and most important impression on would-be customers, so work hard to make a personal connection through your site's personality.

**Shining Examples: Snapperfish, Blue Nomad**

### 3. Take Tech Support Seriously

There is no question that successful companies provide great technical support. Endeavor to answer your incoming support e-mails quickly (many leading firms answer within 24 hours), and make it easy for customers to find the support section on your Web site. Consider adding an online Support FAQ for each product, as it will reduce your e-mail load. Never demean a customer in a



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response, regardless of the apparent idiocy of a question—just avoid the temptation. If you can't keep your cool, find an enthusiastic customer and train them to answer your support e-mails.

**Shining Examples: Chapura.com, Laridian.OnlineSupportDesk.net**

## 4. Encourage Community

An incredible phenomenon occurs when your customers begin to talk to each other: They not only help reduce your support load, but also generate enthusiastic buzz amongst themselves that spreads outward to those they know. If you find the concept of this type of community threatening, it might be an indication that you need to improve your app! Consider setting up a Yahoo or Google group for customers to discuss your software and help each other out with quick questions. Foster this sort of community actively, but don't interfere and attempt to control it too much, as that can backfire badly. If you're doing your best to create great software and, at the same time, great rapport with your customers, it will be obvious. If you intend to directly interact through your forums, do it consistently! Once you start to answer questions directly, your customers will expect you to continue.

**Shining Example: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/snappermail>**

## 5. Be a Good Competitor

Nothing will sour your future sales more than developing a reputation as a poor sport. Sure, business is a contact sport, and there may be another developer anxious to knock you off your pedestal with a knock-off app next week, but remember that our online world can give you a black eye that never fades away... Take the high road by pledging to never bad-mouth a competitor's product, no matter the venue or circumstance. Concentrate on continuously improving your own product and let your customers discover how much better your software is on their own.

**Shining Examples: Ultrasoft Money & LandWare's Pocket Quicken**

## 6. Water the Roots

There is no support more enthusiastic or loyal and forgiving as grassroots support. Where does it come from? One way: from your first customers who discover your app very early on when it still crashes their devices, and who then develop a sense of connectedness to you through your personal responsiveness. Another: from a user who has searched for months for something that will do exactly what your app does, except they want it to do it a little differently—you make the change and you're their hero. Take care of your customers, and they will give you immeasurable goodwill 'out there on the Net'—you can count on it. If they run a Web site of their own, so much the better!

**Shining Example: SnapperMail.com**

## 7. In Google We Trust. Oh and Yahoo! Too.

The search engine battle rages on, and you need to consider this as an integral part of how you manage the content of your Web site. I'm not talking about using gimmicks espoused by the thousands of supposed 'Search Engine Optimization' businesses that have sprung up in the past few years. If you throw money down that hole, it may not work at all, and if it does, it will likely be fleeting. The best strategy for winning the real search engine battle begins with keeping in mind that the goal of a search engine is to find genuinely relevant, popular sites for its searchers. Therefore, winning means making sure the content on your site actually includes the terms your customers are likely to use when searching for your app. Include the name of your application frequently in the text on a page, and not just in the page's image header. Make sure your descriptions use the kind of language your customers use. Consider registering all your product names as domains, and set up redirects to your main site. Never delete old product pages, since Google will still be sending searchers to those pages—redirect them or mirror content. Remember too, the more product reviews that point to your site, the better, so keep in mind the things you do to support 'geeky enthusiast sites' are investments in your ranking as well.

**Dec. 2004 Search Engine Market Share ([searchenginewatch.com](http://searchenginewatch.com)):**

**Google – 48%; Yahoo! – 32%; MSN – 16%; Others – 4%**

## 8. If You Spend on It, Track It

The days of wild spending on banner ads is over. We've learned a great deal about making online advertising accountable for results with CPC's rise in prominence. The best Palm OS developers use systems to track the productivity of their marketing expenditures to ensure that every dollar spent has a purpose and can create sales. If you

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run Google Adwords or Overture keyword advertising campaigns (and you should), monitor them, and use all the tracking tools at your disposal; following visitors through the sales process, and cease spending on nonproductive activities.

