

How to Avoid Economic Ruin: A Survival Guide

Creating Your Own Software

eBook by Dana Brown



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Introduction

The economy is in the toilet and it probably won't get better any time soon. So let's be honest: We are all stressed and we are all worried that we're going to walk into work tomorrow and get laid off. It's just the reality of the world we live in today. Times are tough and we have to figure out how to get through this economic downturn as easily as possible. These past few months everyone I know, myself included, has been working three times as hard, just to prove how valuable they are to their company.

We are all pinching pennies. I am monitoring my bank account and credit cards so closely these days that I spent \$82 online, saw the charge come in on my credit card, realized that it was a frivolous spend, and called 15 minutes later to cancel the order. That was the only nonessential thing I have attempted to purchase in months. Sad.

Amidst all of the darkness surrounding the economy there is a beacon of light, something at the end of the tunnel that can help you turn your personal financial situation around. I'm not suggesting a "get rich quick" scheme, nor am I suggesting you should contact that guy in Nigeria that sent you the email about your \$10 million birthright. What I am suggesting is something that, over time, could actually become a great, solid career.

Why not start a software company?

I know you are probably thinking, "I'm not technical enough," or "I don't know how to program." But there is a way to make it easy. This eBook explains how you can create your own software, market and sell it. All you need to get started is an idea. Some of the most popular software products started out as an idea in the mind of someone who wasn't a programmer. Scott Cook, a marketer from Proctor & Gamble and the founder of Intuit, came up with the idea for Quicken while watching his wife balance their checkbook. Observe your surroundings, see what daily problems you can solve, and an idea will come to you.

This idea probably won't make you a ton of money-- not right away at least. But in the meantime it *will* be a great way to generate some supplemental income. It could earn you enough for your monthly mortgage payment, or even help you build your nest egg. Whether you have lost your job or are just nervous and want to save up as much money as you can, creating your own software is easy to do, fun, and can definitely help pad your bank account. You can do it in your spare time or on the weekends, as a hobby or a full-time endeavor.



Creating your own software company is a relatively easy process. No, really. It's a lot easier than you think. The hardest part is getting started. Give it some thought, and with a simple idea you could make a dramatic change in your life.

Chapter 1: The Idea

What makes a good idea for a software application? This is the age old question. Well, not THE age old question, but it's a big one for *this* age. Coming up with the idea for your application, deciding what you are going to make, is the hardest part of starting your own software company. You need to develop something that:

- **will make life easier for other people**
- **will fill a gap that is evident in the market today**
- **will sell**

A great way to start is by listening to the things other people complain about. This will help you identify the voids your application could potentially fill or the problems it could solve.

For example: With increasing frequency, the headlines in the news report yet another company making massive layoffs. Well, all of these layoffs have to put some strain on the remaining employees; if half of a team has been laid off, the remaining workers are doing multiple people's work. These employees could definitely benefit from learning to write software! They could create a simple software application to automate or manage some of the new processes or tasks they have taken over.

Another benefit of knowing how to write software is that it will make you more valuable at your current job by giving you a new skill set and increasing your productivity. For example, every Monday when I get to work, a simple application shows me two valuable reports about my company's website traffic and sales conversion rate. I could look up that information manually, and waste the better part of my morning, but with a simple application I am able to view that information quickly and easily, making me a much more efficient employee. Another application I use at work breaks down our sales numbers by geography and displays them in a nice little report that I use frequently. It saves me from having to do a bunch of calculations by hand.

One developer I know, Markus Winter, was trying to make his own life easier. In the new version of Safari, Apple's web browser, some settings are difficult to change. Markus was annoyed at having to spend a lot of time to get to these settings, so he quickly wrote an application that opens a dialog box displaying them. It allows him to easily adjust his preferences. He suspected that other people might have a similar frustration, so he put his application on Version Tracker (<http://www.versiontracker.com>), a website that offers

software of all kinds for download. He had an astronomical number of downloads -- *on the first day*.

Your application does not need to be “cutting edge” to sell. You just need an application that will do something you otherwise could not do, will solve a problem, or will make people’s lives a bit easier (or more fun). Some examples of these types of applications include:

- Rondo: A MIDI player and Piano Keyboard practice tool. (<http://www.fracturedsoftware.com/rondo/>)
- Simple Cataloger (<http://www.oatmealcoffee.com/software/simplecataloger/>), an application that logs every file in a folder and saves it in an easy to read and use file. This is great for people who produce a variety of CDs that are shipped to various destinations -- to keep a record of what information has been burned onto each CD.
- iWatermark: Puts your watermark on your images. (<http://www.scriptsoftware.com/iwatermark/>)
- Volleyball Ace: This developer got the idea from his daughter’s high school volleyball team. They needed an application to record and manipulate their team statistics. He created this application for his own personal use, but the team coach really liked it and its now sold to volleyball coaches across the United States. (<http://www.ace4vb.com/>)
- Coachstat: A baseball statistics program. (<http://www.coachstat.com/>)
- MyBlood: An application that allows you to track and manage your ancestry.
- iPod Access: A great music and video transfer application for the Mac that I’ve used quite a bit. (<http://www.findleydesigns.com/ipodaccess/index.html>)
- Movie Montage: An application that gives users quick access to all the Quicktime movies on their computer in one window so they can view and export them. (<http://www.findleydesigns.com/moviemontage/index.html>)
- SpamX: A Windows email spam tracking and reporting application.
- A police detective wanted to add improvements to an application he already used in his job, and he now sells his application across the country.
- PACES: An exam simulator for anesthesia students.
- Inspeed: A wind speed and direction tracking application. (<http://www.inspeed.com>)
- Animated Knots: An application that explains how to tie different kinds of knots - whether you are looking for the Blood Knot, the Crown Sinnet or the Monkey’s Fist - this has it all. (<http://www.animatedknots.com/>)

- **Serial Cloner:** An application made by a cancer researcher for molecular biologists that allows them to manipulate, modify, and prepare new DNA fragments via computer simulation. (http://serialbasics.free.fr/Serial_Cloner.html)

Consider the story of a maintenance manager at a power plant in Florida who created an application that made him more valuable in his job. When the power plant is in continuous operation, more than 5,000 alarms go off. Most of them are false alarms, or just alerts, nonetheless, they are all printed out and filed. This became a cumbersome chore for the manager - imagine all of the paper that was wasted! He created an application that would capture the necessary data and put it on a website instead of printing it out. His application saves his company time and resources. Think about ways you could do things differently, or what you could do to save your company money. It could lead to a future opportunity.

