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# College student builds business on Apple apps

Computer science major sells 100,000 copies of a measurement converter for the iPhone.

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Part-time jobs for college students are in short supply these days, considering the recession and the loss of 71,000 jobs in Orange County in the past year.

That doesn't worry Brent Royal-Gordon, 23, who is home in Irvine from his computer science studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. He has started [Architechies Touch Software](#), a one-person company that builds iPhone and iPod applications.

Apple claims that more than 65,000 apps have been created and a billion downloaded since the iPhone's introduction in 2007. These applications allow you to do everything from play games to network.

That's around 15,400 downloads each with most prices between 99 cents and \$5.99. But the reality is that there are a few super-successful games, some reasonably popular apps and a bunch that are lucky to achieve a handful of downloads each.

So it's quite an accomplishment for Royal-Gordon to have sold more than 100,000 copies of his iPhone app, Converter, for 99 cents each. (Apple typically takes a third of revenues.)

The app converts more than 70 measurement units, such as miles to kilometers or vice versa, and more than 60 currencies.

Royal-Gordon is living proof that the simplest road to entrepreneurship is to find a need and fill it. But business ownership wasn't his initial aim.

"I thought everybody would do a unit converter, but it seemed like a good project to learn my way around the iPhone, so I did it and figured I'd just put it up and then get to work on my 'real' products," said Royal-Gordon, who has written four apps and is working on more.

"I actually started working on apps before there were any books out, so I had to figure everything out myself by exploring Apple's development tools," Royal-Gordon said.

Converter is, by far, his most successful app. It is among the top-selling utilities programs for the iPhone but hardly in the popularity class of games.

"The iPhone Store seems to be a market with a lot of products but only a few 'hits,' much like games or movies, so I'm trying lots of things so that I can find another hit," he said.

One reason for the continuing success of Converter, Royal-Gordon said, is that he updates it every 10 days or so, which users appreciate.

It has been translated into two other languages and will soon be available for the visually impaired who depend on screen readers. Two-thirds of Architechies' sales have been in the United States, but he also has thousands of users in the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany.

Entrepreneurship runs in the family. His grandfather ran numerous businesses and now does Architechies' financials. The family used to own a chain of jewelry stores, Royal 14K Gold that they sold years ago. The main thing Royal-Gordon learned from them about running his own business was how hard it was.

Mom Lori Royal-Gordon laughed when told of her son's assessment. "We learned a lot from the experience. There were good years, but (business ownership) is really hard."

Now father Jack is chief technology officer at a company that makes bankruptcy software, and mom Lori writes historical romance novels. Her pen name is Lauren Royal. Have you heard of her? Brent designed her [Web site](#).

"I'm really excited for him because it's working out for him," Lori said. "He has the potential to be so successful that he'll need employees, which is a big headache. But I don't want to discourage him."

Brent Royal-Gordon is a lifelong Orange County resident. He was born in Anaheim and grew up in Irvine.

"The AP computer science class I took at Woodbridge High School has been as valuable as any of my college classes," he said.

He'll soon enter his final year in college and is unsure of his long-term future but plans to keep writing iPhone apps.

"It's amazing what one person can do. I can squeeze in a few hours at night to add a feature or pretty up a screen, and then send it to Apple and be selling it in 60 countries the next week," he said. "There's no way I could do this trying to put my software in stores or on the Web."