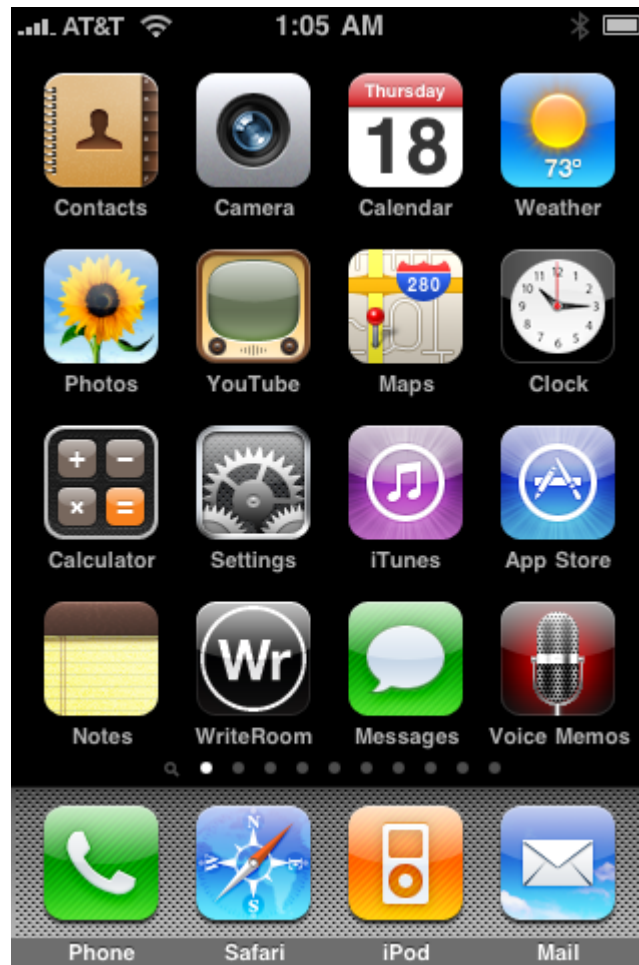


iPhone® Voice Memos App Review

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As is now expected from Apple, their “Voice Memos” application’s human interface is very clean and simple.



There are actually two aspects to making voice memos. The first is the ease of creating the memos; the second would be managing existing memos. Managing existing memos would encompass everything from editing, deleting, forwarding, and organizing memos for future reference. How much managing is required is

really a function of how the user intends to use this feature. If you want to simply leave yourself brief memos such as “Buy milk, cookies, trash bags, and shampoo” or “Remember to send Carol a birthday card.” then the use of the application is pretty straight forward. You will be simply creating and deleting small messages. If your goal is to make dozens of voice recordings regarding complex design, business topics, client specific recordings or school lectures then your need is somewhat different. I will discuss this and some hypothetical implementations to address this weakness in a future blog.

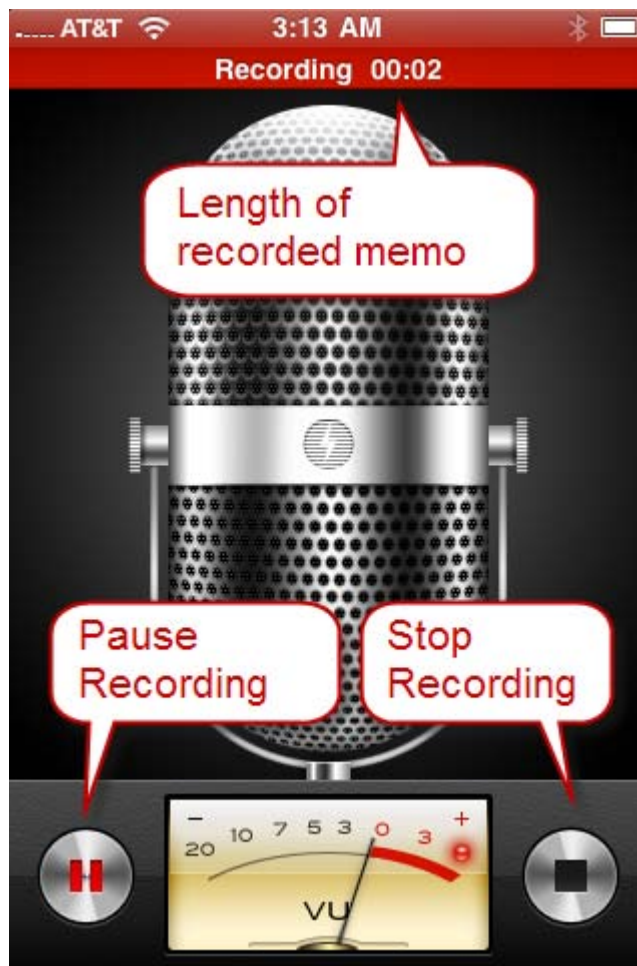
The basic use of the system is pretty straight forward. Apple presents the user with a very simple interface for making the recordings as is shown below.