Another great example is the guy who worked at a printing company and saw the need to automate a process in his job. He had no programming experience, but he created an application that saved the company so much money they decided to sell the solution to other commercial printers. This spun off into a software division putting this employee in charge. He had no idea he was going to go from simply working at a printing company to being in charge of its new software division!

You can make an application to do almost anything. The software world is your oyster and the possibilities are endless. Developing software is no longer just for the super technical computer nerds. It's for everyone.

Here are some more suggestions to help you get started. Ask yourself, your friends, family, and coworkers these four questions:

- 1. Have you ever searched for an application on the Internet and not found what you were looking for?**
- 2. Is there a task you perform every day at work that you could automate?**
- 3. What is a source of frustration for you?**
- 4. What sort of tool would help make your job easier, your home life easier?**

Another suggestion is to observe how your co-workers, or others around you, work. Often people become so used to doing something in an inefficient way that they don't stop to think there might be a better way to do it. Sometimes it takes an outsider to see what is right in front of us.

I know a developer who asked himself these questions. A citizen of the United Kingdom but a resident in the United States, he realized that it was very difficult for him to get a passport photo at the local drugstore matched to the specifications of the UK passport. He created an application that allows you to create any number of passport photos for a variety of countries' specifications. His application is called Passport Photo Studio (<http://passportphotostudio.com/>) and he now sells it online for \$8.95. Does he make all of his income from this helpful little application? Probably not. But it certainly helps!

Determining If There is a Market for your Idea

How do you know if your application will sell competitively? Talk to your potential customers! Explain to them what you are planning on doing and determine if there is an interest. Tell them the features you are planning to implement and see if they have any suggestions. It would also benefit you to identify any competitors in your market space and understand what their product does and who their audience is. You might find there is already something out there that does what you were thinking of doing. On the other hand, you might find that an existing product does a bad job and that you could greatly improve upon its weaknesses and shortcomings. My point is: Take a look at the market before you start developing your application. You don't want to develop something that will flop against the competition, or that has already been developed. Do the research up front so you won't waste your time.

If you have an idea for an application, it's not difficult to make it a reality, and it doesn't cost a lot of money. Your idea doesn't have to be grandiose, like the next Microsoft Office or iTunes. It probably won't make you billions of dollars. But if it just put another \$1,000 a month in your pocket, that would certainly be a nice start, wouldn't it? Start small, see what you can do, and as you hone your skills and ideas, tackle something larger.



Chapter 2: Software Made Simple

Choosing a Development Tool

Now that you have a great idea for your first application, how do you create it? Well, you need to start by getting a development tool, an application that will let you create your own application. With so many tools on the market today, selecting the right development tool can be a cumbersome task even for a seasoned developer. Here are a few tips.

1. You are definitely going to want something that is easy to learn, which quickly rules out a lot of development tools.
2. You need something with a good graphical interface so your application looks professional.
3. With the increasing market share of the Mac and Linux operating systems, you don't want to lose any sales because you don't support a customer's operating system. So, cross-platform development tools are ideal. This will significantly narrow down your choices on tools.
4. Lastly, you'll want a tool that is inexpensive but still a good long-term investment. You don't want to write your application in something "flimsy," or a tool that takes you forever to learn, or one that might not make your application look professional. Remember, just because it's free doesn't mean it's better, and usually you get what you pay for. An umbrella with a big hole in it on the clearance rack is no bargain and the same rule applies to selecting a development tool. If this is a tool you plan to rely on for supplemental income, or possibly your whole income, invest in the correct one so you don't have to go back and learn something new a few months later.

Choosing a Platform

You can write your application for three primary types of platforms: The desktop (on Mac, Windows, Linux or all), the mobile platform (iPhone, etc.) or for the web. You will have to think about your application and determine which platform will make the most sense. Many of you are probably thinking about how awesome it would be to develop your own application for the iPhone. Apple does provide their own development tool for the iPhone, but this tool is not really designed for someone with no software development experience. However, if you are thinking that it would make the most sense for your application to be on the mobile platform, then due to popularity, the iPhone would be the way to go. If you don't have any programming experience, you might consider investing in having an experienced developer build the application for you, but this, of course carries more risk.

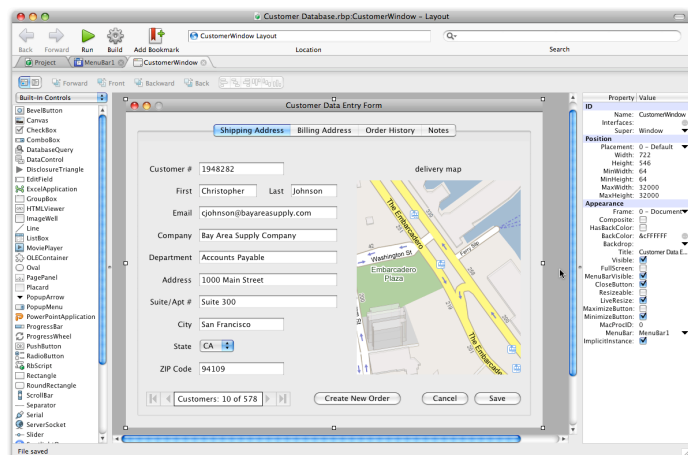
There are some options for the web, like PHP and Ajax, though it's generally not very easy to make money from a web-based application. It can be done though - Salesforce.com (<http://www.salesforce.com>) is a great example of a profitable web application. But most web-based applications get their revenue from advertising, and often this can be difficult for someone to manage on their own. So, let's focus on creating a desktop application.

Choosing a Language

Next, you'll want to choose a programming language and development tool for your application. Based upon the requirements outlined above, you'll rule out languages such as X-Code, Tcl, Python and a few others, pretty much leaving you Java, and C++. C++ is not a language designed for people who are just starting out or for people who want to get something done quickly. Java desktop applications are generally hard to deploy and use a non-standard user interface. Although Java is effective for developing server-side applications, it has failed on the desktop.

