



mkodo

Apple's Apps Submission Guidelines

App specialist mkodo's expert view

This document defines app specialist mkodo's view on the recent update to the Apple's App Store review guidelines. This is mkodo's view on the recent statements from Apple; it is an opinion piece and no guarantees or warranties are either offered or implied.





Background

To start with, a little background to set the scene.

Essentially, Apple's App Store review guidelines have not changed significantly. What has changed is Apple's enforcement of these guidelines. In October 2018, Apple started to enforce guideline **4.2 Minimum Functionality** by rejecting Apps, referencing the clause; "Your app should include features, content, and UI that elevate it beyond a repackaged website".

On the 3rd of June, Apple altered the content within section **4.7 HTML5 Games, Bots, etc.** of their guidelines, clarifying the statement around non-embedded games (or what mkodo calls "side-loaded content"). Further clarification was offered in their News and Updates posting (<https://developer.apple.com/news/?id=06032019j>), which gave, albeit in a relatively compact form, further detail behind the alteration to their view of HTML5 games:

"Guideline 4.7. HTML5 games distributed in apps may not provide access to real money gaming, lotteries, or charitable donations, and may not support digital commerce. This functionality is only appropriate for code that's embedded in the binary and can be reviewed by Apple. This guideline is now enforced for new apps. Existing apps must follow this guideline by September 3, 2019."

In summary, post October 2018, Apple were looking to stop the submittal of Apps that were just wraps of an existing website. More recently, though there is evidence this has been enforced for some months, Apps that are no more than a content distribution framework for HTML5 games have been blocked or rejected during the review process.

mkodo's view

Guideline 4.2: It certainly appears that Apple are looking to raise the bar in what an App is.

Speaking with Apple, it is clear that their objective is, not unreasonably, to have high quality Apps in their App Store. Websites have their place, and it appears Apple's view that that place is not in the App Store. All wrapped Apps will, therefore, be rejected, or, if already in Store, will be rejected on the next subsequent review.

Though wrapped Apps are still being accepted, it is likely that this is short term and probably the 3rd September date (noted in the News And Updates of June 3rd) will be the watershed for these type of products.

That said, Apps that have component parts in HTML5, known generally as ‘hybrid Apps’, will not be rejected on the proviso that the App has sufficient significant native functionality to be considered a standalone App.

Guideline 4.7: Without doubt, the alteration in Apple’s acceptance of side-loaded games has the potential to be the most damaging change for the Betting and Gaming sectors. Why, therefore, has Apple decided to stop Apps side-loading 3rd party game content? It would seem the answer to this is twofold:

1. **The content can be changed post review, creating potential user harm.**
2. **The content is generally of poor quality, not sufficiently “App like”, and reflects badly on Apps offered within Store.**

Having any content that sits outside the App Store review process, but is manifestly controlled or arbitrated by an App, conflicts with Apple’s review processes. Mandating that this type of content should reside in App, so Apple can review it, resolves this conflict.

The quality of side-loaded games is, of course, subjective. There is some excellent content available to players on iGaming sites and apps. Most people will agree, however, that some 3rd party content does not offer the best quality user experience. iGaming Operators will need to consider the quality of what they offer, taking a view, perhaps, that less is more and that the better quality products will be preferred by their customers. Either way, Operators now have some difficult choices to make about how they support “in App” games.

mkodo’s view on how Operators will implement game content in their Apps is as follows:

Choice 1: They decide not to offer an App Store solution and move to a Web only offering.

Choice 2: They work with their key game vendors and port their top titles to something that can be embedded in the App.

With **Choice 1**, not participating in the App Store will be a very difficult decision. The discoverability within App Store is one of its biggest merits for user acquisition; losing this advertising feature will be costly. Customers now expect to be able to interact with brands via an App; Operators will lose customers if they do not have an App Store presence and, crucially, will have to spend more to attract new customers.

With **Choice 2**, the building out of native Games, is already happening with forward thinking games vendors. These vendors are ahead of the game and already have plans to get their top game products ported and available to embed. The clock is ticking towards 3rd September, but some vendors will be ready.



For those operators though who have only wraps in the App Store today, the ROI to bring those products up to a standard acceptable to Apples new position on Guidelines 4.2 and 4.7 will be very subjective. It is mkodo's view that most tier 3 operators will focus on webdeployed products and not participate in Apple App Store.

Conclusion:

Most Operators are asking, "How will this affect me?". This is our simple checklist:

1. Is your App a wrapped website (albeit with push notifications and a jazzy loading screen)? – if so, it will soon be rejected on an App review submission.
2. Does your App have high levels of native functionality? – You are fine.
3. Does your App have high levels of native functionality and side-loaded HTML5 game content? – You need to make provision to remove that side-loaded content.
4. Does your App have high levels of native functionality and some HTML5 delivered business services? – You "may be" fine, however if it supports "digital commerce" you may not – the jury still out.
5. Does your App have high levels of native functionality and embedded Game content? – You are fine and I suspect your competitors are envious!

Note: Please note that mkodo offers App Store Guideline Conformance workshops. We are experts in the delivery of world class mobile-first web and apps for Betting, Gaming and Lottery Operators. If you are interested to discuss a workshop, please contact us at hello@mkodo.com or on +44 207 729 4545

