APX - The First App Store

Atari Program Exchange

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- Classical computer science education
  - Started as a 1401 programmer at an insurance company in 1963
  - Had a two week class in Autocoder at IBM
  - BA Political Science at U of Illinois Urbana
- I've brought over 300 software products to market
- I've reviewed/evaluated over 1,500 software products
- I've seen over 1,000 product presentations

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Founder or a founder at
- Software Companies
    - Blue Sky Enterprises
    - The Wollongong Group
    - Open Country
- Dataquest Software Services (11 yrs market research)
    - PC
    - Client Server
    - UNIX
    - Systems

So you think you have a product?

- Is it complete and ready for use?

- Does it "just work"?

- if yes to above, what is the most important thing you need to succeed?

APX

- First is always a debate. It was for sure, the first one that succeeded

- Reached a peak of 270 unique titles

- **I think numbers like 400,000 titles are bizarre. That's about the same as the number of books in print.**

APX

- Idea proposed by Dale Yocum
  - Got it funded and started
  - Put together developer tools
  - For "organizational" reasons, Fred Thorlin was hired to run APX

- Speaking of bizarre, Atari was totally bizarre "organizationally"
  - When I left, there were just under 50 Vice-Presidents
  - At one point I could have had Fred's job if I was willing to stab him in the back (we are still friends today)
  - I think coke was the line for promotion

What makes an App Store work

- Big name to draw developers (Atari, Apple, Google,...)
  - At one point Atari was one of the top four names recognized worldwide along with Muhammed Ali, Coke, and GE(?)
    - 2010: Coke, IBM, m$, Google, GE, Big Muck, Intel, Nokia, Disney, HP
- An opinion on the software
- Development tools
  - Lots available today for free
  - We had to create ours
    - De Re Atari (Chris Crawford project). Hoovered engineer's notes and bound them
- Recognition
- A distribution channel
- $$$

The review process

- APX did no engineering on products
  - One exception was the embarresing look of Video Flashcards
  - 5 reviewers.
  - Met once a week
  - Each reviewer presented and defended their proposed products
  - Group voted. I had 7 votes - LOL!
  - A critique was assembled for proposed products
- Reviewer contacted author
  - Author had to make proposed changes
  - We only published a few unique programs the authors wouldn't change
  - and usually regretted it - they were a pain in general