**Shining Example: Laridian.com (MyBible)**

## 9. Reduce the Risk

It's all about trust. New visitors to your site will not know who you are, and even in 2005, many potential customers are hesitant to purchase products online from a company they don't know. For this reason, resellers like Motricity and Handango should be a part of your online sales strategy. Developing a relationship of trust with site visitors will encourage them to open their wallets and share credit card numbers with you. Find ways to reduce a customer's natural hesitancy by offering a 30 day money-back guarantee, showing off reputable awards you have won, or sprinkling your 'shopping cart' area with customer quotes or quotes from product reviews from reputable Web sites.

**Shining Examples: Quickoffice.com, Laridian.com/palm/**

## 10. Provide a Free Trial, for a 'Price'

Somewhat related to the former topic, providing a free software trial is a great way to ensure that potential customers are comfortable with how it works, what it does, and the product's price tag. Many developers base trial length on what the application does, and how often it is likely to be used in a 'normal situation'. Try 7 days, 14 days, or 30 days and see which period of time converts to the most sales. In a related issue, many developers request an e-mail address in exchange for a 'demo' download, and e-mail a link to the file rather than allowing a direct download from the Web page. If you decide to do this, post a privacy policy and be straightforward about how e-mails will be used. Requiring an address may reduce the number of downloads, but it provides a means of communication with customers—something many successful developers find invaluable.

**Shining Example: iambic.com**

## 11. Don't Provide a Trial

In stark contrast to previous advice, there are developers who have increased net sales by not providing a free trial. It may be counter-intuitive, but there is at least one possible 'human-behavior' explanation for this. Provided your software is somewhat unique, and the price is modest—\$15 or less—a moderately interested site visitor may feel it worth the risk to simply buy immediately. This is particularly great for games, as they tend to be impulsive purchases in the first place. Try it out and see if it works for you. Generally, you will need to include a rich amount of information about the application if no trial is provided.

**Shining Example: Laridian.com**

## 12. Raise the Price

If you've done everything right so far and wonder what more you can do, then try raising your price during the next version update. Now, it's a good idea to do this at a point when substantial functionality is added—like a wireless angle—though you just might find that customers value your original solution more than you anticipated, particularly if you offer the leading solution in particular category. You'll never know until you give it a shot. To the brave go the spoils. Take a deep breath, and raise your price from \$9.95 to \$19.95, or from \$19.95 to \$39.95, or \$59.95. If your software is priced higher than competing products, potential customers may value it even more.

**Shining Example: SnapperMail**

## 13. Lower the Price

Do you find yourself in an increasingly crowded segment or product category? If you've wrung the value out of that game you initially wrote years ago and are ready to 'cash cow' it into the grave, consider lowering the price. You might see sales surge again.

**Shining Example: EarthTime from Evolutionary.net**

## 14. Divide and Conquer

There's a case study on Williams Sonoma's bread makers that illustrates this point very well. The boutique initially carried one upscale bread maker at price X, and it sold pretty well. But, when they introduced both a higher and lower priced bread maker, sales for both soared. Why? The customer suddenly had an ability to make a choice against

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the lower priced product. Purchasing behavior is emotional—don't fight that fact. Consider finding a way to break out features of your product, creating a tiered offering with varying price-points and feature-sets. Give customers the ability to say 'no' to a lesser-featured product right there on your site, and they'll be more likely to purchase.

**Shining Example: SnapperMail Family: Lite, Standard, Premier, & Enterprise (24.95 - \$59.95)**

### 15. Crowded Marketplace? Reposition

With well over 12,000 Palm OS applications out in the wild already, there's a good chance that you are not the only developer creating solutions in your category. If you are finding it a bit tough to get noticed, think about how you can reposition your application by tweaking it in a different direction. This means that you communicate about it in such a way that you emphasize unique and differentiated capabilities not found in other products, making it a better product for particular users due to the product's design and function.

