

Subject: Fwd: iOS evangelist giving up apps based on appreview team

From: "Tim Cook" <Confidential>

Received(Date): Sun, 25 Jan 2015 21:19:52 +0000

To: "Eddy Cue" <Confidential>, "Phil Schiller" <Confidential>, "Craig Federighi" <Confidential>

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Thoughts?

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Confidential

Date: January 25, 2015 at 1:58:46 AM PST

To: Confidential

Subject: iOS evangelist giving up apps based on appreview team

I fear App Review is getting too powerful. It's no longer about keeping iDevices safe or protecting the user's best interest

Dear Mr. Cook,

I am a long time Apple evangelist who actively reaches millions of iOS users - you won't know me by name but maybe (big maybe here) my company - Confidential. I am writing with a heavy heart tonight. Back in 2008 I swore off anything web related as I believed the future was all about apps and the old web we knew was dead. I now am forced to give up my beliefs and go back to web.

I don't expect my email to change anything, but I do believe you would appreciate some of my thoughts as a developer who has been on the platform since day 1. I am in no way delusional enough to think we are partners or that Apple needs us in any respect. Of course we are insignificant to the success of Apple. Our departure from the App Store won't make even the tiniest blip. Of course I know that and this is no way meant to try to insinuate otherwise.

I truly appreciate Apple and I really **LOVE** iOS. These things will never change (when I was really upset I picked up an Android phone and after 5 mins I couldn't handle how they completely missed delighting the user over and over again). The moment I got an iPhone in 2007 my life changed. I knew I had to drop everything and develop for this platform (even when there was no SDK). I knew it was going to change people's lives forever and I had to be part of it. So I did. We started a company and thankfully, Co years later we amassed quite a following helping people learn to truly love their iOS devices, like we do. Confidential people each day turned to our apps to explore the magic of their devices.

We didn't care much about Apple rumors or even the latest developments in technology. The thing we obsessed about was apps. So many ways to augment the power of your device - there are apps for everything, and if people only knew about them, it would impact their daily lives. We created several apps to try to solve this problem in many different ways. Of course Apple's App Store serves this need as well, and we enjoyed watching it beef up its editorial presence. But a store focused on hundreds of millions of app users and a marketplace for every single app in the world could not get as granular as we wanted to go. We want to serve the app enthusiast, not the masses that the App Store is perfect for.

At any rate, it's been our life's work over the past 10 years to dedicate ourselves to app exploration. In November last year the App Review team made it clear that our apps were not welcome in the Store anymore as they actively removed our main app from the Store. They pointed to the rule (2.26) created just a couple of years ago about what kind of apps can recommend apps other than its own (by the way I still believe my apps fit the description). We of course have been aware of this rule since it came out, as we already had a healthy business and significant payroll doing app journalism. When we saw some apps get removed, it made us more steadfast in our mission. Because we believed the fact that we were not bothered is because we were doing it the "right" way. We were really serving the user and the App Store. Not selling fake "recommendations" as deceptive ads. We literally turned down millions of dollars in revenues, as developers repeatedly asked to pay per install to be featured in our app (outside of tradition advertising). It was hard to turn down the money even though we knew it was not right to users. One thing that made it easier is our belief that playing it straight would keep us in the App Store and in Apple's good graces. Our primary revenue stream is Apple itself through the affiliate program and Apple invites us to their special media events to see the latest devices. So while others had very big paydays we knew it was a fleeting thing for them, and we were building a company slowly and steadily that would be around for the life of iOS.

About a year and a half ago Apple changed their affiliate program rules and stopped paying commissions on most in-app purchases. This cut our revenue by 55% as the "freemium" model is now so popular. While that hurt, we didn't make a fuss, because it didn't stop us from achieving our core mission. Money was always just a way for us to keep building more things, the product is what matters. But now Apple actively removing our app from the store, an app with almost 10 million downloads, it has stopped us completely from reaching the users we aim for. This is not about money loss, it is not about someone making a product that users like more than ours, this is about getting killed by the company you kill yourself trying to support. We didn't even have a web version of the product because we believed the web was dead.

For the past 2.5 months I have tried everything I can think of to get the app back in the store. I've changed it lots of ways and redesigned it completely. I am always met with swift rejection and generic terminology. No one in app review is interested in seeing our app in the store so we're forced to give up. We have now shifted all our attention back to the old boring web we used to make fun of. We know we are delivering a lower user experience now, but we don't see another choice. So now we have web apps and we've literally received thousands of emails from users who want to download our app and can't find it so we now redirect them to a watered down web app. We'll try to still excite users about new apps via the web, because it's our passion and we love it. We just won't be able to build the products we want and we'll have to scale way down

because the revenue on the web is much smaller than it is in the app. The main reason this saddens me is I don't understand the point. I always thought I knew what these guidelines were trying to protect. People gaming the App Store charts and users being tricked into believing bad apps were the best. But we are not doing that. I can't even make up a reason why I think Apple would not want our app on the Store. It's a great app with [Confidential] 5 star reviews and countless thank you emails from our users.

I fear App Review is getting too powerful. It's no longer about keeping iDevices safe or protecting the user's best interest. It's now about something else which I don't understand. I am not alone in this observation and it honestly makes developing on the platform scary. Many other prominent developers have shared the same ideas with me. We are working on some new ideas for Apple Watch. We're excited about them. They are not about app recommendations, but cool uses of iBeacons. But in the back of our minds we are already wondering. What if in a few years after we have success in what we are doing, Apple decides to make a rule banning it. And even if we do it in a way that we believe to be in the spirit of Apple and try to make sure we do it as Apple would want, we could still get whacked. We are now scared of Apple. It's very weird to be in love with and scared of the same thing: Apple.

Of course I want my app back in the store, but even more I want Apple to really think of the role of App Review. Why do they exist and do they all understand their role. I no longer believe they are helping the Store thrive, I now think they are hindering user experiences. I know that is not the intention and not what Apple wants. So I implore you to please have someone really look into this. If anything can undermine the success of the App Store it is App Review (it sure isn't Android, that will always be a 2nd rate port your iOS apps to Android if you have time experience).

Thank you for everything you guys do at Apple. I appreciate that you don't make flashy Hololens type videos but ship real products that really think about the problem. I already see what the watch will be in a couple of years when it won't even require a phone and how different Apple's watch is compared to the ones before it. So thank you. Please don't give up on TV. That is still what I am waiting for (I have TV app ideas ready to go too :)

I'll keep bleeding iOS, but I am now truly worried that I won't make enough revenue to continue my passion. That is my problem not yours, but please do think about the role App Review plays and if you want them to be this powerful, as they continue to extend beyond the user experience role they once played. I'd love to talk about this in more depth. We are located in [Confidential] it would be a honor to meet you to share my learnings in covering iOS apps since the beginning. I know that's a long shot but how awesome would that be for me.

And if you actually made it this far in my email thank you. I know this email is way too long to send to the CEO of the most valuable company in history but I didn't know how to make it any shorter.

Thank you,

[Confidential]