

Interview with Andrew Bowditch, CEO and Co-Founder at Visible Body

Visible Body is a content and software development firm that produces award-winning interactive and visual content. The company publishes anatomy and physiology learning products sold through its web site and at the Apple App Store and produces custom content for many of the world's top pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, and educational publishing companies. Founded in 1996 by two Boston College graduates, Visible Body is based in Newton, Massachusetts. The company also operates as Argosy Publishing.

[Interviewer] Can you give us some background on the development of Visible Body for iPad 2 3D Human Anatomy Atlas? How did it come about?

[Bowditch] The best way to answer is with some background. For years we worked exclusively for large companies, developing award-winning visual and interactive medical content for their customers. In the meantime, we were doing R&D for our own, proprietary content, which we took to market in 2007 with the release of Visible Body for the Web. This was our first direct to consumer product, and it revolutionized anatomy visualization. Visible Body's highly detailed 3D models can be manipulated in multiple ways. You can rotate or zoom into a structure— let's say the heart— and better understand its contours. You can view the heart with all the structures of the thoracic cavity and gain a better understanding of the heart's location in relationship to other structures. You can also see inside the heart, study the valves and chambers. Our product provides anatomical views from so many perspectives, many of which are simply unavailable in any other format. Even a dissection doesn't allow you to see all the interplay of anatomical structures that Visible Body allows you to see. The product has been very successful for us and is used by students and instructors at thousands of colleges and universities worldwide. We soon started hearing from healthcare professionals— doctors, nurses, physical therapists— who were using our models to explain anatomy and various conditions to their patients. From that feedback we got the idea that healthcare providers could use Visible Body on a hand-held tablet during patient consultations. Then the first iPad came out. But we had to wait for the iPad 2 to make it happen.

[Interviewer] That's a good segue to my next question. "For iPad 2" is in the name. Does that mean it doesn't work well on the first generation iPad?

[Bowditch] I'm glad you asked that. It does not work on the first generation iPad. We tell potential buyers that if they don't have an iPad 2, they need to hold off on a purchase until after they upgrade. The model is comprised of over 2,500 individual 3D structures, yet as you run your finger over the screen to rotate them, for example, they do so completely smoothly, as if it were an animation you control. This kind of detailed content and smooth user experience is extremely demanding of the hardware. The iPad 2 has twice as much RAM and a much more powerful processor. We put 'For the iPad 2' in the name to clarify this point. I should add that we are now looking at developing

versions of our product that run on the first generation iPad and on the iPod Touch. We wanted our first offering to be a product that took our successful web product to the next level. We added content— more anatomy, finer soft-tissue textures, and hundreds of definitions. We also enhanced the user interface. It's easy to access any body organ or region. Doctors can quickly show a patient a heart valve or the pituitary gland. Furthermore, as a great learning tool for students, our first Apple product had to offer the powerful visuals and speed that students, used to playing games with amazing 3D graphics, expect. The app performs amazingly well on the iPad 2. Our first buyers love it and it is climbing the charts on the app store.

[Interviewer] How successful has it been in its first weeks?

[Bowditch] We are thrilled with the market response. It became the number one seller among medical apps within a couple of days of the release and has stayed in that spot. It has also consistently been on the list of Apple's top grossing apps overall. We are already thinking about how to build off this success and offer our customers more.

[Interviewer] Looking into the future, what do you see?

[Bowditch] Our first iPad release on June 30 included the female anatomical model and over 2,500 structures and hundreds of definitions. An update, free to all who have already purchased, is scheduled to post to Apple within days. It adds the male anatomical model. We are constantly building new structures, refining textures, writing definitions, and considering tweaks that enhance functionality. There are more definitions to add to the iPad product, and we are adding functionality and definitions to our web subscription product for fall classes. There are also new products to consider. We have a lot of expertise in biomedical visualization— visualizing physiology, pathologies, procedures and surgeries. We leverage this expertise for our corporate customers. I'm excited about crafting additional apps that offer this expertise to students and professionals.

[Interviewer] Anything you want to add in closing?

[Bowditch] We appreciate hearing from our customers. The feedback we receive from healthcare professionals, students learning anatomy and physiology, and the instructors and professors teaching with our products help us shape our future offerings. The company website (www.visiblebody.com) has useful tools including an overview video and a five-minute tutorial video. It also has a Contact Us Page from which you can send us feedback.