Apple removes I Am Rich, a $1,000 featureless iPhone application

Eight people bought the software, which has no function except to alert other people that you have money.

By Mark Milian, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
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Eight iPhone owners have joined an elite clan: Their gadget is running a program that cost nearly $1,000.

When the iPhone first hit the market in June 2007, those who paid the $499 entry price -- and signed the two-year AT&T contract -- owned a status symbol. A year later, we have the iPhone 3G, Apple Inc.'s speedier, sleeker and, most important, less expensive smart phone, which introduced a section for downloading third-party applications.

But Apple couldn’t pull it down before curious aristocrats had purchased it -- eight times. Six people from the U.S., one from Germany and one from France dropped a grand for the gem in the first 24 hours it was available, Heinrich said. That's $5,600 in revenue for Heinrich and $2,400 for Apple, which collects 30% of each sale for "store upkeep."

Heinrich, a German software developer, has yet to hear back from Apple concerning the removal. "I have no idea why they did it and am not aware of any violation of the rules to sell software on the App Store," Heinrich said in an e-mail to The Times on Thursday.

Now that the phone is affordable enough for a wider audience, a new status symbol has emerged: a seemingly useless application called I Am Rich.

Its function is exactly what the name implies: to alert people that you have money in the bank. I Am Rich was available for purchase from the phone's App Store for, get this, $999.99 -- the highest amount a developer can charge through the digital retailer, said Armin Heinrich, the program's developer.

Once downloaded, it doesn’t do much -- a red icon sits on the iPhone home screen like any other application, with the subtext “I Am Rich.” Once activated, the user is treated to a large, glowing gem. That’s about it. For a thousand dollars.

Apple, which didn’t respond to requests for comment, apparently had some problems with I Am Rich. After initially approving it for distribution, the company has since removed it from the store.

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In the e-mail, Heinrich said there seemed to be a market for the program. "I am sure a lot more people would like to buy it -- but currently can’t do so," Heinrich said. "The App is a work of Art and included a 'secret mantra' -- that’s all."

A possible explanation for its removal: A screen shot of an App Store review that has been circulating around the Web recently, showing a user’s complaint that he purchased it accidentally. "I saw this app with a few friends and we jokingly clicked 'buy' thinking it was a joke, to see what would happen. . . . THIS IS NO JOKE. . . . DO NOT BUY THIS APP AND APPLE PLEASE REMOVE THIS FROM THE APP STORE," it read.
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I Am Rich isn’t the first software that has been removed from Apple’s store. Box Office, a movie showtime resource, and NetShare, which let users connect a computer to the Internet using the iPhone’s 3G wireless data service, disappeared without a trace.

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