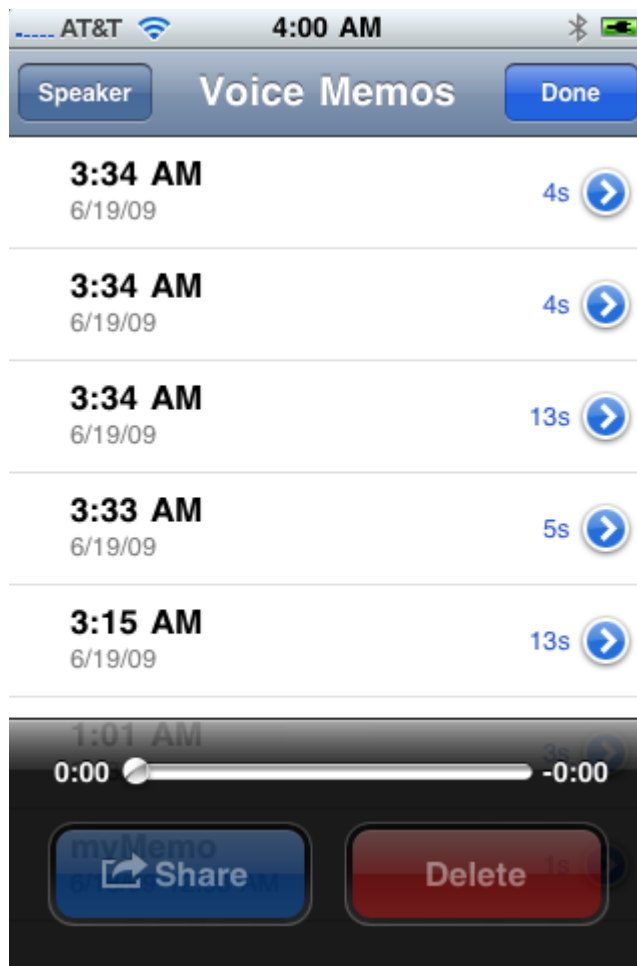
To start recording press the red start button. To pause a recording press the button again. It will now be showing a “pause” symbol. When pressed the recording pauses. The length of the current recording is shown at the top of the screen. The user may start and stop the recording as many times as they like. When finished, press the button, which resembles a small intercom speaker (3 bars), to the right of the VU (Volume Units) meter. The VU meter allows for the user to quickly see the audio level the application is detecting their voice. The application appears similar to the following while recording.