**Ed Keyes' DinkyPad, pa1mOne Notepad, & BugMe! Notepad from ElectricPocket.com**

### 16. Be First. Somehow.

Create that first killer app that does the incredible 'effortlessly' and you're king. There is no substitute for being the first to create an application that does something lots of people want. Well there is, actually. If you weren't the first, then find a new angle in which your application can be first. Electric Pocket augmented a new MP3 player with capabilities that allow album cover art to be downloaded from the 'Net via wireless; NormSoft was first to enhance their MP3 player with streaming audio capabilities via wireless connection, allowing users access to Internet 'radio stations'.

**Shining Example: Electric Pocket's Busker, NormSoft's Pocket Tunes**

### 17. Don't Just Tell, Show

When it comes to your Web site, there are a lot of things you can do 'wrong' and still sell software. Make sure you have a great description of the app, but don't go overboard with the copy. Balance product pages with screenshots. One thing certain to limit sales is a lack of 'feel' for how your software looks and functions. Most applications need at least three screenshots to convey a good impression of a solid design and range of features. Though methods exist that work for accommodating more, general rule dictates no more than four or five screenshots to a single page. Any more can be overwhelming to visitors.

**Shining Examples: iambic.com, Splashdata.com, Quickoffice.com**

### 18. Make It Easy to Buy

Can you imagine a store without a cash register? It sounds absurd, but too many handheld software Web sites realize a similar mistake, making it difficult (or nearly impossible, in some cases) to figure out how to actually buy their software. Look at your own Web site with fresh eyes and try to determine how obvious the purchasing process might be for your potential customers. Is there a large BUY or ADD TO CART button near each product description? There are lots of other common mistakes that fall into this category as well: designing your site so that visitors are required scroll to the bottom of a page to find the Buy button; failure to design your site for proper display in browsers other than Internet Explorer; designing pages for 1280x1024 resolution and forgetting that up to 15% of your visitors could be on 800x600 monitors, and so on. Bottom line: Make sure your mother could figure out how to buy your app, and you'll be on the right track.

**Shining Examples: 995Soft.com**

### 19. Scratch Your Buddy's Back

Many of the best developers have leveraged their own success by finding other successful developers with which to partner, benefiting everyone involved. Think about the people who will use your software and what additional software or hardware they might use. Create a 'network' of solutions around your application, or, alternatively, become a 'network' solution to other apps. Either way, you'll increase your visibility and encourage fellow developers in your network to exchange product solutions from your Web site.

**Shining Examples: SnapperMail with JpegWatch, SplashPhoto, HandZipper, & Documents To Go**

## 20. Find a Niche: Specialty Channel Distribution

With so many apps on PalmGear and Handango, yours might be lost in the crowd. Some applications lend themselves to sales success in out-of-the-ordinary places. Got a real estate calculator to sell?—Make arrangements with a real estate technology Web site for a revenue share of generated purchases. Selling specialty Bible-study software?—Strike up a deal with a major religious book retailer. Think carefully about which group of people are most likely to love your software, and find a way to reach them directly.

**Shining Example: MyBible by Laridian.com, Medical apps at Lexi.com, Diet & Exercise Assistant by Keyoe.com**

## 21. Remember Curly's Law (One Thing)

In that timeless classic *City Slickers*, Jack Palance's character told us that the secret of life was 'One Thing'. This is also the secret to a great piece of software: Make sure you know very well what the 'one thing' is for your app. What is its *raison d'être*? Its Big Idea? Perhaps your great new mp3-player app is not the place to squeeze in all those incredible features for sending SMS messages and controlling your Tivo. Developers of utilities in particular frequently fall prey to the temptation of adding every feature they can think of into one application. Resist this impulse. Create two, three, or more separate applications. You'll not only make it easier for customers to figure out what each app does, but you'll have more apps to offer returning customers!

