

COLUMNS

## 7 SEO tips to help Google like your iOS and Android apps

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By **Brian Klais**

It is the season of love. And if you are among the 57 percent of brands or 67 percent of agencies investing in iOS and Android applications this year, you know that with hundreds of thousands of competitors, getting your app to stand out is a major marketing challenge.

A few weeks ago, Apple threatened to ban apps from the App Store that use "black hat" techniques for improving visibility. There is a better way to help consumers find and download your apps for free: Google.

That is right.

Thanks to recent enhancements on how Google indexes and displays mobile apps in organic search results, your apps can now show up in Google's desktop, tablet and mobile search results for consumers already searching for your brand. That is big news.

Some brands such as Target, QVC and Groupon are already taking advantage, mostly due to their immense app popularity.

Here are seven ways that any brand can help Google cultivate the same warm feelings of affection about their apps.

Choose app name carefully

What you name your app matters greatly, because it doubles as link anchor text in the App Store and Android Market.

Having both of these tremendously popular sites linking to your app page using your brand name as the anchor text puts their massive link equity to work for you. This is particularly true if you are among the top 100 apps in a given category such as Amazon, eBay, Groupon, Target and QVC.

Be sure to feature the brand name in the download page URL as well for additional signal boost.

Link prominently

Whether your app is popular enough to tap into Apple or Android's link equity or not, you can and should still tap your own.

Point your top pages home page and category pages at your app profile pages. Many big brands make the mistake of burying these links.

Remember: if you do not consider your apps important enough to link from prominent pages, Google will not either.

If you have got multiple apps, consider a landing page that promotes them all with screen shots, reviews or features.

Put the same principle applied: link to these pages from your most important pages to maximize the flow of

but the same principle applies: link to these promo pages from your most important pages to maximize the flow of link equity to the apps.

#### Use smart link text

Many companies are again making the classic "click here" SEO mistake when it comes to their apps by linking to them without any mention of the brand in the link.

Perhaps worse, is to link to your app through the "Available on Android/App Store" image graphics.

To really get Google's attention, send a strong signal that your App Store and Android app pages are all about your brand. For example, "Download the Nordstrom iPad app" or "Get the HSN App for Android."

#### Make it visible

You have a captive audience accessing your site with a mobile device. Make it easy for them to download your app.

When iPhone, iPad or Android browsers hit your desktop or mobile site, offer a link at the top of the page for them to download the appropriate app for their device. Do not stop there.

Make sure Google's new Smartphone Googlebot also sees the app links when it crawls your pages. Make sure it sees branded anchor text, not images.

#### Provide shortcuts

QR codes give desktop visitors easy app access and they are an emerging signal for mobile search rankings.

Provide a dedicated QR for each app. The links should be compressed before generating the QR, since native Apple and Android site URLs exceed 50 characters and you will want low-density QRs around 25x25 pixels. Make sure your QR platform lets you measure crawl requests from major bots.

#### Recruit the press

Any press releases you publish to promote availability of your app need to feature links with branded anchor text pointing at the app download page at Apple or Android.

Some news outlets will post your release "as is" with links intact, forming an instant backlink network, with great anchor text pointing at your new app.

Ideally, you want to use links in your press release that let you easily change the destination later via 301 redirect without changing the release itself for when Apple or Android move your app to a new URL.

#### Tell your friends

Brand pages on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus and Wikipedia all allow multiple URLs in your profile.

Your social profiles are also powerful search ranking opportunities in their own right. Why not give your apps an added boost? Aim the link equity of your social profiles at your app pages.

While social sites such as Facebook do not allow you to create anchor text with your link, you can still use branded redirect links to track clicks and crawls between third-party social sites and your app pages to evaluate what is working.

Getting your iOS and Android apps to win Google's heart is not rocket science. It is mostly deciding what you want, and aligning your digital assets to send the same signals. When you do, Google will love you for it. Most importantly, so will your mobile consumers.

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