

Software Consulting and Apps Development for iOS and Mac



Austin Evers
Founder and President

About Appuous Inc.:

Appuous develops apps for iOS and Mac. Founded in 2009, Appuous set out with the mission to create iOS and Mac apps that are beautiful in their simplicity and innovation. We're passionate about creating software people love to use in their daily lives. Be sure to check out our current apps and check back often to see when we release others..

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Evers, what is the concept at Appuous?

Mr. Evers: The concept first started out as a web design company when I was a sophomore in high school. I quickly realized that the market for that was way too saturated, especially in the Atlanta area, and right at the same time, the iPhone and App Store ecosystem were really coming alive. I decided to change gears of the company and become a software development company. The concept now is to provide software consulting and development services to consumers and enterprises that want to build their own software. At the same time, we also provide, build and sell our own third party applications and sell via the Apple ecosystem.

CEOCFO: What do you understand, fundamentally, that perhaps others do not understand about the industry or about creating apps?

Mr. Evers: I think the big thing that we try to grasp is simplicity. It is really easy to take a concept, go too far with it and add too many bells and whistles on something. I think our approach to software development is two-fold: building things with the intention of maximizing the users' daily lives and making it easier for them to go about their routine.

CEOCFO: Did you understand the need for simplicity day one or did you realize that as you went along?

Mr. Evers: I definitely think it is something that has to be taught as a live and learn model. We as a company definitely did not learn it right away. With our first application, which was a puzzle game (Shuzzle), we tried adding all these features into it and it just ended up taking so long to build. By the time we delivered it to the iTunes App Store, it was too big of a file size to download if you were not connected to Wi-Fi, obviously negatively impacting sales. It was definitely something we had to learn, but now that we have it, we have gotten much better at simplifying our concepts and executing on that simplicity as opposed to just going all out and trying to take away things as we go.

CEOCFO: How do you ensure that simplicity?

Mr. Evers: I think understanding the problem we are trying to solve at a very fundamental level is pretty key. When we go out and start a concept, we kind of test the waters with those who are interested in testing our software and give us feedback so we can implement those changes. To ensure that we have a simple concept and we are delivering the most simple idea that we can, we go through a quality assurance process with actual consumers. We heavily rely on consumers to test our product and ensure that it is actually making a positive impact. It is really about fundamentally understanding the problem at the rudimentary level and then taking that to the next level and asking our consumers to test it and give us feedback.

CEOCFO: Would you give us an example of what you developed and improved?

Mr. Evers: One of our flagship products is called Keycard, and it is an application for Mac. It's pretty simple. You take your iOS device, pair it to your Mac computer, and it actually works as a "keycard" and locks and unlocks the computer screen as you walk away from your computer or as you get closer to it. That started out with the idea that there are too many passwords right now. As people who do not like having so many passwords, we took that idea, thought about how we could solve it, and then executed on the idea and developed Keycard, which has been pretty successful for us.

CEOCFO: How do you get attention for what you have developed?

Mr. Evers: Social media has been huge for us and has really developed the following we have. It has made an impressive impact on the brand that we are trying to develop. The thing that I wanted to do from the outset was develop a company and not just make a one-off app that makes one million dollars. While that would be good, the reality is that it is unlikely to

happen today with thousands and thousands of apps in both Apple's App Stores and across other various platforms. That combined with social media has helped.

CEOCFO: *What did you learn early in life that goes to the business side?*

Mr. Evers: I definitely think familial background has a huge role to play in that. My father was an entrepreneur who immigrated to the U.S. when he was 20 years old, built his way up and has been successful. I have had that role model aspect in my life, entrepreneurship that is. I also think there is something about entrepreneurs inherently that they get out of bed and are the ones who want to solve the problems. I am speaking conceptually, but I think having that role model in my day-to-day life and having that desire to just consistently solve problems and improve things has really helped to make me want to do the things that I am doing and keep doing what I have been doing for the past few years.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned so far in college that you feel has been helpful on the business side?*

Mr. Evers: I think a big thing that I learned my freshman year of college was that you really cannot do everything on your own. It is really crucial to find people who you can trust and rely on to help you along the way and help you solve those problems. It has been a learning experience certainly—I cannot do everything on my own or at the level of quality I want. The second thing I think I've really learned is how to identify people who want to help you and invest in your success and how to ensure that those people are good people who have good morals, good character and good values, and to let them come along for the ride, assist you and invest in your success. That way, it is not just one person's success, but it is everyone's.