**Shining Example: Tealpoint Software**

## 22. Change with the Times

Every year or so, we see hardware from Palm OS licensees take exciting leaps forward in functionality and usability. A recent example is the 5-way nav-pad now becoming ubiquitous. When these new innovations come, consider finding ways to support them as soon as possible. Customers of exciting new devices are frequently on the prowl for great software that take advantage of their device's sweet new features, and word of mouth travels fast if you tie into the energy of a popular new handheld or smartphone model. It takes some work to sort out the inevitable bugs with new, poorly documented hardware features, but the rewards can make it well worth the trouble.

**Shining Examples: SplashBlog by SplashData, Handmark Express**

## 23. "It's the Product, Stupid!"

Despite all the exhortations included herein, don't forget that what is most important is what your product does, and how it does it. The most successful software applications save time and are fun to use. Regardless of the impetus behind development of your application, be as hard on yourself as possible when it comes to the base utility of the app. Try to specifically enumerate the top three reasons someone should get up from their computer to find their credit card in their coat pocket in order to buy your software. How do you make their life easier? How do you save them time? How do you brighten their day? What other ways could your product save your customers' time or money or hassles of unpleasant tasks? What other 'problems' or annoying niggles in life could you solve through a new feature, or an entirely new product? Stay laser-focused on your product, despite all other distractions your burgeoning business throws at you. If you don't get that right, all the rest really doesn't matter!

## 24. Let Go of the 'Best Buy/OfficeMax' Dream

I'll keep this simple: don't waste time trying to get your software into the 'big box' office supply and consumer electronics superstores. At worst, you will waste both time and money, and at best you will make very little profit considering the time that could have been better spent researching a specialty channel. Just say 'no' to the temptation. None of the major retailers ever did 'get it', and they gave it a good try a few years ago. Someday this may all turn around, but don't make it your mission to change their minds. Even firms that continue to sell handheld titles through retail are likely disappointed in performance relative to other channels. Want the real scoop? Find someone from the firms below and ask them a few questions.

**Shining Exceptions to Ask About Retail: Handmark, Dataviz**

## 25. Get 'Em Hooked, Then Get the Cash

There are device owners out there in the wild that install every piece of software that comes with a new device. If you have done a good job of creating a full product line with synergies between your apps, you might have a great means

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to offer device manufacturers, providing their products a greater 'out of box' value. Find a way to capture these opportunities by offering to give away one small portion of your 'family' for free, in return for product upgrades or enhancements from those device customers. It can be tenuous business to get customer information, or to encourage them to find ways to seek you out, but integrated browsers and support for the Palm OS Exchange Manager can help you be creative. Think of it as giving prospective customers a taste of Bourbon Chicken on a toothpick, and then making them a lunch offer they can't refuse.

**Shining Example: Handmark Express with SprintPCS**

## 26. Pay to Be Seen

There is no question that Google has changed the way we experience the Internet. The concept of 'Search' has evolved tremendously from the days of the academic/DARPA Internet to the modern Google and today's folder-free Tiger OS from Apple. Online, getting your app seen can be a balancing act between free publicity through product reviews, 'organic' search ranking, and paid visibility. If you have not looked into Overture.com or Adwords.Google.com, it's probably time you did so. By bidding on particular keywords and combinations, you can selectively choose the target market you wish to reach. You generally pay when a searcher 'clicks' through to your paid-placement search listing. There are many sites where you can learn more about the finer points of these great tools; some will swear that Overture works, while others declare Adwords the king. I recommend you try both after reading the materials on their Web site, then, see how things go. If your title is in a relatively obscure niche, you'll be generating new sales very quickly and cost-effectively. If not, you may need to become more sophisticated in your keyword campaign, or leave it to someone more experienced to fine tune for you.

