By using AdMob to distribute and monetize Ant Smasher, Guilherme Schvartsman of Best, Cool & Fun Games quit his "day job" – and the game now brings in $2 million annually

About Best, Cool & Fun Games
- www.bestcoolfungames.com
- Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Mobile gaming developer

Goals
- Boost downloads to improve app store rankings and discoverability
- Monetize new Android and iPhone gaming app
- Maximize income through smart marketing tactics

Approach
- Use AdMob advertising – both traditional download promotions and house ads
- Freemium business model to encourage users to try the app
- Leverage social networking sites and word of mouth to help drive downloads
- Integrate AdMob SDK within app to earn revenue through advertising

Results
- Annualized game revenue of $2 million annually in just four months
- Derived 80% of revenue from ads, primarily through AdMob
- Drove 45% of Ant Smasher downloads with advertising on AdMob

From day job to developer extraordinaire

Until recently, Guilherme Schvartsman was an investment banker with a successful career. At the same time, he was keenly interested in the exponential growth in high-end mobile devices and apps, especially in his native country Brazil. He started developing iPhone applications in 2009 in his free time. "Mobile is such an exciting industry, and it's different from anything else I've ever done," he says, "Seeing the rapid adoption of mobile and apps, especially with Android driving a lot of high-end device growth, I decided to take the leap and quit my day job."

He founded Best, Cool & Fun Games and began developing mobile games full-time. "We are now the #1 mobile gaming company in Latin America, by sales, product breadth, world reach and user satisfaction," says Schvartsman. The company has a portfolio of more than 30 casual games played by 10 million users around the world.

Are you ready to *smash* some ants?

Among dozens of other apps the company has created, Schvartsman had a fun idea for an app game called Ant Smasher. Exactly as the name indicates, this is a simple yet truly addictive app where the user squishes ants on a tabletop. The attention to detail is impressive – the ants are all different shapes and sizes, and they move at different speeds. Tapping them produces a nasty squishing sound effect, along with a yellow or orange ooze of guts on the table. Schvartsman tested it on users and they found it endlessly fun to play.

"A game has to be easy to learn, but a challenge for users to master. It also should be user friendly, have zero bugs, and amazing graphics," says Schvartsman.

Breaking through the clutter

Schvartsman set out right away to drive app downloads for his creation. He started by offering a paid version of the app for $0.99. He was confident that the app would be popular, but he also recognized that with so many apps to choose from, he would need to find a way to make Ant Smasher stand out and be easily discoverable in the crowded app marketplace.

When he heard about AdMob from Google, Schvartsman saw that it would be an easy way to gain visibility for Ant Smasher and allow him to promote his app across AdMob's network of thousands of apps. AdMob would allow him to place his app front and center by advertising his app across AdMob's network of over 50,000 apps and sites.

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The paid advertising campaigns he ran with AdMob were a success. In less than a month, he effectively and efficiently drove 45% of Ant Smasher downloads from advertising, helping him climb app store rankings and becoming discoverable to users browsing the top-ranked app lists. He was able to see the impact of campaigns easily through real-time reporting in AdMob and optimize ad spending accordingly.

Going freemium, to the tune of $2 million annually

Four days after Schvartsman launched the paid version of Ant Smasher, he choose to adopt a "freemium" business model, offering a free version of Ant Smasher with limited content along with ads from AdMob. According to Schvartsman, AdMob was easy to implement within Ant Smasher using the free software development kit (SDK).

"We quickly discovered that ads were bringing in the majority of the revenue and that the free version was also increasing organic growth via downloads driven through social media sites and word of mouth," he says. To allow Ant Smasher to become even more viral, he decided to release a free version of the app that offered the same functionality as the paid version, relying on ads for monetization.

The results are impressive. "Ant Smasher is the most popular app in many app stores, garnering $2 million in annualized revenue – with 80% coming from ads, primarily via AdMob," says Schvartsman. The free app has stayed in the Top 100 Games on the US App Store for more than four months and the Top 100 Games on Android Market for over two months.

Schvartsman notes that traffic and monetization have been similar on both devices; however, the company is seeing tremendous growth on Android. "We are definitely seeing higher growth rates on Android," he says. "We are putting the same energy into developing for Android as iOS. Ad requests coming from Android in the last quarter of 2010 grew 14 times, while ad requests from iOS apps only grew eight times."

33% conversion rates

Schvartsman soon employed other savvy strategies to promote Ant Smasher and make it more popular among the world of app lovers. He used house ads within AdMob to cross-promote his paid version of Ant Smasher in the free version as well as inside his other apps.

"Our house ads have an average click-through rate of 6.5%," says Schvartsman. "One out of three people who see an ad are downloading the free app – that's a conversion rate of 33%. But even the conversion rates for the paid version are high. One in six clickthroughs results in an app purchase."

For Best, Cool & Fun Games, it's only the beginning. They are seeking venture capital funding and are continuing to develop games that they are certain will rise to the top of the charts. They are also working to foster the Brazilian developer community in the near future by offering publishing services, support, mentoring, and even a new platform to help new developers create mobile games.

About AdMob by Google
In May 2010 Google acquired AdMob, a leading mobile advertising network, to significantly enhance our mobile display ad services for publishers and advertisers. With the reach of the Google advertising network and the mobile expertise of AdMob, mobile publishers can now monetize their apps and sites more effectively.