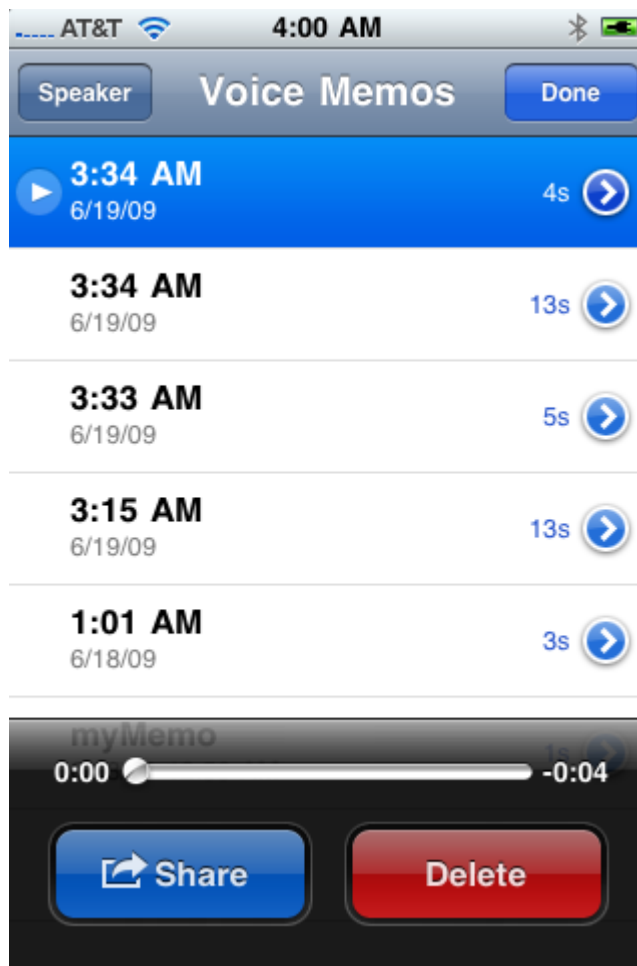
By pressing the rightmost “Stop” button on the right of the VU meter, the current recording is completed. If the user presses the record button again after pressing the button to the right, a new recording will be created. So simply remember to press the button to the left to pause and record within the same voice memo and press the stop button, on the right as shown above, to end the current recording. After a recording is paused or stopped, press the rightmost button which resembles a speaker to listen to your recordings.



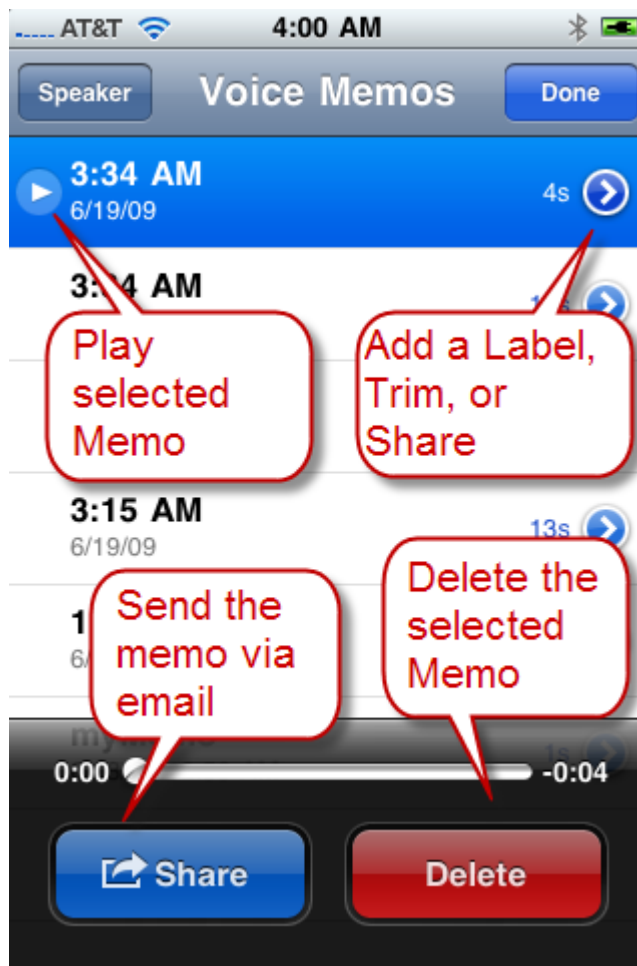
Pressing the rightmost button as shown below will take the user to a page to allow them to manage their recordings. The screen will resemble the following image.