**Sites for Learning: Overture.com, Adwords.Google.com**

## 27. Keep it Personal; Keep it Fun

Software purchases are emotional. I think I've said that before; it deserves to be repeated. One of the best ways to forge emotional bonds with a customer beyond the boring list of features is to provide a method for the customer to make the software his/her own. That might involve building in a feature of various preference capabilities like colors or fonts at the low-effort end of the scale, all the way to designing the application with a means to learn from the customer's own behavior, i.e., seeming to intuit a user's next action even before they know it themselves. There have been many great examples of this principle already in the Palm OS software arena, but far more potential exists. If there is one way to stand out from a crowd of competitors, it's by giving your user that little 'Wow!' of fun and realization that you have predicted his/her next activity. Think carefully about how your application is used, and in what circumstances you might find 'A-ha!' moments that can be transformed into customer preferences.

**Shining Examples: Documents To Go v7, Agendus Professional, LauncherX**

## 28. Simple is Better

It's easy to become so enthralled with your own products that you want to gush about every single incredibly neat-o-whiz-bang feature in your app. While it is true that customers expect a thorough explanation prior to buying, don't fall into the trap of listing every single little thing possible on your product page. Boil it down, condense to the essence, and then reduce this to five words. Now use these words to set the visitor's mind in context, readying them to read a little more. As mentioned before, include screenshots. For all the deep, intensive details that you just know someone is going to ask about, leave it out for a few months and watch to see how many times it comes up in your support e-mail. It probably won't. Remember, the customer does not need to be an expert at using your software to buy it—yes, that may seem crazy to you as the developer and the app's number one fan, but it is the plain truth. Keep your Web site simple, and you will convert more visitors to customers.

**Shining Examples: Natara.com, Astraware.com, 995Soft.com**

## 29. Update Often, and Pass the Hat...

No software is ever perfect. But that's no excuse not to keep trying! Make it your policy to collect customer suggestions and evaluate them for possible incorporation into future product updates. The optimal frequency for updates may vary, but generally it is good to have minor updates every 3-6 months, and major version updates about

every 12 months. Not only is it likely that there will be enough changes to the competitive landscape to make this kind of schedule appropriate, but this schedule also provides the ability for a routine, ongoing dialog with customers through e-mail communications. When it comes to updates, consider providing minor updates free, and charging a modest 'upgrade price' for providing access to major version upgrades. Though there was a short era of 'free upgrades for life' handheld software, you will do no favors for your own business or the handheld software category as a whole by giving development efforts away for free. If you think software should be free (like beer), there may be little point reading most of this white paper.

### 30. Ask for Help

Don't miss the chance to chat with fellow developers while at the PalmSource 2005 Mobile Summit and Developer Conference. From thousands of peers, you can pick up thousands of tips on how to reduce spam in your support inbox, parse reseller sales reports to your own database or into Quickbooks, or reduce the support burden of regenerating registration codes due to errant Hot Sync IDs. Pick the brains of those you encounter this week, in exchange for sharing your own pearls of wisdom. If you have not already created a login for the PalmSource Developer Program, do so. You will have access to the latest development tools and technical information. PalmSource also sponsors numerous development forums available through RSS feed and a wonderful resource can be found in the growing Palm Entrepreneurs' Forum e-mail list noted below. Plug in, and benefit from the experience of others!

**Shining Examples:** <http://www.palmos.com/developer/> & <http://www.markspace.com/pef/>

### 31. Sell It Yourself

There is little debate over the fact that if you want to keep maximum revenue from application sales online, it is necessary to sell from your own Web site. When you have your own site, all efforts to create interest in your application benefit you directly and raise your site's visibility. That can be quite important compared to relying solely on the scant visibility you will likely receive on a major reseller's site among thousands of other applications. Don't be daunted by the task of setting up your own store, either. There are a number of firms that offer 'shopping cart' ecommerce solutions for software developers, allowing for varying degrees of customization. A quick 'Google' should turn up several for you.

