

Top 10 tips for naming your app

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Want to make a fortune from your app? Dan Rose explains how picking the right name can make all the difference.

What's in a name? Everything, if you ask some pretty well-known entertainers. The name Terry Bollea probably doesn't strike fear in to your heart but Hulk Hogan sure does. Let's face it, Eldrich Woods isn't as sporty as "Tiger" and Stevie Morris doesn't have the magic that 'Wonder' does. Those names initially made people take a second look and undoubtedly helped their celebrity in becoming household names. The world of [app design](#) is no different.

That first impression on someone is sometimes all you have. Does it convey how amazing your product is? Is it easy to pronounce? Is it even accurate to what your app does? All those questions, and many more, are considered in those split-second moments when someone's browsing the App Store or some other marketplace.

So why not push those compulsive buyers over the edge to dive in to buying your app by giving it a stellar name?

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Why naming your app is important

All iPhone Apps for "calculator"



Which 'Calculator' is the real one? 'CALCULATOR!!' seems rather rambunctious yet self-conscious

The number one reason why naming your app is important has nothing to do with your app. It has to do with everyone else's. With such a proliferation of apps, it's easy for yours to get lost in the mix. For instance, let's take an iPhone calculator app.

Other than the one Apple makes (aptly entitled "Calculator"), a "quick" search yields 6,012 results (the irony is that I needed to use a calculator app to compute that). There's everything from "Calculator+" to "iCalc4me". Seems like what you call it needs to stand out if it's not incredibly original from a function standpoint.

Recognition also plays a big role in whether or not your app is picked up by a would-be customer. If someone can't tell what it does from its name, you'll be depending a lot on its icon to convey its purpose. While [icon design](#) is another topic entirely, let's not make it do more than it should by pairing it with an obscure name. While "Coveo" sounds cool, does anyone know how to pronounce it correctly? Even so, can you tell what the app does just from its name? It's certainly possible to have your app reach legendary

status without an indicative name, but again, why take your chances in it becoming popular *in spite* of it?

Why naming your app can be difficult



No need to ride the coattails of others. It's your app. Pick your own name! Photo Credit: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/39995160@N03/3683400487/>

Having already touched on marketplace proliferation and recognisability, there are tons of hurdles you'll be up against when deciding on a name. Your initial reaction may be to use a trendy convention in order to make it seem like it fits in with other awesome apps, such as putting the prefix of "Insta" before it or using the moniker of "Angry" to describe your game that tosses animals at seemingly immovable objects (nobody steal that idea, by the way).

However, what you gain in recognition you would presumably lose in legitimacy. Who would want to buy the 75th app named "Insta"-something? Isn't the original one the only one worth buying? There's something to be said for breaking the trends and starting a new one, even when it comes to naming.

Don't duplicate

So there you are, with an original name, not too trendy, that's different than others in the App Store and easily recognisable. Might I suggest a quick Google search to see if there are any companies or entities using that name already? Just because it's available in the App Store doesn't guarantee it not being used elsewhere. Because really, you'll be using the name in more than just a marketplace. You certainly have to consider Twitter handles and domain names, right?

Even if all that goes well, the timing of naming the app is crucial. If you get your heart set on a name but the actual development of the app isn't very far along, remember that you can't squat on a name, according to Apple. You'll have 120 days total to submit your initial binary in order to hold that name. Otherwise, you're up against the chances of someone else taking it.

01. The two-part name



Quite the compound word: 'Tweet' is the function, and 'Bot' is the enhancer, since a tweeting robot is the coolest thing ever

The best app names sometimes use a simple convention of pairing the basic function of the app with a word that enhances it. Think of Evernote, Wunderlist and Tweetbot as prime examples.

02. Be authentic

Conforming to trends is a good way to be labelled "phony" and "knock-off". Make sure your name doesn't sound too conspicuously close to a popular app.

03. Be clear



Sure, the icon helps. PicDish understands clarity on all levels

Since clarity and recognisability are so important, make sure they take the front seat when deciding on a name. Can you tell what the app "PicDish" does? Of course. You take photos of dishes/meals. Done.

04. Pronounceability

It used to be cute to take all the vowels out of a name, but once that trend started to die, you can see that it usually left people frustrated about how to say something. While you have complete licence to make up new words (eg Peggle), use caution when making words that are hard to say.

05. Stick to sentence/camel-case



Why is 'SHOT NOTE' yelling at us? Looks like someone left their Caps Lock on

If you notice your collection of apps, most use sentence-case (eg Cut the Rope) or camel-case eg ScoreCenter). It may sound like a good idea to differentiate and make yours start with a lowercase letter or be all-caps, but really, it delegitimises your app quicker than anything else. People will buy what they trust, and breaking the upper/lower convention is a quick way to look sketchy.

06. Stick to under 11 characters

Short and concise is the way to go. Long names are arduous to read and won't look right in someone's collection of apps. Lauren Sutton explores this topic in her article "[11 Characters or Less](#)".

07. Use prefixes and suffixes



Since outside.com was not only taken but also vague, outsideapp.com is a beautiful solution

When it comes to domain names and Twitter handles, availability becomes even less than that in the App Store. Get creative. Use a suffix such as "app" to distinguish yourself or a prefix like "go" or "get" to invoke action.

08. Use name generators

If you're really stuck for what to call your app, you might get a nudge in the right direction by using a name generator such as nameboy.com or dotomator.com. The best way to use these is as kick-starters for new directions or ideas.

09. Do your homework

The worst thing that can happen is spending countless hours developing an app, submitting it to the App Store, getting it approved, but noticing that you're using a name that someone else has trademarked for their business.

Even if there are no legal ramifications, you'll want to set yourself apart from what could be a widely recognised name for an entirely other reason. Get on Google and research every last permutation of your name. It may be a bummer to have to go back to the drawing board, but it will save you some flack later on.

10. Take your time

While there isn't a magic formula for coming up with an app that will pocket you millions, the app you've got has the potential for success. If it's finished and in the App Store, it's just waiting for someone to find it, and giving it a great name is where to start.

In a sea of apps and icons, it may just be the name that sets it apart. Don't let it be an afterthought - you've put time in to developing this thing, so take time in finding the right name. What you name it should shout from the mountaintops what it is and what it does, since you will most likely only have that first impression.

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