



# Beyond the Book<sup>®</sup>



## Interview with SiNae Pitts, CEO, [Amphetamine](#)

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KENNEALLY: We're taking a visit to a one-stop shop for Web, mobile Web and dedicated mobile device application development. This is Chris Kenneally. Welcome to Beyond the Book and we're very happy to have today on the line with us SiNae Pitts who is CEO of Amphetamine. SiNae, welcome to Beyond the Book.

PITTS: Thank you very much, Chris. I appreciate the invitation.

KENNEALLY: It's good to have you join us because you're talking about something that's been much in the news lately, and that of course is the way that the world is turning more and more into an application-focused world, at least the world of the Web. We'll talk about what all of that means and we'll tell people briefly about what you do. You have a fascinating background. You are, as we said, CEO of Amphetamine. But you are a trained neuroscientist and behavioral physiologist. Attended Columbia University, among other places. You're a published author in scientific journals and have spoken to scientific conferences. That's all important because a good deal of your work is involved in the world of science publishing.

You're also very much an entrepreneur. Apart from starting up Amphetamine, you've had some other startups in your career, and indeed, you won an award or a business plan contest when you were at Columbia University, so you've always been juggling this academic scientific interest with the business world, and I think that's pretty important. Is that a tough thing to do, to sort of manage the scientific part of your brain and the entrepreneurial part?

PITTS: I actually see them being fairly similar. As a researcher and as a scientist, you're building on existing knowledge, but you want to further the field and discover something

new. And as an entrepreneur, I feel like I have that same leaning of wanting to create something totally new on a brand-new platform. And both the researcher and the entrepreneur aren't really sure how to get there, but they have some good hypotheses and through hard work and perseverance, you hopefully will bring out something that will be impactful and good for the world.

KENNEALLY: I like that idea. I like that idea of not being really sure. That's something that I think a lot of people in the business world struggle with, particularly in publishing and especially at this particular moment where nobody really knows what the secret sauce is for mobile applications, and the only way to find out is to experiment.

PITTS: Yes, absolutely. And especially with a lot of the parties not being certainly under your control, whether that be your audience, whether it be the platforms themselves. With Apple and with iTunes, not only are we continually facing new operating systems, new devices such as the iPad coming out, new regulations. For example, iTunes used to not allow in-app purchase in free apps. You could only allow people to upgrade within a paid app. Then later, they discovered actually it was a pretty good business model and they allowed in-app purchase within free apps. So all of those changing rules and changing devices does need to keep you nimble.

KENNEALLY: Right. And you need to be watching what's happening there on the lab table. You can't walk away and miss a result or something. It's important. But I think again – not to carry this metaphor too far, but all the same, you can't just experiment wildly, because if you did, you might combine two chemicals that would create an explosion, right? You have to have a hypothesis that is based upon some prior research, some understanding of what sodium and chloride are going to do when they mix together.

PITTS: Yes, absolutely. For example, I really push publishers to look at what their audience is currently doing on their websites, which of their many tools and offerings are actually being used, to use tools like Google Analytics to find out what mobile devices are people already searching their site through.

KENNEALLY: Right. Let's talk about how you put that into action. There's Amphetamine's design brand, which you call iSoPretty. What I'm curious about there is the challenge of working with this very special screen that is – we speak specifically about iPhones, but it could be any kind of smart phone, or for now, the tablet, the most popular one of course being iPad. How much of a challenge from a design perspective is this particular screen?

PITTS: Well, not only do you have the form and the size factor, but it's also a touch screen and you have some built-in capabilities such as the accelerometer and the GPS and access to contacts and access to photos. You want to limit the amount of data entry someone would need to do to get to the task that they want. So providing controls within the context, making it easy for people to find their way back and make it a highly visual and immersive experience.

KENNEALLY: That sounds like a tall order.

PITTS: Yes. It's a fun challenge though.

KENNEALLY: You've been working on a number of different ways to sort of address all of that. Maybe we can talk about some of them. You've got an app for surgeons, actually. It's the ACCP-SEEK app. Tell us what that is.

PITTS: Yes. That's with the American College of Chest Physicians, which is the society publisher that we've had a long-term relationship with and a great relationship. They've been producing a board review case study series for the last 20 years in pulmonary and critical care medicine and then recently in sleep medicine. They renew these volumes every other year. Very popular as a print book. They're fairly expensive, up to \$300 for non-members, less if you're a member of the society. And it's a big, heavy, glossy book. This was a really good app to make mobile because these doctors – doctors are a particularly mobile population. They're not very desk-bound. They're on the go. And they're trying to study at any spare moment that they have.

