

The Niche App Playbook

Your 3-Phase Guide to Turning a Free Tool's Gap Into a Focused App
People Pay For

01

Find a Free Tool With a Gap

Start with a tool people already use every day for free — a translation app, a screen-time blocker, a design tool, a habit tracker. Then look for the exact place it falls short. That gap, not a brand-new idea, is where the opportunity lives.

QUICK TIPS

- Search app store reviews and Reddit for the same complaint repeated by dozens of people
- Ignore one-off complaints — you want a pattern, not an outlier

02

Pick One Community, Not Everyone

The apps making \$40K–\$61K a month all serve exactly one audience — Apple Watch users, Christian families, churches. They didn't try to serve everyone the free tool already serves; they picked one group and built for that group only.

QUICK TIPS

- Choose a community you understand personally or can reach through an existing network
- Tight-knit groups (faith, profession, hobby) are easier to reach and more willing to pay

03

Confirm the Gap Is Real Before You Build

Validate the idea before writing a single line of code. If the same friction shows up again and again in reviews, forum threads, or direct conversations with people in your chosen community, you have a real gap worth building for.

QUICK TIPS

- Ask 5-10 people in the community directly what frustrates them about the free version
- If nobody can name a specific frustration, the gap isn't there yet

Build the Smallest Focused Version

You don't need every feature of the original tool — you need the one feature or default that closes the gap for your community. Strip everything else out. The winning apps in this pattern are simple by design, not by accident.

💡 QUICK TIPS

- Rebrand and re-default before you add new functionality
- Ship a working version in days, not months — Claude Code can generate the first build from a plain-language description

Price for the Niche, Not the Mass Market

A focused app serving one community can charge more per user than a generic free alternative, because it solves a specific problem that community can't solve anywhere else. Price against the value to that niche, not against the free tool's price of zero.

💡 QUICK TIPS

- Look at what the community already pays for adjacent tools (subscriptions, memberships, courses)
- Start with a simple monthly subscription — the apps in this pattern all use recurring revenue, not one-time purchases

Ready to go deeper?

This playbook is the short version. Inside the hub you get the full build walkthroughs, the prompt library, and the systems I use to ship this in a weekend.

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