**Shining Example:** [eSellerate.net](http://eSellerate.net), [store.Yahoo.com](http://store.Yahoo.com)

### 32. Leave Selling to Others

As much sense as it makes to sell your own software, there are also compelling reasons to list your applications with major online handheld software resellers. Reason #1: Traffic. It's hard to imagine your own Web site seeing anywhere close to the sheer volume of visitors that major online resellers see. Reason #2: Affiliated sites. The major resellers have struck deals that give them the contract to operate online software sales for firms like palmOne, PalmSource, Cingular and Verizon. If you're not listed with the participating reseller, your app won't ever be seen on those sites.

**Online Reseller Examples:** [PDASSI.com](http://PDASSI.com), [PalmGear.com](http://PalmGear.com) (Motricity), [Handango.com](http://Handango.com)

### 33. Hitch Your Wagon to a Maserati

Who wouldn't want to see their application on the most exciting new Palm OS device or be featured in the online store of the largest wireless carrier? When creating your application, give deliberate consideration to the design variables or features that might make the app especially appealing to entities in 'the biz' that can carry you farther and/or faster than you can make it alone. That may mean cooperating with another development firm in a related category to add unexpected and intriguing benefits for mutual customers, thus providing a 'network effect' of mutually supportive messages. Or, it might mean laser focus on a solution that can be seen by a carrier as a perfect means to enhance average revenue per user (ARPU). When your solution speaks to the business interests of other firms, they take on a stake in seeing you succeed, accelerating and magnifying all your efforts. Develop with an eye to providing potential 'stakeholders-partners' much-desired differentiation in their market. If you do well and pick a winner—a Maserati—you'll follow them to the winner's circle.

**Shining Example:** [Pocket Tunes](http://PocketTunes.com)

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## 34. Spread the Load; Know Your Limitations

In the excitement of beginning to see growth and success in your business, you may fall prey to the bane of the entrepreneur—and continue doing everything yourself for far too long. Keep watch on how you are spending your time, and make an effort to maintain proper balance. When you start to feel stress from being pulled in too many directions at once, it might be an indication that you need to trim off some responsibilities that could be handled by a newly hired colleague. Be honest with yourself about which of your skills best serve your business, and what activities add less value. Place a value on your time. Don't be afraid to hire assistance with technical support, programming, marketing, or even administration, if any of those areas are where you are least competent. You will likely find that spending your time in areas you enjoy most, will add the most benefit to your growing firm. Don't force yourself to take everything on, nor expect that you can do a wonderful job at it all. Few of us can.

## 35. Make it Sexy! Make it Great!

Ever since the appearance of Windows 3.1 destined DOS and related text-based shell apps for the scrapheap of history, the evolution of the most fit species in software categories has been primarily determined by the graphical 'flair' of its interface. It can be a very hard truth for 'geek' developers to swallow, but it is a precept you must come to terms with, if you hope to see your application reach its full sales potential: A great-looking app—a sexy app—will always beat an average looking app, if all other variables are equal. Heck, a hot-looking app will even make up for buggy performance for a while, giving you valuable time to retool the dirty little corners of code that were given short shrift at initial launch. Do not underestimate the appeal to the general market of a GUI that is attractive. Spend time thinking about the interface; make the interface distinctive, and 'kewl' enough to draw potential customers into trial downloads just so they can see how those alluring screenshots become real on their own device. 'Good enough' is definitely the enemy of 'Great'. Make your apps stand out.

Shining Example: PocketLingo

## 36. Keep in Tune With Novice Users

The longer your product is sold, the larger your installed user base becomes, and the more the voices of novice users is drowned out by your fan club of loyalists. Be very careful about listening too much to this experienced group of users. The handheld market has undergone very profound changes in the makeup of device owners in the past four years—don't let the beat of the loyalists' drum keep you from hearing the new melody of needs that might be played by recent purchasers. Consider the growing user-base of female wireless handset owners, the estimated 70%-plus of medical residents using handhelds, the preponderance of school-systems using Palm OS devices, and other growing segments. Don't know what segments are growing? Then get closer to your customers. 'He who knows the customer best, has no competition.'