So we took these books, actually brought in the content from the raw InDesign files and made it into a self-study app. It has all the content of the print book but even more features. For example, the print book has a key word index. We added two other indexes as well as full text search. And unlike the book where you have to buy the whole thing, we broke out the case studies into sets of 10 questions and we sell those individually.

KENNEALLY: So this has been out for at least a few months now. How long has it been around?

PITTS: So our first edition was just sleep medicine and that was out last fall. Then we added two additional volumes in February. In fact, we're in the middle of updating it right now with two additional volumes. So it actually will probably have the distinction of being, when you add up all the in-app purchases together, the most expensive app. There's always articles about what are the most expensive apps in a particular area or across the app store. So currently, it would be \$500 if you bought all 50 sets of questions. We're adding two additional volumes, which would add 26 more sets, and we recently made an iPad edition for that and that's been going really well.

KENNEALLY: Taking us back to the start of the conversation, how have you learned from the customer about what should be changed, added, redesigned?

PITTS: They definitely liked having the iPad edition in full resolution. As you probably know, all iPhone apps can run on the iPad, either in the small screen or in pixel doubled mode. However, it's blowing up all the images and all the text and it's a little bit grainy. For an app like this, which is full of CT and PET scans, it's full of photomicrographs, it's full of polysomnographs and things like that, we really wanted to use the high resolution of the iPad to its best. So when we came out with the full iPad, full resolution edition, and exhibited that and now it's been released and we've been getting feedback, people really love it. It really just popped up. It's almost the size of the printed version.

KENNEALLY: The points you made about the physician community being a very mobile one, I was struck. I've been lucky not to be in the hospital very much lately, but someone in my family was and I was surprised to see nurses with their mobile devices, laptops still, some of them on carts and so forth. But what I could see coming very clearly was the tablet, whether it's an iPad or another device. It's definitely going to replace that and it's going to be so much more useful because, as you say, the resolution, the ability to call up all kinds of images and charts and so forth, I'm sure that's going to be a dream come true for many of those people.

PITTS: Yes, absolutely. And with two medical schools now issuing iPads to incoming medical students, students are demanding that more and more content be available to them on their mobile devices, so they're not weighed down by books and tethered to their desktop or a laptop.

KENNEALLY: Absolutely. You have worked with another community, one that also can't be tied down for too long because they're hard at work at the stove. That would be chefs, of course, or cooks, I should say. You did a recipe collection app for eatingwell.com. How was that challenge different from the design perspective, and also from just sort of thinking about what the customer's looking for?

PITTS: Yeah, so Eating Well Media Group publishes a very popular magazine and have a very popular website that you mentioned, eatingwell.com. They're known for their professional food photography. All of their recipes are professionally developed and vetted by nutritionists and they're known in the culinary world to be particularly sensitive to dietary needs and healthy choices. Their food photography is just really luscious. I'm a budding foodie and cook, so it really attracted me, just how beautiful their sets are. So I wanted to create an app that highlighted their food photography. Also made it really easy to navigate a database of recipes, so they're divided by course category. So appetizers, lunches, dinners, beverages. You can filter by main ingredient, chicken, vegetarian, etc.

And then you can further filter by time that you have. So most of these recipes are ready in like 45 minutes or less. The nice thing about making it mobile is that when you're waiting in line or at the commute, you could start planning what to have for dinner and you can email the ingredients to your spouse and have them buy them. Or when you're in the store and you see eggplants for sale, you can quickly look up what kind of recipes you could make with eggplant.

KENNEALLY: I see the point about giving a helping hand and a head start on the shopping list. That's a great idea. And also, as you say, the mobility piece, I was thinking it's just convenient. I can imagine an iPad sitting on the table somewhere in the kitchen. But with the phone, you would have it there in the store. I hadn't thought of that too. So you can do your shopping, you can make decisions on the fly based upon having that app there.

PITTS: Yes. So that app was actually the very first official app under the Amphetamine iSoPretty brand and we were very proud to have iTunes pick it as a quick link under Apps

for Foodies, which was a new category they came out with a couple months ago. So even though the app was over a year old, it was actually placed quite highly ahead of many other well-established apps. And we've recently renewed that too with additional collections that people can buy through in-app purchase. And I think people are actually cooking with the phone on. We can see from our usage analytics that the average session link is 15 minutes with this app.

KENNEALLY: Yes, so you can see that they are glancing at the recipes and going back and forth between the stove and the device.

PITTS: Yes.

