

# AppNation rises in booming world of smartphone programs

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"The word has just started to get out that there is gold in them there hills," AppNation chairman Drew Ianni told AFP.

"The gold was discovered a couple of years ago with Apple and now the rush is beginning."

Mobile applications have been around since the late 1990s but began to flourish after Apple launched its App Store for [iPhone](#) and [iPod Touch](#) devices in mid-2008.

An independent study released by GetJar, the world's second largest app store, early this year indicated that the market for mobile device software programs should rocket to 17.5 billion dollars (US) within three years.

The annual market for mobile applications is six billion dollars. Internet firms large and small are racing to offer services that tap into geo-location, camera, touch-screen and other features of mobile phones.

"You need to get top-rank to make a lot of money," said Brian Lee of Pen Power, the California firm behind a World Card iPhone app that enters contact information in address books by taking pictures of business cards.

"Making apps is getting more competitive."

Downloads of [mobile applications](#) to handsets will leap from slightly more than seven billion in 2009 to nearly 50 billion in 2012, according to the GetJar study.

Applications resonate with smartphone users because they typically do a single desired task well, according to Mashery chief executive Oren Michels.

"A great app grants a wish -- book a hotel room, get a taxi, buy a television," Michels said. "You are not trying to cram the entire Web experience into a smartphone with a small screen. You narrow down."

Mashery, which was among the firms on the AppNation expo floor, specializes in using applications to help companies connect with their audiences on any type of Internet Age device.

"People are fickle," Michels said. "If an app sucks, they won't use it. Software makers optimize for each device."

The list of AppNation sponsors included Alcatel-Lucent, GetJar, Yahoo!, Microsoft, BlackBerry, LG, and Nvidia.

In yet another sign of an app gold rush, more than 1,000 people registered for AppNation beating the expectations of organizers.

"This tells us that we are onto something," Ianni said. "This is a heads-up that a non-Web-but-on-the-Internet world is emerging. You need to be aware of it, and you need to respect it."

A notion building at AppNation was that traditional Web surfing using a browser is being supplanted by applications that take users directly to the content or service they want on the Internet.

"The Web is dead, long live the Internet," Ianni said, echoing a phrase freely used at AppNation.

"The average person doesn't care whether it is a native app or it is running on the Web, they just want their content."

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AppNation is taking place just a few blocks from where GetJar in July hosted the first Gettie Awards honoring application makers in a style fashioned after the renowned Academy Awards in Hollywood.

A team of young hip-hop dancers and a comic hostess whose outfits included a Lady Gaga spin-off called "Lady GetJar" entertained the audience in the posh ballroom where the awards were handed out.

Top winners in seven categories were chosen from some 7,000 nominations from more than 100 countries and GetJar executives marveled at how the [app](#) industry barely existed two years earlier.

"What an amazing night -- with some of the best developers on the planet at the Gettie Awards ceremony," said GetJar chief marketing officer Patrick Mork.

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