



Finding Success on the iPhone

What's the key to being successful on the App Store? Unity's **Thomas Grové** speaks to Graveck's Jonathan Czeck, developer of the runaway hit *Skee-Ball*...

When did you start using Unity for iPhone development?

We got invited to a small beta test group before it was released. After a lot of brainstorming, we picked the *Skee-Ball* concept because it was a simple game we knew would take advantage of Unity's awesome physics engine, and it was something we could crank out on the side. Also, at that time, it would have been the first out there – but by the time it was released there were a few competitors.

Was Unity Remote useful in the development of *Skee-Ball*?

Oh, wow. I think if we didn't have Unity Remote I'd still be making test builds. *Skee-Ball* was a simple game to make, but we tweaked it a lot. If we had to wait for the building, installing, and running each time we made a small change, you can bet we wouldn't have bothered to make those small changes. The lower you can get your iteration time, the better.

How much iteration did you do with the ball rolling mechanic?

I believe that's about all that one person did for a week. It was a lot of number tweaking, and then trying to add more sensible things to tweak when tweaking the existing numbers alone didn't get things where we wanted to go. I still don't think we got

it quite right but it works pretty well. If you go to an arcade and play a game of *Skee-Ball*, you will no doubt notice everything moves a lot faster. The realists in us got pushed aside for this, because fast physics didn't feel quite as engaging.

How long were you in development for *10 Balls 7 Cups* and *Skee-Ball*?

Ahh, you touched on *Skee-Ball*'s precursor, *10 Balls 7 Cups*. I think it was probably about two person-months of work. *Skee-Ball* was probably another month or two thrown on there. We almost released *Skee-Ball* as a rebranding of *10 Balls 7 Cups*; I'm glad we decided instead to add some major features like a graphical store and Plus+, and make it a sequel instead of just a rebranding.

How long have you been in the #1 App spot?

We've been at the number one spot for a total of about five weeks. The first time was after our initial launch. We kept climbing all the way up steadily. That lasted a couple of weeks. The second time was a bit of a surprise. We had this massive spike after Christmas that brought us back to number one after hovering around eleventh place. That lasted for a few weeks. At the moment I think we've fallen to the fourth position, but I'm rather proud we've been able to hold on top for so long considering the competition out there.

How many copies have you sold to date?

We broke a million copies recently. It's pretty fantastic. I think there are only a handful of apps that have ever done this.

Is there a consistent formula for success on the iPhone?

Nobody knows anything. We all just guess. I think it's basically to be realistic. If something stinks, be real about it and don't point fingers. Chances are you're not going to have any influence on how the App Store operates, so accept it and work with it. Brands seem to be a big deal, because you're usually selling to people's glances. Don't set yourself up for failure with too big of a risk where your game has to be extremely popular for you to break even. Build upon smaller successes.

Do you have any method that describes the way you approach game development?

I'm not sure we do. We're not as much interested in thinking about how we should make games as we are in just making them. We keep things small with great people who can really communicate well, and just go for it in an open constructive environment. This approach doesn't scale up very well, but we're just fine with that. We're doing what we love and are being successful at it. I suppose that is a method after all.

What can we expect next from the team at Graveck?

We're working on a great title with Freeverse that'll have a similar fun feel and atmosphere to *Skee-Ball*. We're also carving out some time from our busy contract work schedule to make another game using what we've learned from our previous ones. I want to make a game that loads very quickly and you can play for only a minute, but you are rewarded for your progress long term. I love collecting and a bit of randomness added to that collecting. It makes it feel like a treasure hunt. I guess the design element of 'collect stuff' can be applied to any genre, so we'll have to figure that one out. There are some ideas, like sending out intelligent cars to go out on scavenger hunts for you. We'll see what happens.

SPOTLIGHT: UNITY REMOTE

Building iPhone games that really feel good can be tricky; novel interfaces such as multi-touch and accelerometers are still coming into their own and often used poorly. In order to avoid the scorn of reviewers, developers must iterate on their controls time and time again. Fortunately this a breeze when using Unity Remote.

Unity Remote is an awesome feature in Unity iPhone that gives you the ability to live preview your game on an actual iPhone – without having to rebuild and redeploy your Xcode project. It does this by establishing a connection between your iPhone and the Unity editor. Video from your game is streamed to the iPhone screen, while the input you provide on the iPhone is sent back to Unity. In true Unity fashion, you can even change scripts and art assets on the fly to tweak the game's look and feel.



Unity Remote lets you live preview your game on an actual iPhone

To download a free evaluation of Unity iPhone, visit <http://unity3d.com>. More than 550 games made with Unity iPhone have been published to the App Store.