

Freeware Opportunities for Series 60 and Series 80 Developers

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Application Signing

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1 Introduction

Symbian OS smartphones put mobile computing power in the hands of millions of consumers around the world. Nokia has shipped over 20 million devices built on the Series 60 Platform alone. The Nokia 7710 media device and devices based on the Series80 Platform increase the opportunities for developers.

Consumers want great applications for their mobile devices, and are currently paying premium prices for them, especially for applications that tap the full potential of Symbian OS. Demand is so great for native Symbian OS applications on Series 60 devices, for example, that the average sale price actually increased in 2005, according to Handango, Inc., a leading retailer of mobile application software.

In this expanding market, commercial developers tend to focus on mass markets. This leaves plenty of opportunities for applications that tap niche markets and for freeware developers with good ideas.

The motivation behind freeware development can be as simple as the desire to share a great idea or as strategic as building a new market. Some developers release freeware as a form of advertising, in effect letting their application demonstrate their technical competence. For example, game developer Noumena Innovations Ltd. (<http://www.nmprod.com>) opened for business in 2003 and has since won numerous awards for games that run on the Series 60 Platform and the Series 80 Platform. Noumena distributes a freeware game that has given its company and underlying platform extensive coverage within the Symbian OS developer community.

Beginning in October 2005, freeware developers can get their applications certified without having to pay the testing fees commercial developers pay. The Symbian Signed Freeware Route to Market program is administered by Symbian Ltd. and paid for by Symbian and Symbian OS licensees, including Nokia. The program promotes the development of freeware, provides an infrastructure to take freeware applications to market, and subsidizes testing and distribution costs for freeware applications.

Developers who obtain certification for their freeware applications gain access to key distribution channels, and beginning with Symbian OS v9 (Series 60 Platform 3rd Edition), their applications gain access to APIs not always available to unsigned applications because of security reasons.

2 Eligible Applications

Eligibility requirements for the Symbian Signed Freeware Route to Market apply to applications, not developers. This means the opportunity is available to professional developers looking to establish a reputation, successful commercial developers entering a new market or building their existing business, or even hobbyists with great ideas.

The only requirement is that the application submitted conform to the program's definition of freeware as "software that is distributed at no charge to the user, and from which the developer derives no form of direct revenue for the software being used." The program allows *honorware* ("if you like this, feel free to contribute") as long as there is no restriction on users should they choose not to contribute. The program explicitly excludes applications that provide a limited feature set of a commercial product (*crippleware*) and applications that provide revenue to the developer through the delivery of messages to users (*adware*).

Within these few limits, developers are free to submit more than one freeware application if they choose, and different UI variants count as different freeware submissions if they require different distribution packages. Hence, a freeware application optimized for the Series 60 Platform would be submitted separately from the same application optimized for the Series 80 Platform. However, a Series 60 application that uses the Scalable UI Framework to adapt to different screen resolutions only requires a single submission.

After submission, the testing agency will confirm that the application "offers substantial functionality and appears to be of reasonable quality" before accepting it for testing. The testing agency, called a publisher certifier, is the sole judge of this initial quality measure.

3 Preparing for Certification

The first step toward the freeware opportunity is the delivery of a great idea in the form of a native Symbian OS application. Developers do not need to write their applications in C++, as long as their development tools produce *.sis and *.pkg files. For example, Nokia developers can write Python applications that can be packaged for freeware certification.

Whatever language developers use to create their applications, they should follow design practices required to pass Symbian Signed certification. The Forum Nokia Web site (<http://www.forum.nokia.com>) includes helpful documentation. A detailed list of Symbian Signed criteria is available at <https://www.symbiansigned.com/app/page/requirements>.

Freeware applications also must include a special “This application is freeware and may not be sold” dialog box that is presented to the user upon installation. The dialog box helps prevent somebody else from selling the application and provides a mechanism for users to report violations. This is the only design element added by the Symbian Signed Freeware Route to Market. All other technical requirements are identical to those for commercial applications submitted to the Symbian Signed program.

Pretest applications using one of the tools available at <https://www.symbiansigned.com/app/page/suggestedTestTools>. The pretesting tool flags the most common reasons Symbian applications fail final testing.

Writing a user manual is the last step in preparing a submission package. The following chapter describes how developers submit the user guide and the *.sis and *.pkg files for certification.

4 Getting Applications Certified

Once a developer has prepared a submission package, the process of obtaining freeware certification is easy.

1. With a desktop or notebook computer providing access to the submission package, point a Web browser to <http://www.symbiansigned.com>. Click the Freeware link.
2. Agree to a few legal terms, including the Symbian Signed Freeware Route to Market submission rules and the publisher certifier's terms.
3. Follow the steps outlined in the Web form to upload the application's *.sis, *.pkg, and user guide files. Provide other information about the application and the developer company. This information will be used for correspondence during the certification process and for distribution of the application if the application passes all tests.
4. The publisher certifier will inform the developer whether or not the application will go through the full testing process.
5. The publisher certifier will test the application against the Symbian Signed test criteria (including inclusion of the freeware dialog box discussed earlier). Testing is expected to take approximately two weeks.
6. If the application passes all tests, the publisher certifier will digitally sign the application with their ACS Publisher ID and return the signed application to the developer. The signed application will automatically be distributed through the publisher certifier's catalog unless the developer explicitly opts out of this distribution benefit.
7. If the application fails, the developer will receive a full report detailing problems. Developers may fix the problems, retest the applications themselves and then resubmit the application for certification. It is up to the discretion of the publisher certifier whether to accept resubmissions, and if so, how many chances an application developer will be given before the application is rejected.

Note: Note that all developers are expected to test applications before submitting them to the Symbian Signed program. Free testing tools are available at <https://www.symbiansigned.com/app/page/suggestedTestTools>. While freeware developers do not bear the direct financial cost of retests, the costs are borne by the Symbian OS community, and the impact on available testing resources could be detrimental to the community as a whole.

5 Managing Freeware

Managing a freeware application in the field is no different than managing any other application release. Freeware developers should develop a bug reporting and resolution mechanism for application users.

As with commercial applications, freeware functionality will grow over time as developers add new features and fix existing bugs. After a freeware application has gone through a major revision, new versions of the application can and should be submitted for certification. The submission form allows the developer to provide details of the update, and the publisher certifier will use this information to prioritize the testing of freeware versions. For example, the publisher certifier may place a low priority on a freeware application with a feature upgrade while placing a high priority on an application submitted to correct a critical bug.

6 Getting Started

To learn how to begin the process, review the following steps.

Freeware applications start with a great idea. Decide why the user will be interested and what to do.

Go to the Forum Nokia Web site (<http://www.forum.nokia.com>) and download free tools and documentation to build the application.

Build the application using good design techniques so it will pass Symbian Signed testing.

Pretest the application according to the Symbian Signed criteria and correct any problems.

Do not forget to include the “This is freeware” installation message.

Go to <http://www.symbiansigned.com> to submit your application for certification at no cost to you.