

The Vibe Coding Illusion: Why Less Than 1% of AI-Generated Apps Make It to the App Store

Driven by AI, app submissions surged 84% in early 2026, creating an illusion of speed when, in practice, only a tiny fraction of projects make it through the App Store's gates.

July 2, 2026, MONTREAL, Quebec, Canada – The mobile app market is facing an invisible tsunami. According to data from Sensor Tower, nearly 600,000 apps were published on the App Store in 2025, a 30% increase attributed to the rise of vibe coding. Far from slowing down, the trend has accelerated dramatically: in the first quarter of 2026, submissions jumped 84% to reach 235,800 projects, propelled by tools like Claude Code, ChatGPT Codex, and Apple's latest features in Xcode 26.3. Yet behind this apparent ease of creation, the reality on the ground is brutal: less than 1%¹ of them achieve a viable, secure, and compliant launch.

Drawing on its experience working with companies that have developed apps with AI, the Montreal agency Sidekick Interactive is nonetheless observing an emerging trend: while building a prototype has never been faster, believing you have completed 90% of your app thanks to AI often means you have covered only half the distance. The final stages, which involve security, architecture, regulatory compliance, and passing the platforms' review processes, represent the bulk of the work and have become the main barrier to launch for businesses.

■ The Illusion of a Finished Product: What the Audits Reveal

To better understand this new reality, Sidekick Interactive analyzed the results of several audits conducted on apps developed with AI coding tools. While the core features appear operational at first glance, structural risks such as security mechanisms, subscription systems, mobile platform requirements, and quality control processes remain invisible until the final stages.

"It's very easy to start a vibe coded project. Finishing and launching it is the hard part."

LIAM COUGHLIN, CO-FOUNDER OF SIDEKICK INTERACTIVE

Among the most frequently observed flaws and blind spots during the audits:

- **Faulty security:** Critical vulnerabilities that can expose sensitive data or confidential information.
- **Store rejections:** Non-compliance with Apple's and Google's strict requirements, particularly regarding subscriptions, privacy, and user account management.
- **Structural fragility of the code:** Software architectures that are difficult to maintain or scale as the product gains popularity.
- **Quality control gaps:** Quality control, testing, and deployment processes that are insufficient to support large-scale use.
- **Legal compliance gaps:** Discrepancies between the practices actually implemented and the commitments presented in the documentation or privacy policies.
- **AI governance challenges:** A lack of control over prompt moderation, data protection, and cost management.

■ The Role of the Mobile App Developer Has Shifted

This reality is more important given that Apple's and Google's mobile distribution requirements continue to evolve, faster than the AI models. For many companies using vibe coding, these regulatory and technical requirements are discovered only at the moment of app submission, leading to major delays or complete overhauls.

The rise of AI coding does not eliminate the need for technical expertise. It redefines its role. While artificial intelligence simplifies the creation of interfaces and features, the human mobile app expert remains essential to guaranteeing the product's security, stability, and commercial viability.

In other words, while AI can now accelerate much of the initial development, the final stages of a project often remain the ones that demand the most experience and have the greatest impact on its success.

¹ **Methodological note:** According to our research, although the number of App Store submissions has increased significantly, even if 100% of these new submissions were attributed to vibe coding, this would represent only a tiny fraction of the apps started on engines like Lovable or Replit. Indeed, with more than 300 million projects created on Replit, the mass of active projects is enormous. As a result, it is estimated that fewer than 1% of all apps initially started through vibe coding manage to cross the finish line and be published on the App Store.

ABOUT SIDEKICK INTERACTIVE

Founded in Montreal, Sidekick Interactive is an agency specializing in mobile app and custom software development. Backed by its experience working with companies of all sizes, its team combines technical rigour with strategic vision to transform complex concepts into high-performing, secure, and durable technology products. In the age of artificial intelligence, Sidekick Interactive stands out as a trusted partner to guide organizations through the technical and regulatory challenges of digital distribution.

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