"I really care about the user experience and want to improve our users' daily lives—as a company, we are passionate about creating software people love to use in their daily lives."- Austin Evers

CEOCFO: *How does the business break down between consulting and development, and would you like to see a different mix?*

Mr. Evers: Right now, consulting has not been as big of a part in our business. We have a few clients and we have done some client work, but at the same time, I would definitely like to see more involvement with clients and more consulting in our business. At the same time, I am very passionate about developing our own products, so it is kind of hard to get a balance. Right now, we just finished an acquisition from an independent, UK-based app firm, and we are going through that process still and developing some other apps. I would love to see more client engagement in consulting work as we grow.

CEOCFO: *With so many changes in technology, how do you keep up? How do you decide what to keep on your radar screen if not to embrace immediately?*

Mr. Evers: Technology and specifically the mobile software industry are very hard to keep up with, as everyone knows. Identifying and creating a five to 10 year timeline for where you want to be as a company is pretty imperative to understanding what you are going to keep on your radar screen, what you want to care about, what products you want to adapt to new technology and which ones you do not. Fortunately, there are quantitative measures that can help you with that, such as looking at our revenue and our sales and seeing what we can invest more money in and hope to get a return on as opposed to something is not doing so hot. We will cut a product out and not adopt it to new technologies if it is not performing well.

CEOCFO: *How is business these days?*

Mr. Evers: It is going well. It is definitely still a struggle for me to be a full-time student and do this whole thing on the side, but it is going well. Our first app struggled to take hold, but Keycard, which released in January 2013, has done really well, and it is still doing pretty well right now. We are about to push a big update for it, and I mentioned an acquisition of another product earlier. Right now, we are really focusing on retaining the good products we have and developing them further as well as acquiring other ones that we think are beneficial to our product base as well as align with the mission of the company. Things are going pretty well, and I am just kind of in this for the ride, education and to learn as much as I can. We will see where it takes me, but things are going well right now.

CEOCFO: *How do you assess an app to acquire?*

Mr. Evers: I think the big thing to look at for us is if it aligns with the mission that we have set. Is it simple, can it make things better for peoples' lives, and if so, let us look at it. I think with the product we just acquired from Realmac Software, which is a UK-based, independent firm, is a quality built photo-editing application. It is quality engineered, well designed, and there has obviously been a ton of time invested in the application. You can see that there is a huge following of people who enjoy the application. We have received so many emails, Tweets and what not encouraging us and thanking us for the acquisition. They say they cannot wait to see what we do with the product. I think if you can identify a following

of people who are sworn to that product and if it aligns with your mission statement and vision on products, then I think it is usually pretty advantageous to at least evaluate the possibility of an acquisition.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. There are many companies in your industry. Why pay attention to Appuous? What sets you apart?*

Mr. Evers: I think the vision that we have by trying to improve the users' lives is not something many companies have. I think that is one of the big selling points we have. The other thing is that this is a company, but I am really in to it for the education. I am grateful for the success that it has gained, and hopefully it gains more. I really care about the user experience and want to improve our users' daily lives— as a company, we are passionate about creating software people love to use in their daily lives. We are coming up with some cool software to solve some daily problems, so I think that is really where we are right now and where we are going to be heading for the next few years.

BIO: Austin Evers is the Founder and President of Appuous, Inc.—an iOS and Mac application house which prides itself on crafting apps that are beautiful in their simplicity and innovation. Evers is a junior at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and is a Business and Enterprise Management major in the School of Business.

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