There is, however, another language and development tool that is excellent for developing cross-platform applications:

REALbasic. The user interfaces you create in REALbasic maintain the appropriate look and feel - whether for Windows, Mac or Linux. REALbasic is a modern, object-oriented language that enables you to create a cross-platform version of your application from a single mouse click. Because it's object-oriented, you don't have to know a bunch of code to lay out your user interface. You can simply lay it out graphically,



just drag and drop items into the window editor, and you can refer to the REALbasic Language Reference or User's Guide when you need to get into the nitty gritty of your application's functionality. It's really easy to use and easy to learn, and you don't have to worry about downloading the application and wondering what to do next. It comes with a QuickStart and Tutorial that will hold your hand until you are ready to venture out on your own. REALbasic is inexpensive and will get you on your way to developing a cross-platform application.

I just want to stress how important the ability to compile cross-platform applications is. Go to your nearest coffee shop and look at all the different types of laptops you see people using. They aren't all Windows laptops anymore!



So how do you get started in REALbasic? First you'll need to go to <http://www.realsoftware.com/download> to download REALbasic. A free 30-day Trial Edition is available so you can check it out first. Or you can simply download the application and purchase your very own license through the online store. Included in the download is the product documentation, which will help you get started. A new feature added to REALbasic is the Quick Launch window with a lot of great information for new users, along with some links to video tutorials which are a great way to introduce yourself to the tool.

So what do you do once you download REALbasic? The first thing you need to do is work through the REALbasic Quick Start and Tutorial. They are pretty simple but they will really help you learn and understand what you are doing. With them you will get to create your first software application! Next there are some helpful video tutorials for new users through RBTv here: <http://www.ahatfullofsky.comuv.com/English/REALbasic/RBtv/RBtv.html>

Another great thing about REALbasic is its user community. Not only is there a knowledgeable group of developers who use REALbasic and discuss features and ask questions, but they also want to see the tool prosper and grow. And it's a peaceful community where newcomers are welcome. Don't be afraid to post questions to the forums or mailing list - the more seasoned developers will try to help you if they can. What's more, the REALbasic engineers themselves post on the forums and lists, too. You would never see direct participation like that from a company like Microsoft. The upper management and the engineers alike post on the company blog, <http://www.realsoftwareblog.com>. The blog posts range from industry trends, helpful hints, product announcements and other information. You can also follow REAL Software on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/realsoftware>.

As one member of the community told me, "The community is really one of a kind. I hope that kind of atmosphere stays around the product forever. It's an incredible resource for new people to come in and the attitude towards 'newbies' is very welcoming." The community is always there as a resource for you whether through the online user

forums (<http://forums.realsoftware.com>) or the NUG (Network User Group), mailing list (<http://realsoftware.com/support/listmanager/>).

If you have any prior programming experience, especially in Visual Basic, you are in luck! REALbasic has a fairly low learning curve for you. Very quickly you will feel comfortable with the syntax of the language and the object-oriented usability. If you have no programming experience whatsoever, do not fret! It's pretty easy for you to get acquainted with REALbasic. I know people who hardly knew any HTML yet were able to build an application in REALbasic. Don't be scared. REALbasic exempts you from having to lay out all of the code for your user interface, since those elements are all objects within the development environment. You can create some cool little applications, like a web browser, with just one line of code! You visually lay out the user interface and then write a bit of code to tell your application what to do. It's pretty simple. And the REALbasic Language Reference includes all the stuff you will need to know about the REALbasic language, such as syntax, specific commands, the works. It will always be there to help you along the way if you get stuck or are unsure, simply select Language Reference from the Help menu.

Testing Your Application

Since you are going to be creating an application for multiple platforms, you will need access to hardware on all of the platforms you intend to support so you can adequately test your application's compatibility. If you already own a Mac, you can run Windows and Linux through VMWare (<http://www.vmware.com/>) or Parallels (<http://www.parallels.com/>). If you have a Windows PC, you can run Linux, but you cannot run Mac OS X. At the beginning, you might consider asking a friend who has a Mac if you can come over to test on their Mac. Later, you could purchase your own Mac if you wanted to test on all three platforms.

Before you launch your product upon the masses, you should make sure it is sufficiently tested. Ask your friends, family, coworkers or anyone who might find value in your product to test it. Have them provide feedback about usability and notify you of any bugs they encounter.

Naming Your Creation

When selecting a name for your application, be sure to pick something people can say. Most likely, word-of-mouth will be the quickest and most effective way to sell your product so you want to make sure to have a name that is easy to say and, subsequently, easy to spell so they can easily find it online. A name that effectively describes what your

product does or somehow relates to that is advisable. When people hear the name they should be able to identify to some degree what its purpose is.

If you are in the United States you will want to check to see if the name has already been trademarked (<http://www.uspto.gov/main/profiles/acadres.htm>). Please note that I am not a lawyer and you should consult one to do a trademark search once you have decided on a name and are at the point where you know the product is going to “ship”. Also, you might consider obtaining the corresponding domain. Having the same domain as your product name is certainly not the be all end all, but it’s definitely helpful for marketing purposes.

Spreading the Word

Now that you are on your way to creating your application, how do you get it out there? The next few chapters will cover creating your website, making it a selling machine and marketing your product.

Chapter 3: Creating a Website

Many people think creating a website is something for the pros. Well, you've just created your own application, so creating your own website will be a breeze! After all, how many websites do you visit each day? I think everyone should know the basics of how they work. The good news is that there are a ton of resources available for creating your own website. One thing to consider, if you prefer not to spend the time creating your own website, is finding a freelancer on Craigslist (<http://www.craigslist.org>) or a similar website, or paying a friend who knows web design. This could get your product out to the market a bit faster than if you were to design it yourself.

Having an informative and well thought out website is key. It will be the storefront for any software application you create. When making your website design, you must take into consideration your audience's level of internet experience, age, background, etc. Gone are the days where you can put up a simple image and HTML description. The public's expectations for websites are continually increasing with the availability of broadband and rich media. To be competitive with other websites you have to consider it as digital entertainment. One way to appeal to your audience's expectations is to create demo videos and put them on your website. Not only will they spruce up your website, they will show your potential customers how to use your product.