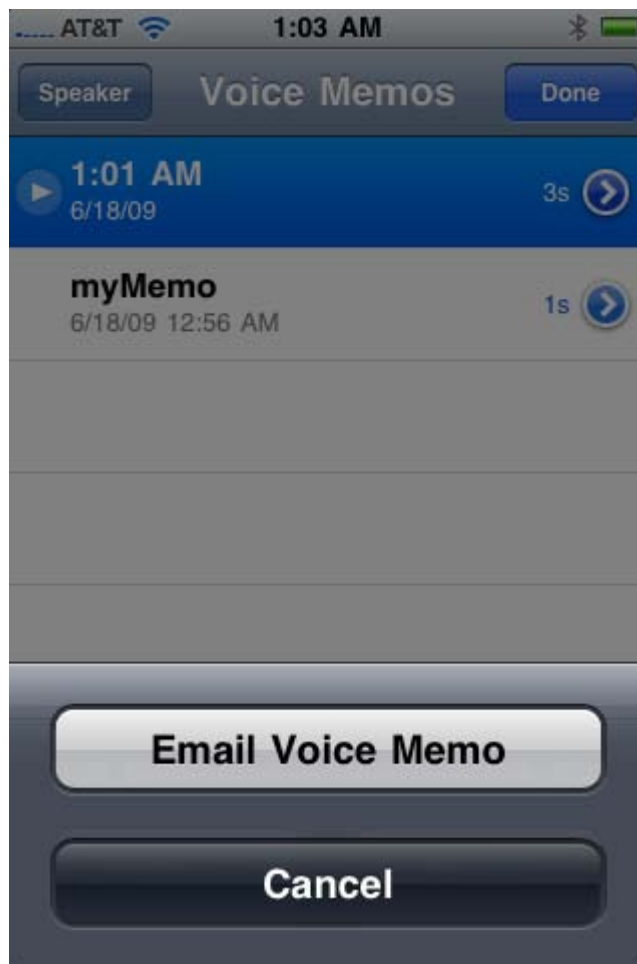
By touching (selecting the first memo) the screen will change to one that resembles the following image. The “play” icon will appear to the left of the recording time and the “Share” and “Delete” buttons will be highlighted.



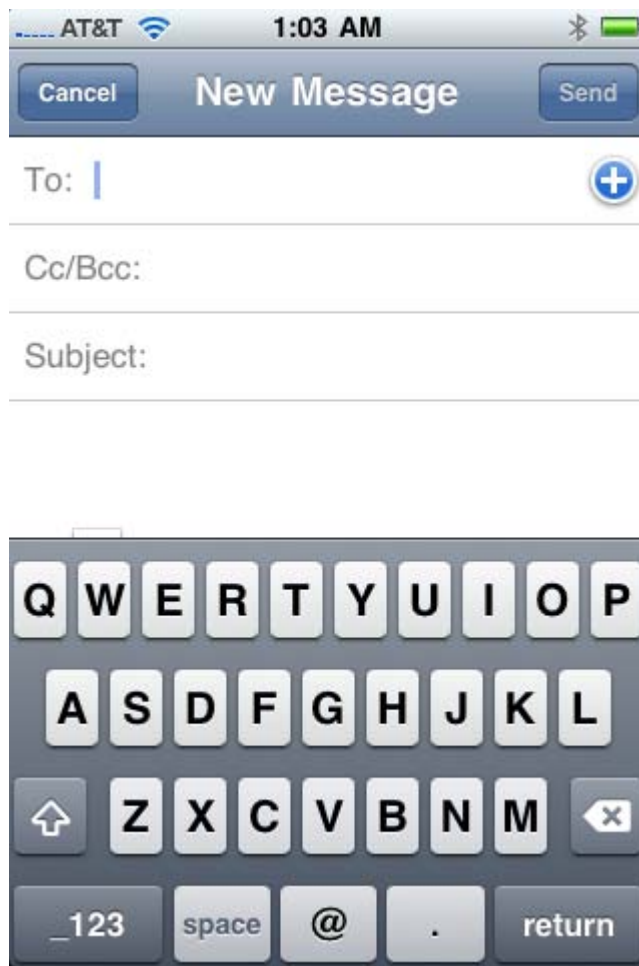
The following image better illustrates the functionality of this screen.



When the user touches the “Share” button, a screen similar to the following appears allowing the user to email the memo as an attachment.



The user is presented with the standard “New Message” email screen as shown below.



Scrolling down on the screen, the user can see the attachment which will be labeled "Memo.m4a".



