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IT, MOBILE, SOFTWARE

Boston Startups Stake Out iPad Territory: Big Plans at Apperian, Jumptap, Skyhook

Wade Roush 1/28/10

For Boston-area startups that have already spent years staking out their corners of the mobile marketplace, getting on board with the Apple iPad—and the new set of business opportunities it creates—is a no-brainer. At least two local companies have already announced they're providing technologies or services targeted at the tablet-sized device, and the area's application developers are diving in too, looking for ways to optimize existing mobile apps for iPad, or build entirely new ones.

I've touched base today with a number of these local players, and have rounded up their news, comments, and approaches below. Many of these folks have clearly known about the iPad project for months, but couldn't talk due to Apple's strict confidentiality rules. If there's a common theme in what they're saying now, it's that they expect the technology and marketing elements that have worked so well on the iPhone—things like location awareness, specialty apps, and rich-media advertising—to work even better on the iPad. And each is ready to help clients and consumers take advantage of the new platform.

At Boston-based **Skyhook Wireless**, which makes software that allows laptops and mobile gadgets to translate Wi-Fi or GPS signals into an exact location fix, CEO Ted Morgan [announced via Twitter](#) yesterday that Skyhook's software will be built into the iPad. That means iPad owners, just like iPhone users, will be able to locate themselves on the device's native map interface, as long as there are a few Wi-Fi networks in the neighborhood. (Skyhook's software works by collecting the IDs of nearby Wi-Fi networks, checking them against its global database of Wi-Fi access point locations, and triangulating.) It also means that the location data will be available to third-party apps running on the iPad, starting with the 140,000 existing iPhone/iPod Touch apps in the iTunes App Store.


The significance of the iPad deal, for Skyhook, is that "it shows in general that all mobile devices are going to have location in them," Morgan told me. "It's our goal at Skyhook to make sure we are the ones providing location on all of them, and this just broadens our technology into a whole new device category."

Morgan points out that more and more apps are incorporating location awareness, even those that have nothing to do with maps or navigation. "Music apps, movie-finders, newsreaders are all starting to have location," he says. On the iPad, location data will initially be used in much the same way that it's used on laptops, Morgan predicts. For example, Skyhook announced this week that [...NEXT PAGE >](#)

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FourSquareX—a laptop and desktop application that lets people "check in" to FourSquare, a mobile social network from the New York-based startup of the same name—will now grab location data using Skyhook's technology. "Desktop Twitter apps are also adding location," Morgan says. "We expect the same on an iPad."

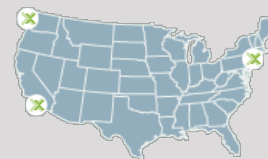


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Apple is "really leading the way" in the world of location-based services, Morgan says. "I don't think you can get more enthusiastic about a relationship than the one we've had with these guys. They have been tremendous supporters of our company and have frankly driven the whole location market, which we benefit from."





If anything, Chuck Goldman, the founder and CEO of Boston-based mobile application development house **Apperian**, is even more enthused than Morgan. When I reached him on his iPhone yesterday, the former Apple executive—he ran the company's professional services division for eight years—was in the middle of a six-hour meeting at Apple headquarters in Cupertino. "There is a lot to dig into and learn about, but we're doing the best we can," he said. "It's really exciting."

Apperian's specialty to date has been building iPhone applications for large corporate clients. I wrote back in September, for example, about a [very slick app it had built for Stratham, NH-based Timberland](#), the outdoor and athletic clothing company. Goldman says Apperian has long been preparing for the advent of the iPad, which has an iPhone-like user interface but a much larger screen, opening up many new possibilities to app developers.

"One of the things we've been talking about specifically with Apple is how to use all of this newfound screen real estate," Goldman says. "The resolution is so much bigger and crisper and clearer that you can't hide anything—you have to be much more precise in your attention to detail and the fit-and-finish of the app. But you also have a football field of space to work with, so we're looking at how to integrate more graphics and video and other things that may have opened up on separate screens on the iPhone. With the new SDK [software development kit] there is much more you can do now in terms of creating in-line multimedia."