KENNEALLY: That's pretty cool. We're talking with SiNae Pitts, who's CEO of Amphetamobile, about the emerging world of mobile device applications. She's a designer and developer of those and I think brings an interesting perspective. One of the things that we hear a great deal about right now is the potential for the iPad, particularly to kind of come to the rescue, be the white knight for newspapers and magazines, and this special opportunity that the iPad presents to kind of start again. The Web made content free. Here with the iPad, the kind of walled gardens there, many of the media companies are hoping they can charge for it.

What is your take on all of that? When you talked about the ACCP application, you said that's the most expensive one, possibly. The one that you just spoke about, the Eating Well app is I think, \$2.99. So there's quite a range there. Do you think that applications are going to realize the expectations, the hope of publishers to generate revenue?

PITTS: Well, certainly on the iPad, the early statistics show that people download more apps on the iPad and they pay more for them. And the early magazine apps and periodical apps have all advertized huge initial sales. For example, the *Wired Magazine* app had something like 29,000 downloads the first day and that amounted to 30 percent of their newsstand sales. And I think they sold that for about \$4.99. So I think if they're done right and of course, being an early adopter and getting on the bandwagon of how hot the iPad is certainly helps. The iPad has huge potential because it's also such an – like the mobile phone, it's an intimate device. You have it with you all the time. But it's novel and it's just more fun and more immersive than sitting at your desk and your keyboard and craning over your screen. It feels more like the leisure of picking up a book or picking up a magazine.

KENNEALLY: Right. And in contrast to the iPhone or to any kind of phone like that, it's a little more comfortable to have in your lap. The iPhone is terrific for the kind of quick things, quickly getting a phone number, quickly taking a picture, doing those kinds of things. But my sense is that the tablet is going to allow people to sit and have, as you say, that immersive experience.

PITTS: Yes.

KENNEALLY: Are publishers concerned about the monetization piece when they talk to you about what they are hoping for from an app or have they other concerns that are more important to them, like design?

PITTS: Well, I think absolutely everyone's worried, how am I going to pay for the development and is the audience going to support this financially? Especially for scholarly publishers who are worried about eroding print sales and about online subscriptions, and then to have this new platform kind of thrown at them, they're not really sure because the market and the devices are changing so quickly. And then you will always get some people grouching, oh, well, songs are 99 cents. Why should medical review questions be more expensive?

There's many different models. This can be – for example, for a journal. Some journals are going to want to offer mobile apps with their journal content as a subscriber benefit. Some see it as an add-on convenience, that people will pay for the app and then pay for the full text content, just the articles that they want, or special filters that give people just the specialty content or specialty collections that they opt in for. Certainly, there's a lot of opportunities for sponsorship and for advertising. The same kinds of sponsors that would say, pay thousands of dollars for a booth or for a conference bag could easily help sponsor a mobile app.

KENNEALLY: Right. Let's finally take you back to your original work in the lab as a neuroscientist and physiologist and the challenge that researchers have. You mentioned when we were chatting before about the ability of the phone and the need for the consumer of the content to make meaningful use of data. How does an iPhone really take that to the next level?

PITTS: I think that's a really good question because some scholarly publishers, STM publishers, are looking at the say, the magazine and periodicals, at how glossy and picturesque they are and may be thinking that researchers and scientists are going to sit down with their journals and flip through them like that. I think that may be the case for only a few flagship, general interest journals. For the most part, most journals – kind of unfortunately, maybe, to the publishers – researchers are a bit agnostic about that. They're looking at the actual research and the data and they're not really not paying that much attention to the journal title and the publisher.

As a former researcher, I know researchers are looking for tools that will fit into their work flow. So I think it's going to be important for research-oriented apps to help researchers filter the huge deluge of literature, to help them once they select an article to share it with their colleagues, add it to their libraries, save the citations and really make it easy for them to make meaningful use of it. And maybe that's also extracting data out of tables, re-purposing or licensing images out of publications as well.

KENNEALLY: Well, it's a fascinating new world out there and it's been a pleasure to speak with you, SiNae. We've been chatting here at Beyond the Book with SiNae Pitts, who has a PhD in neuroscience and behavioral physiology from Columbia University, but much more than that, besides being a scientist, she's an entrepreneur and is CEO currently of

Amphetamobile, a one-stop shop for Web, mobile Web and dedicated mobile device application development. SiNae, thanks again for talking to us today.

PITTS: Thank you very much, Chris. It's been a pleasure. I'm a big fan of NPR and the NPR app and I feel like I've had a little taste of it.

KENNEALLY: Well, thank you for that. And for all of us at Copyright Clearance Center, this is Chris Kenneally for Beyond the Book. Have a great day.

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