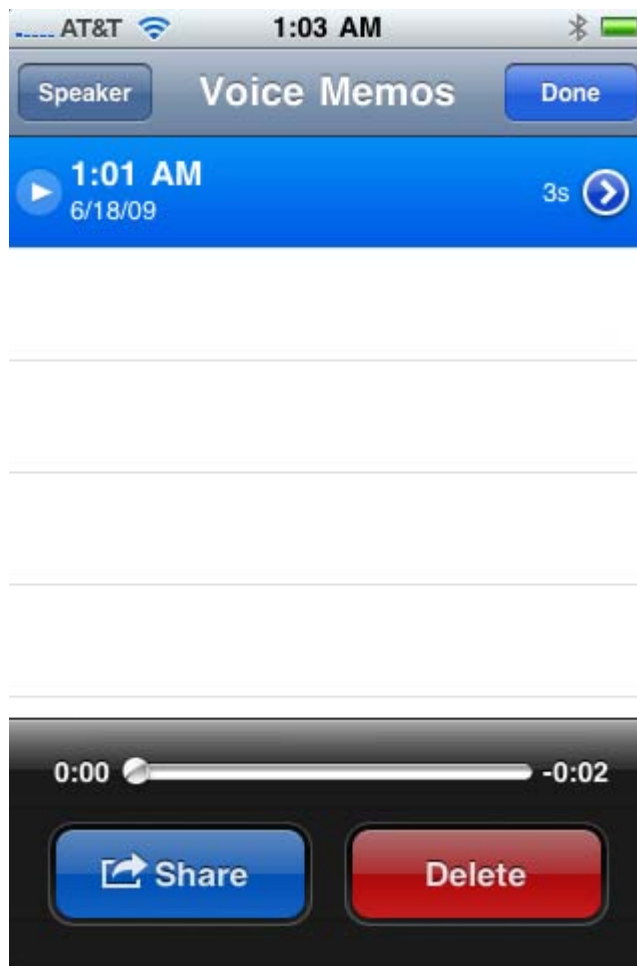
Subject:



