

developed

The App Economy Tour

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Developed | The App Economy Tour is a series of events that brings entrepreneurs, business leaders, industry experts, and local, state, and federal officials together for an eye-opening discussion on next-generation apps, game-changing mobile solutions, and innovations driving the app ecosystem. These events are an opportunity for developers and entrepreneurs, at any stage of the development or business cycle, to get more insight into how to build a brand, what rules and regulations they must be mindful of, how to get into app stores quickly and efficiently, and how to figure out what comes next in terms of funding streams and business opportunities.



St. Louis, Missouri

Thursday, February 20, 2020

The app economy is a \$1.7 trillion ecosystem led by U.S. companies. The app marketplace is growing in areas outside of traditional tech hubs. In the United States, more than 83 percent of app companies are located outside of Silicon Valley, and 13 percent operate in rural or suburban areas.

Our final stop on Developed | The App Economy Tour took us to St. Louis, Missouri. While Missouri may not be typically associated with a robust tech ecosystem, in the last decade St. Louis has built a mighty tech community that has a profound impact on innovation that reaches far beyond the immediate area. The event on February 20th included a discussion featuring panelists representing the various components of the app ecosystem who shared their thoughts on the resources for entrepreneurs in St. Louis and the uniquely supportive community; how to balance privacy and data necessity; and creative ways to think about funding and marketing.



Developed | Speakers

The panelists shared their experiences as developers or working with developers and answered questions on how increasing attention from policymakers may shape the next 10 years of the app revolution.

Developed | Panelists



Jennifer Ehlen is the founder and CEO of BGI, a tech-enabled service platform that helps companies form peer advisory groups for their employees in a self-facilitated fashion. She is also a passionate investor and serves as a lead investor with Portfolia, Inc. out of Silicon Valley, is a member of the St. Louis Arch Angels, and makes numerous investments alongside her family office. She is passionate about helping women-led businesses succeed. During the panel, Jennifer provided insight into the ways that VCs think about funding companies, things companies should have prepared before they enter a funding run, and the questions startups should ask their potential VC.



Gv Freeman is the founder of Software Field Manual, a digital framework to help founders balance work and self care, and founder and principal of okapi, a cloud-based marketing program that uses data to help companies improve their marketing strategies. During the panel, Gv talked about how companies can better use data to improve their marketing success. He also shared his thoughts on responsible data stewardship and the role good privacy practices can play in overall marketing strategies.



Kevin Hagens is a software entrepreneur with a strong foundation in web and mobile development. His soon-to-be-released storytelling app, Topik, is an app that lets you blog from anywhere at any time, from your phone. During the panel, Kevin talked about some of the resources in St. Louis he utilized as he has approached the launch of Topik. He also described the benefits his company has seen from choosing to launch their app through a platform, including access to tools that helped them get their app from idea to product quickly and seamlessly.



Lois Lewis is the founder of CoCreate Collective, a UX/UI service that focuses on designing creative solutions and strategies that improve overall user experience at every stage of product development. During the panel, Lois shared her thoughts on how companies can adopt superior user experiences as market differentiators; how to include privacy in their strategy; and tools—both local and provided by platforms or other third parties—to help companies test their apps and improve the overall experience for the user.

Developed | Panel

The discussion covered a wide range of topics, including good privacy practices, thinking about user experience at every stage of design, smart marketing practices, and how to best prepare for a funding run. Additionally, the panelists shared insight into resources available to developers and startups in St. Louis and ways to best utilize those resources.



When discussing how platforms have changed software distribution over the last 10 years, Lois highlighted some of the platforms' built in tools that can help companies make their product better. "If you can, beta test. Put the product in the hands of users before you officially release. The ability to do that is built into the platform. It's easy to forget how helpful these built in tools are."



The panelists all agreed that privacy, and good privacy and security practices, are key as the app economy continues to grow. As Jennifer pointed out, even VCs are thinking about those things. "At the end of the day, there are so many steps in the investment process and boxes to check. Privacy and cybersecurity are part of those boxes."



As Kevin explained, knowing how to code is only one part of the equation. Being a good coder doesn't mean your product will be successful. "Knowing how to code doesn't get you anywhere if you don't know your market. I know so many people who know how to code, but they don't understand user interfaces or user experience, and they don't get their audience." According to Kevin, those are the companies that won't make it.

**"If you want to have a secure product, build it into software first thing."
- Gv Freeman**

Developed | Your Backyard

When considering difficult policy issues, the first question you likely ask is, “how will this impact my constituents?” At Developed | St. Louis, we asked those questions directly to your constituents. During Developed events, Members of Congress and their staffs get to speak directly with small business constituents about the app ecosystem, their relationships with software platforms, and how regulations affect their ability to grow and create jobs. We are happy to facilitate the ongoing dialogue between your office and any of our panelists. Let us know if you would like more information on Developed | The App Economy Tour, the panelists from our St. Louis event, or how you can get more information on policy issues critical to small businesses in St. Louis.

“You can’t solve every problem with your company. Focus on one app that does one thing and solves one problem for 1,000 people. Grow from there.”
- Kevin Hagens



If you have any questions or would like more information, please reach out to the App Association's senior director for public policy, Graham Dufault.

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