**Shining Example: Llamagraphics' Life Balance, Keyoe's Diet & Exercise Assistant**

## 37. Always Support the Enthusiasts

This topic is related to my earlier grassroots topic. There is no substitute for fully participating in the 'Palm Community'—through supporting Palm Users Groups, enthusiast Web sites, fostering communications between your software customers and users, and, being the voice for the market segment you know best in your communications with PalmSource, palmOne, and anyone else who will listen. To continue to see the entire market grow, you need to think of your own products and company as a part of the community and not simply a benefactor. Ask yourself how you are 'giving back', (as an advocate, as a visionary) even in small ways?

## 38. Do Your Own Marketing and PR

You know your own products best. You likely know your own customers and market segment better than anyone else. Depending on your firm's size, it can make a lot of sense to set aside a few hours a week to put on your marketing and/or public relations hat, and handle some basic tasks. What tasks? While you have your marketing hat on, think about your products and who is buying them. Where else can you find customers like your current customers? Spend some time reading about and using your competitors' products. Where have they captured magic your product lacks? While you have your PR hat on, think about what Web sites or print publications cater to your target audience. In casual opportunities, create a genuine relationship with the Webmasters, blog authors, or editors

and writers who comment or write about your segment. Gather their candid opinions of your applications. Would they write a product review of your latest version? Find out what their readers or visitors are telling them about the market. Listen between the lines, and then add the learning from this listening right back into your products. When you have a genuine relationship with the influencers who matter most, you're far more likely to have an interested audience the next time you have something to say.

**Shining Example: Snapperfish, Ltd.**

### 39. Don't Do Your Own Marketing and PR

Despite the comments made in the preceding topic about doing your own marketing and PR work; there persuasive arguments can also be made for hiring a pro. It should come as no surprise to any developer reading this, that skills in programming and skills in marketing are frequently mutually exclusive. If these 'soft' areas are not your forte, and particularly if you don't enjoy them, find a way to perform those functions with an employee or contractor. After nearly a decade of Newton, PalmPilot and Palm-size PC (sic) history it is possible to find solidly skilled product managers, marketers, technical writers, public relations professionals, and other skilled incumbents savvy to handhelds who are happy to lend you a hand full-time or on a contract basis. Ask other developers how they fill these roles, or where they found their last hire. Join a professional network Web site like LinkedIn.com and search for someone with the skills you need. Visit a local professional association chapter meeting for PR or marketing, and get to know your local pros. Just bringing in a professional to help with a product launch can make a profound difference.

**Sources & Resources: TalonPR.com, Compeau-Fawkes.com**

### 40. Think Different. Think Wireless.

If you have not found an angle that adds value to your apps' through leveraging the growth of wireless device capabilities, make it a priority. I have not encountered many applications that can not be made more compelling or useful, through judicious integration of innovative 'wireless' angles. You will very likely need to get outside your 'box' of comfort, but the rewards can be great. Think about wireless access as a means of offering any of the following general features: sell game levels; offer product updates; serve small 'ads' to subsidize development; link users to each other directly or through a community of users; use the SMS transport to do 'interesting things' behind the scenes between wireless users; partner with other wireless app developers to create a broader 'network effect' through wireless... the list can go on and on.

**Shining Examples: Agendus Professional weather forecasts, Pocket Tunes' streaming audio**

Naturally, these tips won't make up for buggy software, and they won't guarantee that you'll be driving a new car this time next year. Not all of these ideas may apply to your application; nor will all of them work with the same efficacy for you as they have with others. But incorporating lessons from even a handful of these best practices will place you far ahead of the pack. Many of these tips will feed off of each other to create a flywheel of positive results for you—and the more you can implement, the more your sales will grow!



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