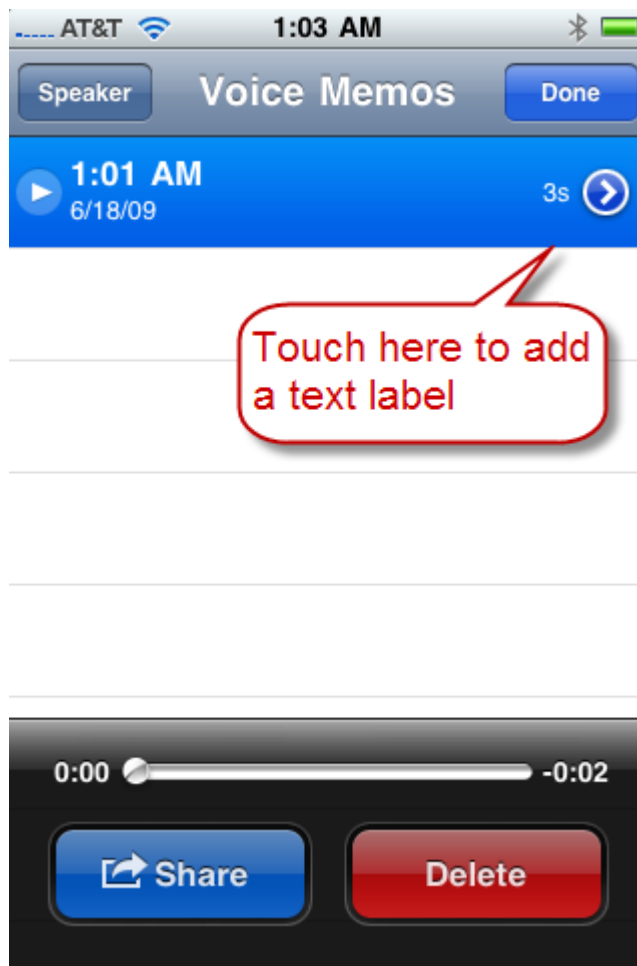
Memo.m4a



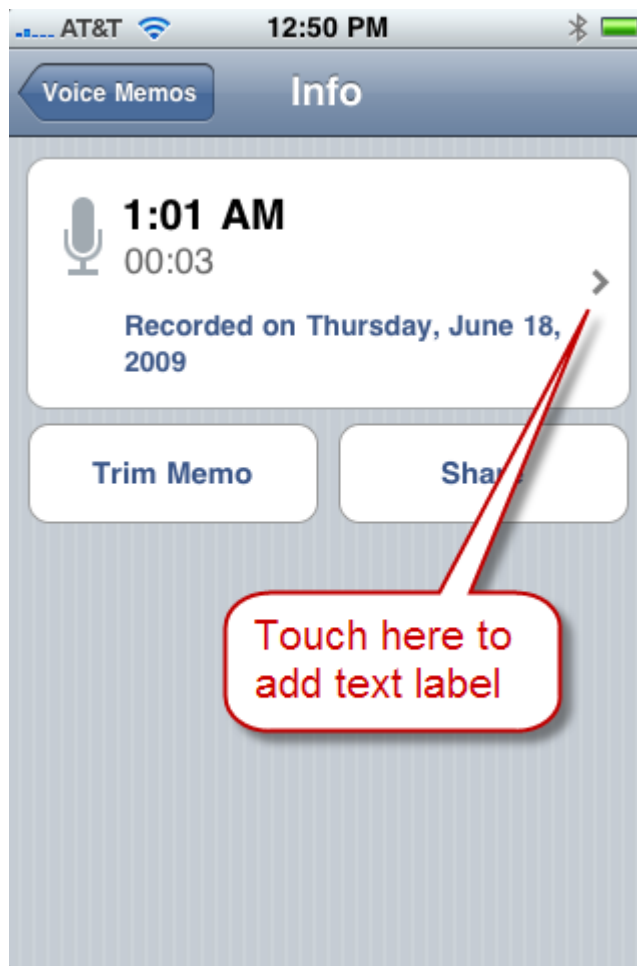
One of the most important features of such a program is adding a meaningful label to the message. Instead of having a non-descriptive label such as “1:01 AM” as is shown below, the user may define a text label for the memo.



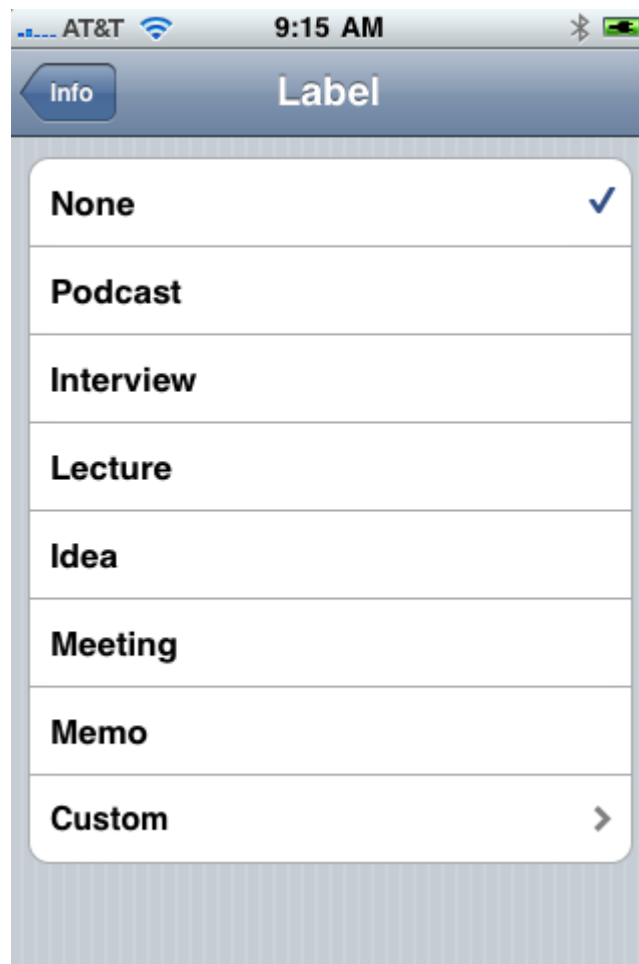
To add a label, the user must first start with an already recorded memo. It is not possible to define the name of the recording first. This will be addressed in a future blog describing how this product could be greatly enhanced. Touch the screen in the area shown below to add a label.