To get started on your website you will first need to get a URL, a place for your website to live. Getting a URL is easy; go to <http://www.godaddy.com> (there are other sites you can go to for domain purchases) and do a domain search for the URL you would want to have. New .com websites run about \$9.99 per year and they give you a discount for purchasing multiple years up front. You can also purchase server space with Go Daddy and they make it really easy to set up your account.

Before you start designing your website, I suggest you get a simple step-by-step guide to help you. One that I really like is [Creating Web Pages in Easy Steps](#) by Nick Vandome (it's a little out of date) but there are a ton of other guides. Go to your local discount book store and pick up any book on website design or look at the free eBook options.

Text and Organization

Some things to keep in mind as you write the text for your website:

- **Keep it brief.** Most people find reading more difficult on the computer screen than on the page, so try not to be too wordy.

- **Show, rather than tell, wherever possible.** Most users prefer a more visual experience to text. If you do have a lot of text, break it up with headings and subheadings.
- **Split up long passages by creating separate pages** - it is not recommended to have one long page of text that the user has to scroll through.

As you decide what to put on your website you should sit down and write out a site map. Most websites have them and they are a great way to help you get organized. Here is a basic layout of a 1-product site map:

HOME PAGE

- Product description (Sub-page)
 - Demo video
 - User quotes
- Store (Sub-page)
- Company or Developer Description (Sub-page)
 - Privacy Policy

Make sure to have a link on your home page to download your application. If your potential user cannot figure out how to download and try out the app, they will never become a customer. Your application itself should also have a link back to your website, preferably in the Help menu. That way, if the user forgets where they got the application, they can easily find their way back to your site to purchase it.

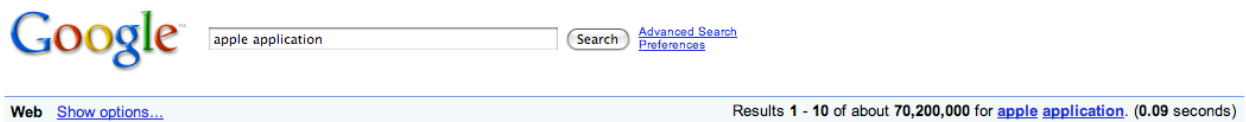
Once you have your website up, you are not done with it! It's your new baby, your storefront, and it will need constant nurturing and improvement. Keeping your content up-to-date does a lot of things for your company and your product. It tells your visitors that your content is current, thus increasing your credibility, and it tells the search engines that you are still around, which improves your visibility on searches.

Get Found: Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization, or Search Marketing, is extremely important and you will need to consider it when building your website. Search engine optimization is the process by which you improve both the quantity and quality of your website traffic from search engines. There are two types of traffic you will get on your website from search engines - organic search results, which show up in the main part of the search results, and paid search results, which show up on the side as sponsored links. You will want to focus more on organic search results because those are the links internet users are more likely to click on.

How do you get to the top of organic searches? Search engine optimization is sort of like a “dark art;” there is no single magical way to get your website to the top of anyone’s search. We will never know the secret algorithm by which the search engines are fueled. There are companies out there for hire whose primary business endeavor is to help people improve their placement within searches. With some time invested, you can easily optimize your website for the search engines. Here are some things you can do on your own:

- Get your friends to link to your website from their sites or blogs and register yourself in any trade directories you can find. These “Inbound” links can really help the position of your website within search terms.
- Make sure your product name or company name stands out - you don’t want to get lost. For example, if your product name is “Apple Application X”, you might have a hard time getting through all of the other stuff out there about Apple (Notice 70.2 million search results).



- Publicize yourself - write articles or contribute content for other websites and include a link back to your site. Get other online publications to write about you and, subsequently, to link back to your site.
- If you own multiple websites, link them back to each other.
- Choose your keywords wisely. Make sure you pick keywords that are specific enough to get to the right people. You don’t want keywords that are really broad, like “software.”
- Include your keywords within the text of your pages. The search engines need to see the keywords on your website pages to know how to classify your site.
- Create a good title tag. Title tags carry weight (not much, though) in terms of search engine placement. Make sure you include your keywords in your title.
- Use headlines, image alt tags, meta tags, keywords in file names, and keywords in hyperlinks if it makes sense for your site.

Don’t expect immediate results. Search engine optimization is a process, an ongoing one at that. Be patient. If nothing happens, try tweaking your content or keywords to find the way it works best for you.

What Not to Do

There are, however, some things you can do wrong that will lower your page rank, or even possibly get you banned.

- Don't duplicate too much content on multiple pages to increase your page views. Search engines have a mechanism that can see this behavior.
- Do not link to “bad neighborhoods,” or spamming sites. That's a sure way to lower your page rank. If you aren't sure if something is a “bad neighborhood,” check their page rank.
- Don't buy “Instant AdSense” websites; write your own content. Having a machine write your content for you is just a bad idea anyway.
- Don't hide keywords by making the background text the same color as your text, which is called “keywords stuffing.”
- “Title stacking” is another no-no. Don't add extra <title> tags for more keywords.
- Don't include a lot of keywords that don't relate to your content. There really is no point in showing up in a search that doesn't have anything to do with you.
- Lastly, don't make it so search engines see one thing and the people who actually visit your site see another thing. This is called “cloaking.” If people are searching for a *Lord of the Rings* fan club, they will be very mad if they end up on a page about your dolphin tracking software.

Now that you have your website up and running, you will want to implement some tracking capabilities so you can view your traffic sources, see how long people are spending on your site, determine if your traffic is returning or new, and many other important metrics. Google offers a website tracking system called Google Analytics. It's free and has some great reporting capabilities. Further, it's really simple to set up. All you have to do is go to www.google.com/analytics and create your free account. Once you enter your website URL and other information, Google will generate a small line of HTML code for you that you need to paste onto each page of your website. Once you do that, your website traffic will begin tracking immediately.

