

As a professional software developer for more than 15 years, I work with mobile devices on a daily basis. In addition to desktop (PC/Mac) software, my company also creates software for for iOS (iPhone/iPad), Android (phone/tablet) and Windows Mobile devices.

The ability to “jailbreak” or “root” a device brings many crucial advantages for software development. These include:

- The ability to fully back up a device’s state at any point in time. This is crucial so that, if something goes wrong, we can restore the device to a known-good configuration.
- The ability to restore a device’s state to any backed-up point. This is not only useful for recovery; in some cases, we have device backups with known issues in their configuration, because the specific configuration helps us to identify or solve an issue. The ability to restore a device’s state quickly lets us focus on the problem instead of spending hours trying to get the device into the correct “bad” state – if we could even get there at all.
- Using these techniques, we only require a handful of physical devices. Given the wide variability in devices and operating systems, it would be extremely expensive for us to acquire a different device for each possible scenario. In addition, we would need to regularly “wipe” each device (restore to factory settings) in order to recover from various testing scenarios.
- The ability to modify “deep” device settings is particularly useful. These settings are locked down for consumer use, but it is sometimes necessary to modify them for development purposes.
- Because some of our applications include confidential and proprietary information relating to medicine and pharmacology, it is necessary for us to perform periodic security audits of our applications and data storage. Such audits would be impossible on a device that was locked down to prevent deep access to the device.
- While all device and mobile operating system manufacturers provide emulators for use in testing their devices or applications running on them, these emulators are usually significantly slower than a physical device, frequently contain bugs that are not found on the physical device (because of the hardware emulation) and are still locked from the deeper control abilities mentioned above.

For these reasons, the ability to “jailbreak” a device is a necessary and frequent part of our development practice. If this right was revoked, it would result in our software being slower to market, prone to bugs, more expensive to maintain, and susceptible to security issues. In short, it would require us to dramatically scale back our efforts, focus on other markets entirely, or drop that line of business.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kurtis Miller

Senior Software Engineer

Carmel, Indiana