How to name an app: The ultimate guide to naming your app

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At first, figuring out how to name an app doesn't seem complicated. Many business leaders expect to be shot by a bolt of inspiration from the minute they start coding. However, the reality is choosing the right application name is often more complex than you'd think.

For all the clever app names out there, there are dozens of titles failing to hit their mark. In a market where there are around 8.9 million mobile applications to compete with, your name can genuinely make or break your chances of success.

So how do you differentiate the perfect app name from the rest?

Today, we're going to look at some of the top tips you can use for naming software applications, and reaching your target audience.

How do I find a good name for my app? Core features

Naming an app is different to naming a business. When you choose a name for your company, you need to give your organization room to evolve. This means it's rarely a good idea to explain exactly what you do or what you sell in your title.

Alternatively, there's a good chance your app isn't going to transform into an entirely different tool in the years ahead.

This means you can be a lot more descriptive with your name. In fact, many of the best app names are indicative of what the solution can do.

Just look at some examples:

- **Facebook:** An online directory for finding people.
- **TikTok:** An app built on fast-paced video content.
- **Netflix:** An environment offering access to movies online.
- **Evernote:** An app where you can preserve your notes.
- **Snapchat:** A social platform sharing photos and messages.

Perhaps the easiest way to name an app is to sit down with your business plan, and ask yourself what your core "USP" (Unique Selling Point) is going to be. What are you going to give to your audience, and how can you convey this in a snappy and engaging way?

The idea is to give your customers an idea of what your app can offer, without being overly obvious. You still want your name to roll off the tongue easily, so a name like "Email Organizer" for an email saving too might be as effective as "Mailpro".

Keep in mind, you don't have to work too hard to make your name incredibly clever. When you try to be too clever, there's a risk your message will go over the heads of your target audience. Sometimes, it's best to keep things simple.

For instance, for an app offering access to short games "Mini Games" is likely to be a great choice.



How to come up with an app name: Play with words

If looking at the functionality of your app doesn't give you the perfect name, the next step is to start playing with words. Sometimes, a play on words can give you the perfect title.

As an example, "Free Map Israel" changed their name to "Waze" in 2008. The title plays on the word "Ways" – ideal for an app showing you the various ways to reach a location.

Try saying what your app does out loud, and ask yourself if anything unique comes to mind. For instance, "Gopher Leads", is a fun way to add a little playfulness to the term "Go for leads".

Here are some word game ideas to use when you're deciding how to name an app:

Write a word list

Start by writing a list of words associated with your app. These terms can include descriptive words, highlighting what your app does, as well as emotive words to show how you want to influence your audience.

The more terms you can include here, the better, as you'll have more options to play with.

Use synonyms

Select some of the most compelling terms from the list you've written – the ones you believe resonate best with your app, and your target audience. Then use a thesaurus to start discovering some potential synonyms.

There are a million extra terms out there you can discover just by looking at a thesaurus.

Play with portmanteaus

Many of the top apps in the world today are a combination of two terms. Instagram came from Instant Telegram, and Pinterest came from Pin and Interest. Combining multiple words into one will give you a unique name, and allow you to portray more useful information fast.

Just make sure the central meaning of each word still comes across when combined.

Use suffixes and prefixes

Suffixes and prefixes can be a great way to add a sense of meaning to a word and transform your potential app name. "Songify" simply adds the term "ify" to the word "Song" to convey you can use the app to convert anything into a song.

These options are perfect if you don't want to combine more than one word for your name, but you do want to go beyond using a basic word.

Use another language

This can be a slightly more complex process than it seems, but if you're planning on appealing to a global audience, exploring languages outside of English could be a good idea.

Latin terms are particularly compelling for a lot of apps, because this is a language many people recognize, but it's not actively in use.

Dare to misspell

In the average brand naming process, misspelling your title would be a big mistake. However, with an app name, you'll have a little more freedom to get creative. There are tons of examples of misspellings and oddly-placed letters in some of the world's most popular apps.

For instance, "Tumblr" is a miss-spelling of tumbler, and "Reddit" is a miss-spelled version of the term "read it".



How to name your app: Crucial steps

While there's no one-size-fits-all strategy for how to name an app, there are certain steps you should always keep in mind to protect yourself from common mistakes. For instance, you'll need to make sure your name is unique to you.

This means avoiding anything too similar to another brand's title, and checking the app store, and trademark offices for evidence your title is taken.

It's also worth making sure you take extra steps to ensure your audience can find your app easily, share it with their friends, and help you grow.

Make sure you take these steps…

1. Get to know your audience

Every aspect of your brand, from your logo, and colors, to your business name, should be chosen with a focus on the audience you're trying to reach. With this in mind, make sure you know your target audience before you do anything.

If you don't have a user persona yet, sit down and create a profile highlighting all of the features of the kind of customer you're trying to reach.

Who do you think is most likely to download your app?

If you're appealing to business users who need help organizing their calendar or meeting with team members, you're going to need a very different name to if you're reaching young children.

Think about the kind of language your customers are likely to use, and what sort of terms are most likely to resonate with them when making your word list.

2. Check the competition

Researching the competition when figuring out how to name an app can be one of the most powerful things you do. Competitor research has two purposes for a business leader. First, it’s a chance to see what kind of other names are already making an impact in your industry.

Looking at your competitors means you can see the names customers are already being drawn to, and potentially get some inspiration yourself. At the same time, you’ll also get an insight into the kind of names you want to separate yourself from, so you can be as unique as possible.

Pay close attention to if there are any recurring themes in the names chosen by your competition, and how long the typical app name is.