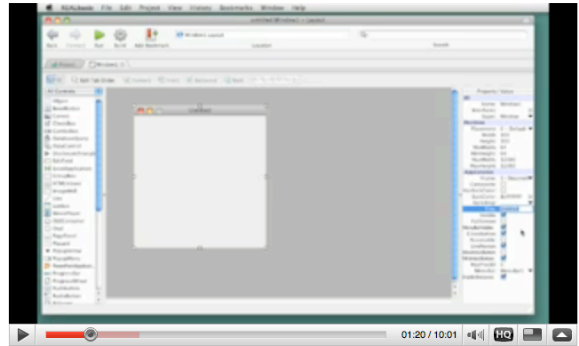
Creating a Demo Video

Creating a demo video can add pizzaz to your website and nicely showcase your application's functionality. One way to create a demo video for your website is to get a video capture program - ScreenFlow (<http://www.telestream.net/screen-flow/overview.htm>) is one example of an application that will record your screen and give you a variety of outputs including one that is acceptable for YouTube. Also, on the Mac, iMovie is great for editing and including titles that can emphasize key points, as well as

making the video feel more professional and visually interesting. Camtasia Studio (<http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp>) is another tool that lets you highlight the features of your product in a video demo on Windows. Another option is Video Studio X2 (<http://www.corel.com/>) from Corel for Windows.

You will want to keep your demo relatively short. YouTube has a maximum time limit of 10 minutes; also, you don't want to lose your audience's attention. If you have a lot of content to cover, you might try breaking the video up into several shorter videos and making them more like "chapters" about your product. Uploading your video to YouTube is very easy. Just go to their website, create an account and follow the steps for uploading content. Once it is uploaded, you can assign search terms to your video and people will find it through their many searches on YouTube.

Introduction to REALbasic by Geoff Perlman



Chapter 4: Selling on Your Website

Selling your software on your website is quite simple and you certainly do not need a fancy proprietary system to do it. There are some tools on the market today that are made for the everyman and will help you turn your website into a selling machine.

Available E-commerce Tools

PayPal

Many people have told me that PayPal is the easiest e-commerce solution to set up and use on a website. PayPal offers the ability to accept secure payments, including credit card payments, from your website quickly and easily. Further, PayPal offers free tools to use with Microsoft FrontPage which let you create “Buy Now” buttons as well as a shopping cart. Another nice thing about PayPal is that if you don’t sell anything, you don’t pay them! They don’t have a monthly subscription or contract fee - you just pay a fee per sale. According to their website, [Paypal.com](https://www.paypal.com), it’s about 1.9% to 2.9% + \$0.30. So, for example, on a \$100 transaction, you’d have to pay PayPal \$3.20.

More information about their payments schedule is available on their website: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_wp-standard-pricing-outside. Also, PayPal comes with some reporting tools so you can view your transaction history, buyer information, etc.

Here’s how PayPal works: Customers who shop on your site can click on a payment button, which takes them to the PayPal site to complete their payment. The customer will then return to your site after the payment is completed.

Google Checkout

Google Checkout shares a lot of similarities with PayPal - customers will shop and read about your product on your website, but they will actually checkout via Google. The transaction fee is also 1.9% + \$0.30 per transaction, on par with PayPal’s rates.

Signing up for Google Checkout is quick and easy and comes with integration tools to help you get set up to sell. Like the capabilities on Google Adwords and Analytics, Google Checkout comes with some tracking features to help you improve sales and measure your success.

Yahoo Merchant Solutions

Yahoo Merchant Solutions comes with design tools, a shopping cart and free marketing services. It also comes with a monthly fee of \$39.95 per month, a 1.5% transaction fee and a \$50 setup charge. Yahoo provides a wizard to help you design and customize your online store. It integrates with your existing design tool and also offers the option to let you hire a professional designer/developer within their network (for an additional fee).

There are other options available for e-commerce systems, but these three are the most popular. Do the research and see which one works for your new software company.

Chapter 5: Marketing your Product

Marketing has changed so much in the past ten years. Back then you had to get your application into retail stores and do traditional advertising like print ads in industry magazines, which is quite costly. Such traditional marketing is no longer as effective. Print ads are declining in popularity and print publications are on the outs. Everything you need to sell your application is online which is great for your new software company because you won't need to spend much money to market it. Viral marketing is the new black...and it's highly effective.

Today there are so many tools available online - from social networking mediums to paid Adwords, blogs and search engine optimization (SEO). How often do you watch a video on YouTube? Have you done a Google search for anything today? Those are both prime places to advertise your product.

Keep in mind that if you don't want to handle the marketing of your application, you might consider partnering with a friend who has some marketing experience or an interest in marketing.

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a technique that uses word-of-mouth to promote a product online. The viral marketing tactics that are the most effective are definitely the more entertaining ones. You see, the key to viral marketing is giving the audience something to talk about. So you either need to have something very compelling in your product, like an application that magically produces free beer, or your marketing tactic must be silly enough or outrageous enough or provocative enough to get people to talk about it.

I recently attended a web seminar on viral marketing where I heard the story about a dentist, Dr. Helaine Smith. Basically, she wanted to increase her new revenue, so she wrote an eBook titled "Healthy Mouth, Healthy Sex" that spread through the internet virally. As I am sure you can imagine, with a title like that a lot of people read it and her business more than doubled!

Today, we see more and more businesses and groups using viral marketing techniques. There is a rock band, for example, that uses outrageous photographs to promote themselves throughout the internet. I had never heard of them, but people kept emailing me these weird pictures and I ended up going to their site to look at the whole collection.

The pictures lure people to their website where they end up listening to and purchasing their music.

Another example, not software related but still noteworthy, was the 2008 film *Cloverfield*. Trailers circulated the internet through MySpace and Facebook that didn't even mention the film's title, just the release date. No one really knew much about it, but people were intrigued. When the film came out, people went to see it in theaters to find out what all the fuss was about -- certainly an interesting viral marketing technique. The use of vagueness and mystery got people interested.

Think of what you can do to get people talking about your application and you can get other people to do your advertising for you.

Facebook

Facebook is one of the free, social media marketing resources that you should definitely get yourself set up on. Create a profile (if you don't already have one!) and use Facebook to promote your product. You can set up a fan page or a group and then start adding fans from your personal Facebook page or invite people who visit your website to join. This will not only promote your product but will help you build a community for it.