Goldman says Apperian is working with magazine and newspaper publishers who have been "waiting a long time" for an Apple product that might show off their content to better advantage than existing devices like the iPhone or the Amazon Kindle. "The news industry is suffering so badly, and ...NEXT PAGE >

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this could really help," Goldman says. Clients in fields like education, healthcare, and retailing are also clamoring for iPad apps to fit their unique needs, and Goldman wants to help them create applications that will make their businesses more efficient.

"Apperian is not just about building utility-based applications for the iPhone, but truly building transformative point-of-service apps and moving your business to a mobile platform," he says. "This is the next step for us in that process. You can't do that really effectively on a 4-inch piece of glass. To move your business to a mobile platform, most companies are going to require a larger device. So I think [the iPad] is going to transform healthcare, it's going to transform education, and it's going to further accelerate enterprise mobility, and that's really what we've been waiting for."

On the app development front, I also spoke with Greg Raiz, founder and CEO of **Raizlabs**, a smaller iPhone app development outfit in Brookline, MA. (Raiz contributed to our story yesterday on [early reaction to the iPad news](#).) Raiz he expects inquiries from clients interested in workplace applications of the iPad. "I suspect we are going to see a lot more line-of-business apps, where they would traditionally get a Windows Tablet-type computer for data entry," says Raiz. "I see it more like a clipboard, in many respects, than a phone. A doctor's office, or a business setting, or a retail environment—this device may make a lot of sense for those types of business."

Many of the apps Raizlabs has built for the iPhone, such as FitnessKeeper's GPS-driven RunKeeper app for tracking runs, wouldn't translate well to a tablet-sized device, Raiz points out. "A lot of our clients are really looking for mobile apps that fit in your pocket," he says. "RunKeeper needs the GPS, and you are not going to put a tablet in your backpack and run with it. But Survey on the Spot [a Newton, MA-based Raizlabs client whose app allows consumers to provide feedback to restaurants, retail stores, and other local businesses]

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is an interesting one. Mobile surveys done on a larger device may be interesting. We may talk to them about that in the future."

Finally, I spoke this morning with Paran Johar, chief marketing officer at **Jumptap**, a 100-employee mobile search and advertising startup based in Cambridge. Jumptap helps companies place targeted advertisements on mobile devices, whether the ads appear on Web pages or embedded on mobile apps. The company **announced yesterday** that it's ...[NEXT PAGE »](#)

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developing technology that will allow Jumptap clients to run ads that take advantage of the capabilities of all of Apple's mobile platforms, including the iPhone, the iPod Touch, and the iPad.

"We've known about this for several months now, and we've been working not only with our application developers but our advertisers to give them a system that could accommodate this new device," says Johar. "What's really important from an advertiser perspective is that they be able to reach their target audience, whether on an iPhone, an iPad, or an iPod Touch. Whether they're looking to drive purchases or click-throughs, or do advanced targeting based on location, we can target and track campaigns across multiple devices, and we're the first platform of its type that can do this."

In one sense, there's no need for any special "integration" to make ads show up on an iPad—any text or graphical ad that shows up in the iPhone or iPod Touch Web browser will automatically work in the iPad's browser too. But Johar says Jumptap can help clients "leverage the true functionality" of each device. On the iPad—as Goldman hinted—this could include embedding video inside ads, or even making ads into mini-apps.

"One example that could be really interesting—take Procter & Gamble, which owns the CoverGirl brand. Imagine a CoverGirl app inside an ad where you could open a picture of yourself and apply makeup to the picture. That's something that would take advantage of the screen size and the touch-driven nature of the device." Or for a more masculine example, Johar adds, think of a Land Rover ad that allowed users to rotate a vehicle in three dimensions, open the doors, and look inside, all through touch gestures. "It gives the user much more flexibility with the content," Johar says.

Within 30 to 45 days, Jumptap will publish case studies and begin recommending iPad best practices to its client base, which include big brands like the NBA, MSNBC, and E! Online, Johar says. The company's first practical step will be to help mobile advertisers adapt their existing iPhone and iPod Touch ads for the iPad. After that, the company will help advertisers beta-test more sophisticated ads that use more of the iPad's functions.

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