

Preface

With over 200,000 apps in the App Store, it has become increasingly challenging for app designers and developers to differentiate their apps. The days are long gone when it was possible to crank out an app over the weekend and refine it *after* receiving a few not-so-flattering user reviews. Users now have choices—lots of them. If your app is difficult to use or doesn't meet their needs, finding another one is just a tap away.

To illustrate, consider the ever-growing field of Twitter clients. There are hundreds of variations in the App Store, but only a handful stand out from the pack (such as Tweetie and Twitterific). For most apps, it boils down to one thing: the user experience. The same is true for countless other categories within the App Store; well-designed apps are more likely to attract and retain users. Of course there are other critical aspects of iPhone app development: the coding, the marketing, the customer support. All of the elements must come together.

Designing the iPhone User Experience will help you tackle the user experience part of the iPhone challenge. Three key themes will be reinforced throughout the book: know thy user, the design life cycle, and attention to detail.

Know Thy User

Millions of people depend on iPhone apps to get them to work, find their next meal, and stay in touch with family and friends. Professionals of all kinds also rely on iPhone apps: Doctors look up drug interactions; photographers fine-tune lighting; cyclists find the best routes. To truly understand how apps can fit into their lives, designers and developers must learn how users do things today, what's important to them, and what needs have not been met. **FIGURES P.1–P.5** illustrate contextual observations from field interviews, an effective way to uncover user needs. Part Two, “Defining Your iPhone App,” will introduce a variety of user research methods.