Examples:

- REALbasic: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/REALbasic/35750265881?ref=share>
- MySQL: <http://www.facebook.com/mysql?sid=da9a59f23e45774d16317c187bf02d68&ref=search>

Flickr

Flickr is a photo management website where you can make content about your application available to your target audience. Creating a Flickr page for your application is quick and easy, and most importantly, it's free. Go to www.Flickr.com to create your account and you can start uploading screen shots, demos, tutorials, etc. to share with your users. You can connect to your friends on Flickr and build a following. As always, keeping your content fresh is key.

Twitter

[Twitter](#) is becoming more and more significant in the world of marketing but many people are still confused about what it is and how it is significant. When I first heard of Twitter, I could not grasp the concept for the life of me. Basically, you just give your “followers” updates in 140 characters or less (called “Tweets”) about things going on with you. Initially I found it really frustrating to have to update my Twitter status, my Facebook status, the blog, etc. but now it’s becoming built into the way I use the internet. I see something interesting. I Twitter about it. I’m working on something cool and I just think “I need to update my Twitter feed.” It just takes a bit of time to adjust. Twitter things like “My new application that does X is now available: [www.yourlinkhere.com](#)”, or “Read a great article about object oriented programming - check it out <link>”. You can Twitter about anything you want, and it’s good to add a personal touch: “I’m going to Hawaii for a week - I’ll update again if I decide to come home.”

How do people find you on Twitter? Well, it’s a lot easier than you would think. Within a few days of launching my Twitter account I had about 15 followers, then 40, then 80, then over 100 and I had not done much to promote it. Every day I get more and more requests from people wanting to connect; I was surprised by how easy it was. You can build your contacts list by importing your address book (<https://twitter.com/signup>). This will help you get all of your friends who are already on Twitter connected with you. Also, by “following” other people more people can find you too. And the more updates you have and the more frequently you update, the easier it will be for people to find you on Twitter. Promote it and link to it in as many places as you can - your website, your Facebook page, blog, etc. You will build a following. Just keep Tweeting!

Education with Twitter is important. Tell people about your application - what it does, how they can benefit from it, without selling it to them. You don’t want your followers to feel like your feed is just a long-winded sales pitch or commercial. Talk about your product, your development tool, your life, any relevant news or topics of interest. It’s OK to make it personal - people like to feel connected with the people they are following. So questions like, “Should I swim with the dolphins at Sea World or join the *Lord of the Rings* fan club?” are totally appropriate. Your followers can respond to you by asking direct questions that you can then answer in your “Tweets.” No one wants to read a stuffy Twitter that only talks about product updates. Keep it interesting, make it funny and people will read it.

One thing I have to recommend for Twitter is to get Tweet Deck (<http://www.tweetdeck.com/>). It is a free application that will really help you discover what others are talking about, and who is talking about you. It’s basically a personal browser

that shows you your Twitter friends, updates, replies, even Facebook status updates. It will show you everything you want to see in one browser and it's free!

Free Listings

Depending on what your product does, there are websites all over that you can create a listing on to promote your product. Some examples are:

- The Code Project (www.codeproject.com)
- Upload.com (www.upload.com) - This site allows you to upload your product listing and promote it on CNET Download.com, VersionTracker.com and other sites within their distribution.
- VersionTracker (www.versiontracker.com)
- CNET Download.com (www.download.com)
- Apple's website (<http://www.apple.com/downloads/macosx/>) includes Mac software listings
- MacUpdate (<http://www.macupdate.com/>)
- i use this Mac (<http://osx.iusethis.com/>)
- i use this Windows (<http://windows.iusethis.com/>)

Public Relations

When you have a press release or product announcement you will want to send it out on the newswire via a wire services company, like PR Newswire (<http://www.prnewswire.com>), Business Wire (<http://www.businesswire.com>), or prMac (<http://www.prmac.com>), amongst many others. They will distribute your press release to a library of media contacts. Having your press release distributed on the newswire is a paid service. Investing in your marketing is very important, though, and it can yield great results. The visibility these types of services can afford you is far greater than simply posting a link to your press release from your own website. You need others to see it to drive the traffic back to your website. There are different distributions you can send your release to. For example, to send it to the US Technology list it costs close to \$500 for the first 400 words; if you exceed that word count, there is an additional fee. But the Technology list reaches highly targeted media in the top US technology markets. There are also smaller segments you can send your release to if you don't want to spend that much, or you can just post it to as many free sites as you can find.

Also, when you have news go ahead and register it with sites like Slashdot (www.slashdot.com) or Digg (www.digg.com). If a lot of people "like" your news you can get some great visibility. There are also sites that offer daily software promotions, like macZOT.com. For example, you could offer a 50% discount on your application and

macZOT would push it out to their entire audience. An offer like this could yield a high number of sales in a short period of time.

Once you submit your press release, you will receive reports showing you what publications pick up your release. You will want to optimize those press releases with your main keywords about your product to get more pickups in the search engines. Make sure to use the most prominent keywords in the headline of your release.

A couple of things to remember when announcing your product in a press release:

- The press generally prefer paragraphs of 6-8 sentences.
- Avoid jargon.
- Make sure you are clear and concise.
- Make sure you explain why your announcement is significant - why should the reader care about your product?
- Do not ask a question and then answer it in the same paragraph (Example: Why is Product X important? It's important because Product X makes money grow on trees).
- Make sure the date on your press release is correct.
- Proofread many times for errors and grammatical consistency.
- Avoid puns and double meaning - say what you want to say, don't imply it.
- Avoid the passive voice

Examples:

Active Voice	Passive Voice
Cats eat fish.	Fish are eaten by cats.
I love you.	You are loved by me.
I mailed the letter.	The letter was mailed by me.

One final thing to consider when issuing a press release is that you can generate some interest from the press, bloggers, and other media by sending them a free copy of your application to try out and review. Also, you can be proactive and solicit reviews. Identify the publications whose audience could most benefit from your application and contact their staff to tell them about your great application. Be sure to present the best selling features and explain to them what problems it will solve for their audience and how they will benefit from using it.

There is a press release template and sample press release on the next page.

Press Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAIN TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE HERE

Subtitle Goes Here (in Title Case)

CITY, STATE, COUNTRY (May 30, 2009) — In this paragraph include the company name, description of the product, and the news basically the who, what, when where and how of your press release.

Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release
Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release
Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release

Body of Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release Body of Press Release
Body of Press Release (One good thing to include would be a quote from you or a spokesperson for your company, or a customer or expert)

For more information about Product X, or to download the latest release visit <http://www.mycompanywebsite.com> today.

About Product X

Give a brief description of your product - what it is, what it does, what problems does it solve. Include a link to the product website.

About Company X

Include a short description of your company - what you do, who you do it for and why you do it. You should include a link to your company website here.

###

Press Contact Name

Press Contact Phone

Press Contact Email Address (Set up pr@yourcompany.com so all of your PR correspondence goes into one email account)

*Sample Press Release***REALBASIC WINS 'BEST PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE' IN THE CODE PROJECT'S FIRST ANNUAL MEMBERS CHOICE AWARDS**

AUSTIN, Texas, USA (May 19, 2009) — REAL Software, creator of REALbasic, a cross-platform development environment for creating software for Mac, Windows, and Linux, today announced that REALbasic won "Best Programming Language" during The Code Project's First Annual Members Choice Awards. The Code Project is one of the largest online developer communities in the world, with more than six million registered members.

The Code Project community was asked to rate their favorite software development-related applications at <http://catalog.codeproject.com>. Each codeproject.com member decides which companies or products deserve recognition. See all of the awards [here](#).

"Having REALbasic recognized as the 'Best Programming Language' in the Members Choice Awards is particularly valuable because it reinforces what our customers have been telling us all along - that REALbasic improves their productivity by letting them develop 4 times faster than any other programming language and being truly cross-platform, and that it puts the fun back into programming," commented Geoff Perlman, Founder and CEO of REAL Software.

REALbasic is a powerful, modern, object-oriented development environment and is used by professional and non-professional developers alike to speed the development of all kinds of software, like custom enterprise projects, vertical market software, business productivity utilities, scientific applications, and more.

REALbasic is offered in a 30-day trial edition and is available for download at <http://www.realsoftware.com/download>. For more information about REALbasic visit <http://www.realsoftware.com>.

About REALbasic / REAL Studio

REALbasic / REAL Studio is a full-featured cross-platform software development tool suited to creating a wide range of applications, from utilities to enterprise-class applications. REALbasic Personal Edition for Windows or Mac is priced at \$99. REALbasic for Linux Personal Edition is offered for free. REALbasic Professional Edition, required for cross-platform compilation, is \$299. REAL Studio, geared for full-time developers, is \$1495. All editions of REALbasic and REAL Studio are now available

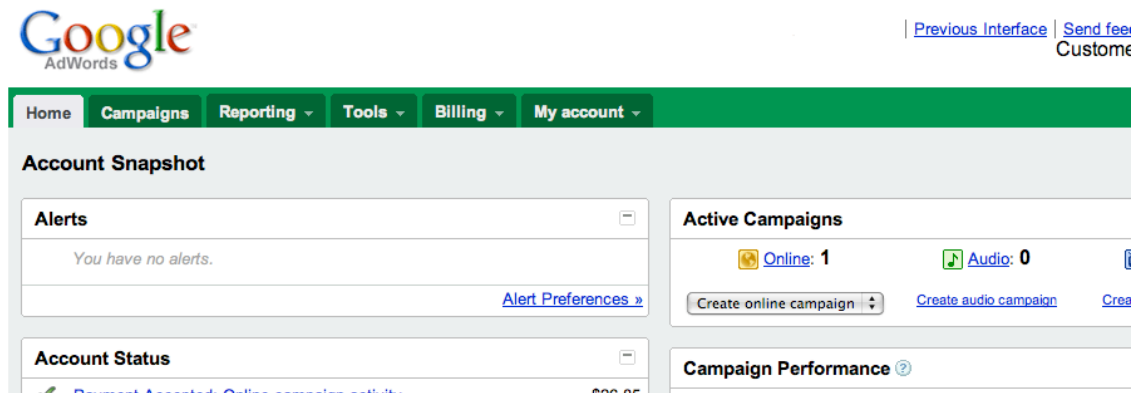
and can be downloaded directly from REAL Software at <http://www.realsoftware.com/download>.

About REAL Software

REAL Software provides REALbasic and REAL Studio, an object-oriented cross-platform software development tool, and REAL Server, a cross-platform database server, for developers who want to create and deliver software for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. REAL Software was founded in 1996 and is based in Austin, Texas. For more information visit www.realsoftware.com or call 866.825.2114. To view the REAL Software Blog visit <http://www.realsoftwareblog.com>.

Paid Search Engine Advertising

Google Adwords can be a great place to start marketing your website. Adwords are the ads you see on the right-hand side of a Google search under “Sponsored Links.” As discussed earlier, Google has an organic search, which is the main content area to the left of the page and a paid search, which is Google Adwords. You can go to <http://www.google.com/adwords> to set up your account. Google Adwords is set up so that you pay for each click on your sponsored link, but the great thing about the tool is that you can set up a daily budget to keep spending under control.



There is a tool within Adwords to help you identify what Adwords you should purchase, which ones will generate the most clicks, etc. You can adjust your settings at any time to help increase, or decrease, your exposure.

With Google Adwords you have to show that your ad is relevant to the search, so make sure to use your keywords in your ad. As with your website, keywords are so important. Make sure you use your keywords in your ads, on the landing pages those ads link to, all over your website, etc. An example: if you were selling inventory management software, you'd want to use keywords like Inventory Management, Inventory Control System, Simple Inventory Mgmt, etc. in your ad to show the user that your ad is relevant to what they are searching for. The terms the users, search for will show in bold to help make your ad stand out.

Inventory Management

Trust Everest for your **inventory** needs and more. Request a demo.
www.EverestSoftwareInc.com

Quickbooks Inventory Mgmt

Inventory Management Software
Free 14 Day Trial.
www.fishbowlinventory.com

Inventory Management

Increase Operational Efficiency
With **Inventory Management Solutions**
Intermec.com/Inventory-Management

If you need help with keyword development, selecting the right keywords that will get the right traffic to your site, there are some resources on the web that help with just that! One option is Wordtracker, <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com>. They have both a free option and a more advanced version for a fee. The free one, however, is quite sufficient. Other options for keyword development include Keyword Discovery, <http://www.keyworddiscovery.com> and Google Adwords Keyword Tool, <https://adwords.google.com/select/>.