3. Choose a unique name

First, it’s important to ensure your name is unique. With millions of applications available in the digital world, many attractive app names are already taken. With this in mind, do your research and ensure nobody else is using the title you want.

It’s worth double-checking to ensure the name is available on all app markets, and avoiding any names too close in style to another title.

Even if your name is a little different to another app, ask yourself if your customer could easily lose track of your solution if they miss-spelled something.

Speaking of being unique, try to avoid immediately jumping on any app trends. Although it might be tempting to join the bandwagon of using the prefix “insta” or the suffix “r”, you may end up looking unoriginal.

4. Make it searchable

Next, ensure it's going to be as simple as possible for your customers to find your app. Around 63% of customers discover apps through the app store, where they may end up searching for terms or keywords to find something they want.

With that in mind, it's definitely worth thinking of names which help to describe your app.

You can also take steps to improve your app's presence in each app store by optimizing your listings and including keywords throughout the description. However, don't underestimate the value of choosing the right name to make your app more searchable.

Ask yourself how easy it is to spell the name of your application, and whether people can pronounce it if they're searching through the App Store with Siri, or another voice assistant.

A name people can easily pronounce also means they'll be able to share their experience of your app with others.

5. Align the name with an online presence

While you might do the majority of the advertising for your online app on the app markets where your solution is listed, there's a good chance you'll want to build a virtual presence too. This means creating a website or landing page corresponding with your app.

Using a domain name search is a good idea, to ensure your app name is available on the web. You'll also need to ensure you can claim social media profiles for the name you want too.

Having a strong presence online means you'll be able to connect with your target audience and reach out to potential customers to build relationships and communities.

6. Ensure your name fits your brand

When deciding how to name an app, try to avoid doing so in a vacuum. You'll need to think about the overall brand image you're trying to create, and the personality you hope to convey to your target audience.

Ask yourself what a logo might look like with your name on it. Usually, a smaller logo is best for an app, so it's best to avoid choosing a name that's too lengthy.

Don't get carried away searching for cool app names, and end up with a title without the impact you're looking for in your business. If you're not certain the name makes sense, run it past your team to get their thoughts.



Naming software applications: Quick tips

Figuring out how to name an app can be a complex process. A name that sounds great initially could end up having the wrong

impression if you're not careful. This is why it's so important to do extensive research, and test the impact of your name with multiple people.

If you're still having trouble when it comes to naming software applications, the following tips could help to push you in the right direction:

Make it an action word

Some of the best names for apps work because they can easily be converted into a verb. Think about how we say things like "Google it" or "Skype me".

An actionable term is much more shareable than a standard word, and it's great for getting your app's name into the everyday vocabulary of your target audience.

Pick the obvious name

Sometimes it's easy to over-think a name, to the point where you end up with something overly complex. When this happens, you can end up scaring your customer away, rather than drawing them in.

Stick with the "obvious" term if you can think of one that makes sense. For instance, "Tasker" might not seem like a particularly unique name, but it's excellent for describing what the app can do.

Connect emotionally

An emotional name can really help you to reach your audience and stick in their minds for as long as possible.

For example, "My Fitness Pal" sets itself apart as being more than just another health and fitness app – it's an application committed to actually supporting and helping its customers achieve their weight loss and fitness goals.

Adding the word "pal" or using another term connected with

friendship and community can help you to make a more significant impression on your audience.

Keep it short

App names are generally better-off short. This is one of the reasons why it’s common to see an app leader combining multiple words together to make a new term. Your customers need to be able to recognize your app on a small screen, so the shorter the name, the better.

You’ll also find it’s much easier to attract attention online with a shorter name. Think about how easy it’s going to be for your customer to remember and share your name.

Look global

Apps can be available in local areas around the world, but they’re more likely to appeal to a global audience. With this in mind, it’s worth looking at your name from a global perspective. Keep in mind certain terms and phrases can have a different impact depending on where you are in the world.

If you’re concerned your name might have another meaning elsewhere, then it may be a good idea to get some help from a translator.

Show your personality

As mentioned above, your name should be a critical part of your overall brand identity, providing customers with an instant insight into what your company stands for. With this in mind, try to showcase your personality with the name you choose.

It’s best to stay away from complicated words, for example, if you’re making an app intended for younger children, and want to convey a fun and friendly vibe.

Get plenty of support

App naming is not a simple process. You'll likely spend a lot of time brainstorming and agonizing over how certain terms sound. It's much easier to come up with a consistent stream of ideas if you have some support.

Get other members of your team involved, or even consider reaching out to a professional.

Finding the right names for apps

Figuring out how to name an app isn't as simple as it seems. There's no magic formula for coming up with an app you know is going to make you a fortune. However, it's crucial to take your time and come up with a term you know you can rally your community behind.

An app name is only one factor in your company's success when you're building your own application. Although it's one of the most important initial assets you'll invest in for your business.

Making your name an afterthought, or failing to give it the right amount of attention could mean you never get your business off the ground.

Once you've chosen a name which seems to make the most sense for your app, the most important thing you can do is test it. Bring the title to the rest of your team and ask for their insights.

Try to find out whether your app might come across in a different way to different members of your audience. Look at the name from different angles and perspectives.

If you already have an audience lined up for your potential app, you can even take the names you like to them and ask for their input. Sometimes, getting your community involved in the

naming and brand development process for your business will make them more invested in your company.

When all else fails, the best thing you can do is seek help. There are naming companies like Fabrik out there to help you if you're out of inspiration. Don't just pick a name at random.

Fabrik: A naming agency for our times.