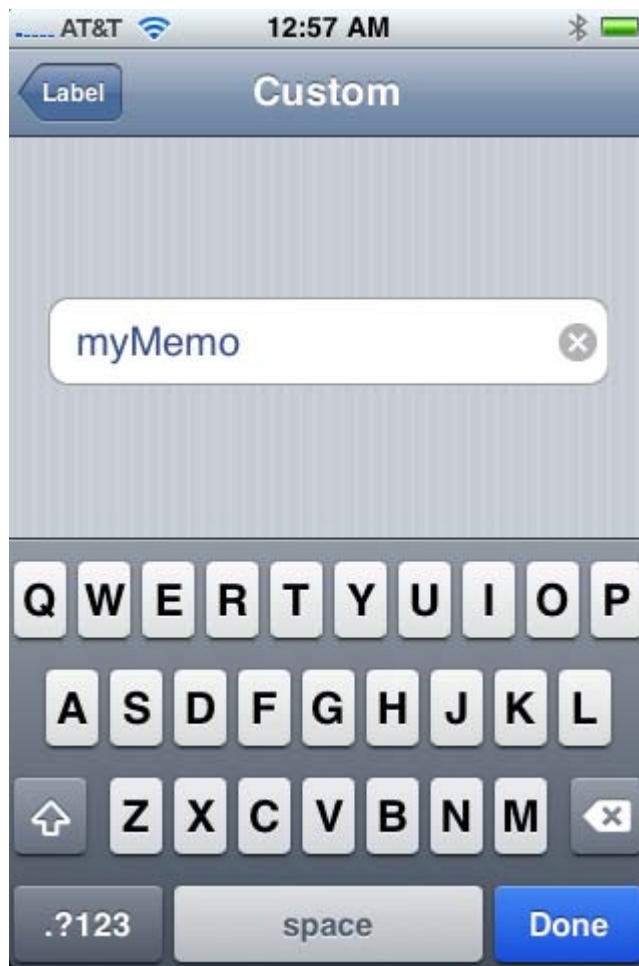
Well, it isn't that simple. Apple as chosen to bury the label feature down several layers so the user is first presented with a screen similar to the following showing recording details. The user must go down one yet one more layer to add a predefined text label and two more layers to add a custom text label. The following screen is actually a little sparse. If I was to guess, Apple likely has future features they intend to add to this page. In any case, they have made it clumsy to add custom text labels to the recorded memos.



Depressing the additional information arrow, as shown above, results in a screen similar to the following to be displayed.



The user is presented with a number of preset labels. However, these are not very descriptive. And the user has no way of changing these presets. If the user wants to create a label “TO DO” or “Groceries”, the user must use the “Custom” option which is at the bottom of the page. To use a preset label, select the label by touching it and then return by pressing the “info” button and then the “voice memos” button. This will take the user back to the list of recorded memos. To add what I consider the most frequently used feature, the user must go down one more layer in the human interface. Press the “Custom” button at the bottom of the screen and a screen similar to the following will appear.



In our example we enter “myMemo”. When “Done” is depressed, the interface takes the user two screens back to the “Info” page. The result is our memo is labeled with a custom label “myMemo”.



Unfortunately, if the user syncs their iPhone with iTunes, the memo times and dates are placed in the iTunes list but the custom text labels are lost. Syncing my iPhone to iTunes with several memos labeled, the resultant screen is displayed in iTunes. As is obvious, the text labels are lost.

	▶ ▲	Name	Time	Size
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/18/2009 12:56 AM	0:01	63.2 KB
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/18/2009 1:01 AM	0:03	127.4 KB
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 3:15 AM	0:13	539.9 KB
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 3:33 AM	0:05	204.3 KB
5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 3:34 AM	0:13	509.4 KB
6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 3:34 AM	0:04	174.9 KB
7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 9:02 AM	0:04	154.1 KB
8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6/19/2009 1:25 PM	0:05	184.5 KB

iTunes does not show the "label" name of a memo

I am not sure if this is a design deficiency or a bug. But it certainly is an unfriendly feature in its current state.

One other nice feature of the application is the ability to trim off excess audio from the front or rear of a recording. This is accomplished in the "Trim Voice Memo" feature which can be accessed from the "Info" page. The user drags a control from the front, end or both of a recording and then touches "Trim Voice Memo" to trim off excess audio. It would have been easier to have a feature to automatically or on demand trim silent audio from a recording.



There are in fact dozens of potential enhancements to this application. The ability to merge or append recordings, the ability to group recordings, the ability to label recordings in a much more friendly manner – including but not limited to the use of speech recognition are but just a few. I will be discussing some of these possible enhancements in future blogs regarding this application. A number of potential patentable features will be disclosed.

The application, in general, is pretty good. It is screaming for enhancements and someone at Apple needs to seriously take a look at the human factors of the application. They made a few blunders on this first release of the product. The application is certainly worth

learning and using. I am confident that Apple will enhance the application in the future. Be sure to check back for future blog entries as I discuss ways to enhance this product.

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Link to article: [“iPhone Voice Memos App Review”](#)