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## Blacksburg company creates map apps; no refolding required

**Funded by angel investors, Nomad Mobile Guides sells its software platform to travel publishers and marketers to create maps and travel tips for mobile devices.**

By [Jeff Sturgeon](#)

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Blacksburg-made software will lighten backpacks this fall hiking season.

The Great Smoky Mountains Association, publisher of various guides and maps to the national park, recently began to sell the same material formatted for a mobile device.

People who buy the app want their maps and tips with them in camp or on the trail without the bother of carrying paper travel guides or material printed from the Web.

Technology developed in Southwest Virginia makes the mobility possible.

Nomad Mobile Guides Inc. has created an iPhone, iPad and iPod touch application that adapts published works for mobile viewing.

It has teamed up with only a few publishers so far, but investors have supplied the company its first round of angel financing on the belief that demand could expand.

Blacksburg-based New City Media Inc. built the technical guts of the company in its innovation lab and spun off Nomad Mobile Guides seven months ago.

New City Media, which now calls itself NewCity, is a 15-year-old creative services company whose clients include Virginia Tech and The Roanoke Times. The spinoff illustrates how a services firm can create a product-based company leanly.

The popular desire to do more with mobile devices such as cellphones, smartphones and tablets drives the company's business plan. Purchasing one of the apps requires a few clicks at the iTunes store. If a user buys additional chapters of a guidebook later, they will mesh with previously purchased material.

There is no need for a connection to the Web because the app is stored on the mobile device. The apps can acquire the user's location using GPS technology and tailor the map appropriately.

Right now, Nomad is targeting travel publishers and travel marketers.

"For most of them it is expensive to create their own mobile applications from scratch," said David Poteet, who is president of both Nomad and New City. "We created a platform, a software platform, that makes it easy."

The Great Smoky Mountains Association slaps a big GSMA across the application that it sells for \$4.99.

But the fine print discloses that software by Nomad is running in the background.

For its contribution, Nomad collects a flat licensing fee or a share of its customer's revenue.

The last time Nomad Mobile Guides was the subject of buzz, it had just won the "People's Choice" plaque at TechNite, a regional celebration of technology and innovation in the spring.

Last month, the company announced it closed its first angel investment round. It gave the source of the money as 460 Angels, which invests in the businesses of coachable technology-based entrepreneurs in the New River and Roanoke valleys.

The 29 investors associated with 460 Angels, whose names are not public, found Nomad's leaders to be "experienced entrepreneurs with a track record of success addressing a real customer need in the growing mobile and digital media markets," 460 Angels representative Bob Summers said.

Poteet declined to discuss the matter, saying he was forbidden by securities laws from divulging additional details about the financing.

Nomad Mobile Guides raised \$255,000 of an expected \$500,000 round of equity-based financing, according to an Aug. 3 filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The filing says \$105,000 is earmarked as salary and payroll compensation for Poteet; Jeannine Everhart, director of operations at Nomad; and Colin Grant, formerly with Librato and Nomad's first outside hire.

In addition to striking a deal with backers of the Smokies, Nomad has sold the software to the Grand Teton Association, which sells a mobile guide to Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

Poteet said Nomad has already signed an agreement with Moon Travel Guides.

Based in Berkeley, Calif., Moon publishes countless books on domestic and international travel and exploration. Yellowstone National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway are likely future customers, he said.

For now, Nomad is not an engine of jobs and may never be. It can scale up to higher sales without adding significant numbers of people. It could easily remain under 20 employees long-term, the same as NewCity, Poteet said. The two firms share one office.

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