Within the messaging of your ad make sure to include a call to action, something that you want the audience to do as a result of seeing your ad. Some examples of call to action phrases include: *Buy Today - Save 25%*, *Download Free Trial Now*, or *Sale Ends Friday*. To make your ad stand out focus on your unique selling proposition - the thing that makes your application really stand out from the others. One of Amazon.com's first taglines was "Earth's Biggest Bookstore." That was their unique selling proposition and what made them stand out from their competition. Find your unique selling proposition and feature that within your ad content. One more tip: Remove common keywords like *an, it, on, in*, etc. You do not have a lot of space for characters, so you need to make every word count.

Once the user clicks on your ad, you want to make sure they are taken to a relative landing page, a page that tells them they found exactly what they were searching for. If they were to click on your Inventory Management ad and then be taken to a page that describes why the dolphin is your company mascot - they would probably leave right away because it isn't what they were looking for. So **make sure that you link your ads to relevant landing pages!** Make sure you include a "buy now" link on your landing page. Don't expect your prospective customer to find their way to your store. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to buy your product.

Test multiple versions of your ad. Google sets up an option so you can test your messaging by including multiple different versions of your ad and set them to run evenly. Google will run the one that performs the best by default. The message that gives you the highest ROI (Return on Investment) is the one you should set as your main message.

You will also want to set up **negative keywords** to make sure your ad finds the most relevant audience. Negative keywords are words that you want to *remove* from your search parameters. If you have your inventory management application, you will want to make sure to add broad or vague words like *inventory, management, application, software*, etc. to your list of negative keywords. If someone searches for *management*, they are most likely not searching for an inventory management software application, so they do not need to see your ad displayed in the search results.

Google Adwords is a bidding-based system, and since you will be competing against ads that have been developed and refined over time, start high with your bidding and then lower it as you see the results. You can change or update your bids or ad budget at any time. Google's system is quite easy to understand, and there are a lot of resources within Adwords to help you if you get stuck.

YouTube

YouTube is the best tool for software developers because you can show the public what your application does rather than tell them. YouTube is searchable and people can find, view and comment on your video.

There are good software demo videos and there are really bad software demo videos. Here are some tips to create a good, quality demo video of your application:

- Write your script ahead of time - this will help eliminate unnecessary pauses during audio recording.
- Focus on the features that will capture your audience's attention.
- Avoid acronyms or technical terms that might confuse those who are new to your product.
- Practice before recording.
- Get a good headset with a microphone so your sound quality is as high as possible.
- Find a quiet room to record in that has minimal background noise.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Avoid long periods of silence.
- Review and edit - be prepared to record segments multiple times.
- At the end of your video, give your audience a call to action - try the demo, read a white paper, etc.

Here are some examples of good video demos:

- FogBugz: <http://media.fogcreek.com/fogcreek.com/FogBugz/60movie/60movie.html>
- MasterWriter: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RyCYAUobGE>
- Quick.tv: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1141rZm8pOk>
- Donation Software: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qId0rBfvvkl>
- Logos Bible Software: <http://www.logos.com/demo>

Blogging

Starting a blog is an effective way to drive traffic to your site and promote your product. You can talk about anything related to your product, including your development tool, the industry, etc.

Updating your blog, website and Twitter, Facebook and Flickr can be really time consuming. But stick with it; after making it part of your daily routine it's a breeze. Once you see the results you get from your efforts, you won't mind doing it, and you'll actually enjoy it and the new contacts you will make. There are certainly paid advertising opportunities for you to promote your application. This might make sense for you, depending on what your application does. You can do banner ads, white paper sponsorships, conference sponsorships, etc. The paid marketing activities can definitely yield you some big results but try the free stuff and see how it goes. Like I said, it all depends on what your application does.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

So you see, creating your own software company isn't such a daunting task. Now you have all the tools you need to get started.

Using REALbasic as your development tool will make the process so much more efficient. REALbasic is so easy to learn, your kids can learn it along with you. It's a full strength development tool - so once you become an advanced software developer, REALbasic will still be by your side. For what it will do for you, purchasing the tool is a minimal investment. In the long run you will have an application on the market that is bringing in a steady flow of revenue that can either help keep you on your feet during the economic crisis, or it can fund the purchase of that 60" flat screen TV with surround sound speakers, or tropical vacation to help you forget your troubles.

Learn more about REALbasic today by visiting www.realsoftware.com. You can download the free Trial Edition and try it for yourself. It's not quite as easy as learning to ride a bike but seeing your first application standing on its own two feet is just as exhilarating.

This eBook will be updated occasionally. To get the latest updates, or for tips and tricks, find me on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/createsoftware>

Appendix A: Resources

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/createsoftware>

REAL Software: <http://www.realsoftware.com>

RBLibrary, a collection of REALbasic articles: <http://www.rblibrary.com>

REALbasic Forums: <http://forums.realsoftware.com>

Principles of Software Development Leadership Book: http://www.leadingswmaniacs.com/resources_books_psdl.html

Beginning REALbasic Book: <http://realsoftware.com/community/booksandmags.php>

REALbasic Cross-Platform Application Development Book: <http://realsoftware.com/community/booksandmags.php>

REALbasic Developer Magazine: <http://www.rbdeveloper.com/>

13 Marketing Tips for Indie Developers: <http://www.gigliwood.com/weblog/Business/indie-marketing-3.html>

Optimizing Conversion Rates: Less Effort, More Customers: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/05/05/optimizing-improvig-conversion-rates-less-effort-more-customers/>

Optimizing Conversion Rates: It's All About Usability: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/05/15/optimizing-conversion-rates-its-all-about-usability/>

Optimizing Conversion Rates: Use Conversions to Generate More Conversions: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/05/23/optimizing-conversion-rates-less-effort-more-customers/>

42+ Social Media Marketing Tools: http://blog.junta42.com/content_marketing_blog/2009/06/42-online-content-sharing-and-productivity-tools.html



About the Author

Dana Brown is Director of Marketing for REAL Software and has spent most of her career in the high tech industry. Dana holds a BA in Communication and an MLA with a dual focus in Advertising and Cross-Cultural Communication from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas.