



Where'd You Get That App?

How to find the sites and services that will change your business (and life).

By Guest Editor Chris Ronzio

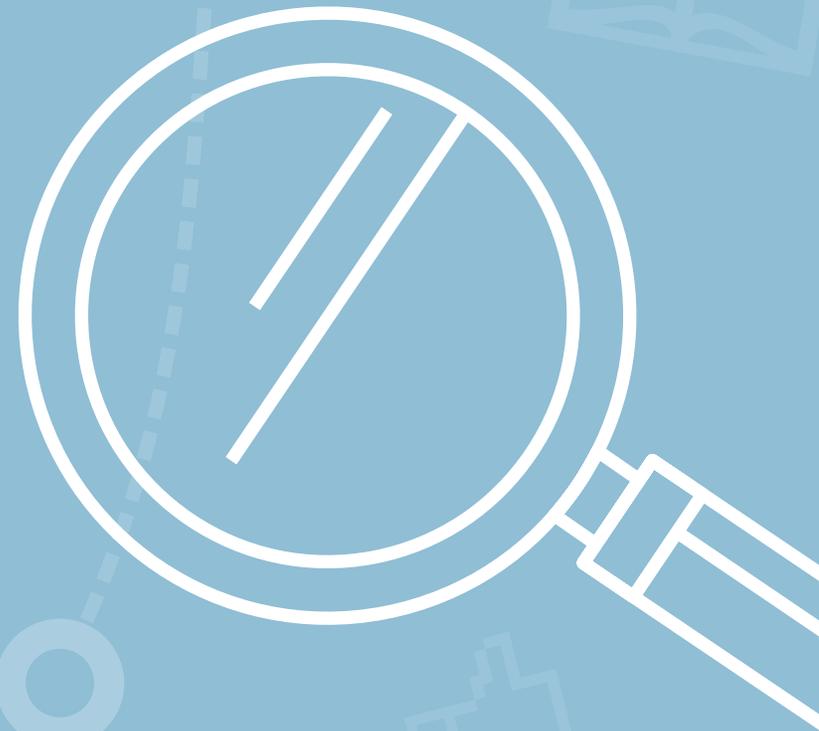
 AppointmentPlus™

www.AppointmentPlus.com

INTRODUCTION

It's hard to imagine a world without an app for everything. Literally, anything you need. Pizza at the touch of a button. A ride to Mexico ... this afternoon. Lights that fade on as you walk into the house. And business automation technology that would have taken 10 salaries to pull off just a few years ago.

So, where do you go when you need to find the perfect app? Where should you start? Here's a list of the top places to look, and some suggestions for how you can take your app-radar to the next level.



1 First, Fixate On the Problem

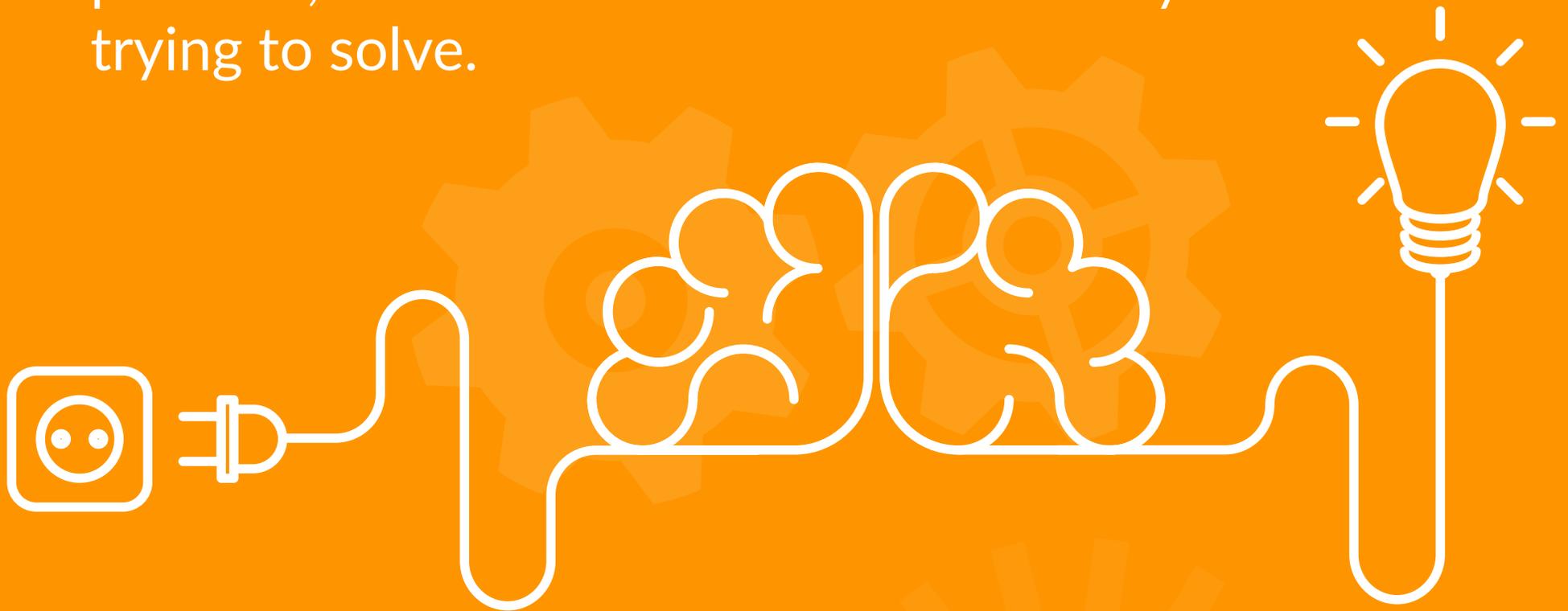
Remember the last time you were buying a car, and all of a sudden you saw 15 of them on your commute? Selective recognition. When your mind is fixed on something, you tend to notice a lot of it.

So, before you get deep into the app hunt for a specific problem, think hard about what it is that you're trying to solve. What is the problem? What do you wish was different? If you're losing time because of some inefficiency in your company, how much time? If you're losing money because of some service that just seems expensive, how much money? If you're thinking, "there has to be a better way," what is it? What's the perfect solution?

Start by thoroughly defining the issue, so that you'll be better equipped to evaluate the solutions. When I'm searching for apps, it usually starts with something like, "I wish there was a service where I could sell my unused gift cards at a discount, and other people could buy them." Only then do I stumble onto an app like [Raise](#).

TAKEAWAY 1

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2 Learn How to Google

It sounds obvious, but the easiest place to find an app is ... a search engine. But, it's amazing how few people know how to do a comprehensive Google search.

When you do a search, the results that appear are limited to matches for the exact terms that you used. So sometimes, you need to get creative. Once you've defined the problem, you might need to check out Thesaurus.com, and find alternative ways to express the problem. Instead of "calendar app," you might search "appointment app" and get an entirely new set of results that are more relevant to your search (like AppointmentPlus).

Google also has a built-in way to search smarter. For example, search "meetings OR appointments" to see results for both terms at once. Or, if you want to find a new search engine, try searching "related:google.com," and the results will be the most popular, most similar sites.

It's all about how you search.



TAKEAWAY 2

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3 Ask Your Network

After a basic search, I usually go straight to my network. I belong to Entrepreneur groups on Facebook, Small Business groups on LinkedIn, and some [Slack](#) channels with other people that are building great businesses and want to support each other. If you're plugged into some groups like that, you'd be amazed by the support you get when you just ask for it.

Don't have a good network built out yet? What about asking your competition? Seriously.

If you're a dry cleaner, and you're looking for a dry-cleaner specific vendor or service, why not ask other dry cleaners? When I'm working with a company, I quite often will make some anonymous calls to competitors to ask, "Hey, what do you guys use for scheduling? I have a business like yours and I know there has to be a better way than how I'm doing it."

If you're weary about calling up your closest competitors, try finding some distant ones in other markets. Or, you can use a site like [Clarity.fm](#) to find self-proclaimed experts in a variety of areas, book a call, and pay by-the-minute to get some incredible suggestions and advice.



TAKEAWAY 3

Don't forget to go to your networks for support on finding the best apps.



4 Hunt for Alternatives

If you're already using one app or tool to solve a need, but you're dissatisfied with how it's working, try [AlternativeTo](#). You can search for thousands of apps and softwares, and see a list of other close alternatives.

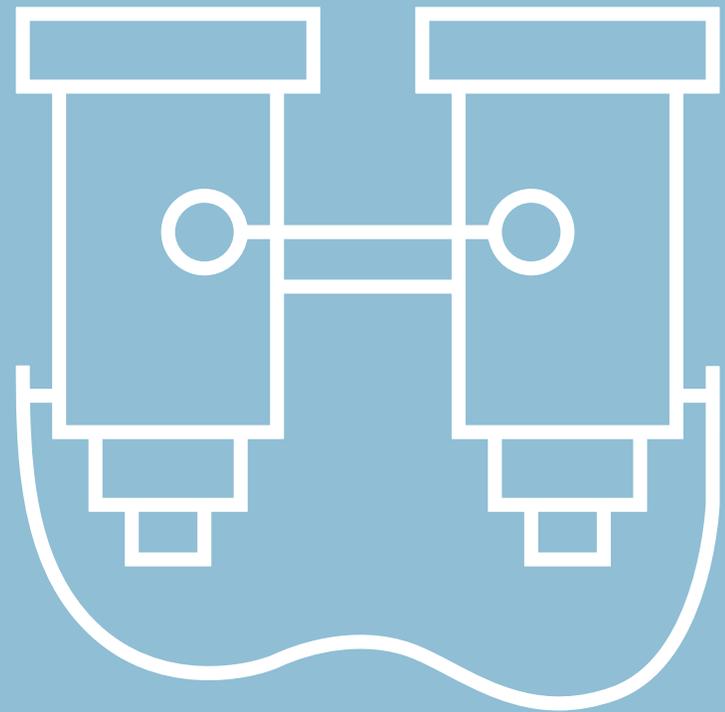
There are other sites like this — [G2Crowd](#) is another that I use — but the point is, there is no shortage of information out there. If you're experiencing a problem with an app and looking for something different, someone else probably is too.





TAKEAWAY 4

There's no shortage of information out there. If you're looking for a different app, someone else probably is too.



5 Watch for New Releases

Before software hits the mainstream, you can often find it posted on sites like [Product Hunt](#) or [Erlibird](#). On these sites, cutting-edge companies are posting incredibly innovative products for early adopters to use or beta test. So, I keep my ear to the ground, looking for amazing software when it's first introduced so that I can test it and follow it.

Some applications don't make it past the free testing stage, others get acquired, and others turn into mainstream solutions! I installed the [Product Hunt Chrome browser extension](#), so every new tab that I open shows me the top products of the day. It's good to be in the know.



TAKEAWAY 5

Keep your ear to the ground.
Look for amazing software
when it's first introduced.



6 Read. Yes, Read.

I still trust (some of) what I read. When you see a web publication or magazine write about or recommend an app, you have to assume that they did a little homework. Either that, or the app's founders are well-connected and know how to hack some good PR. Either way, I respect it.

I follow sites like [TechCrunch](#), [Engadget](#), and [LifeHacker](#), and to make it easier, I subscribe with [Feedly](#). Then, when I'm ready to catch up on the news, I pull out my iPad and skim through interesting articles.

I also still have a few magazine subscriptions, because I like carrying something around at the airport and not having to hunt for wi-fi. [Wired](#) and [Entrepreneur](#) magazines are my go-to's for finding great tech recommendations. Oh, and [Southwest Airlines'](#) magazine! It's really good.





TAKEAWAY 6

Read web publications
and print magazines for
recommended apps.



7 Dive into the Pandora's Box of Integrations

Today, the best apps are the most connected ones. There's no silver bullet that does every single thing needed to run your business. Instead, you'll end up with a small toolbox of useful software and applications that make your company and life work. So, they better play nicely together.

I discover a lot of new apps on sites like [Zapier](#) and [IFTTT](#), my two favorite automation tools. Both of them have hundreds or thousands of connected apps, so just dive into a category and you'll be amazed by what you find.

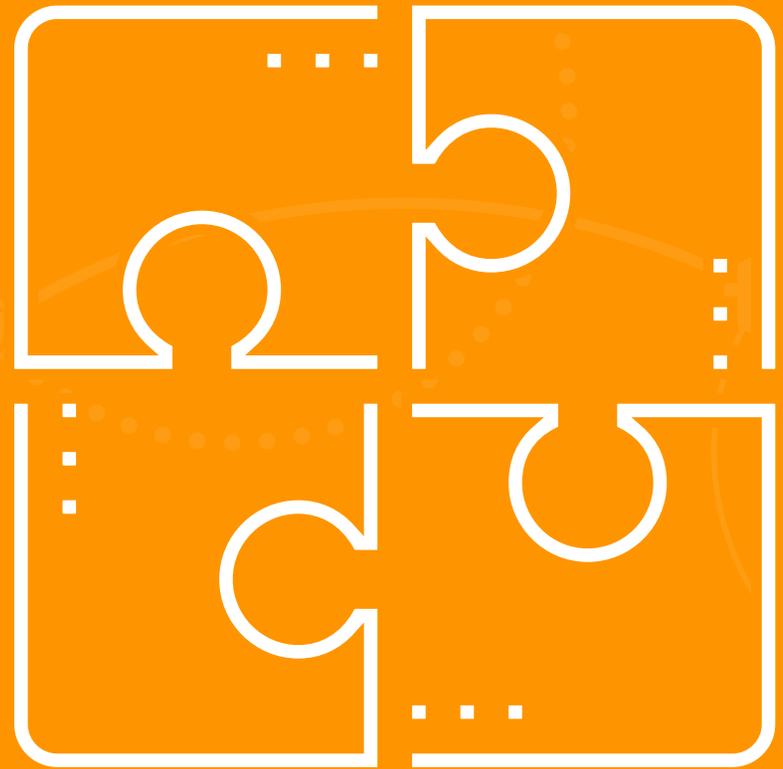
Affiliate marketplaces like [GrowSumo](#) or even individual applications like [Asana](#) do a great job of publicly listing their partner companies, so it's easy to stumble onto great solutions there, too.





TAKEAWAY 7

The best apps are those integrated with others.



8 Don't Skip the Ads

Ever since the early days of Tivo, I've been skipping ads. My wife's car can pause and fast-forward live radio, my internet browser can block all the ads on certain sites — as marketers try harder to reach us, we try harder to hide.

Well, ever since I've started looking for great tools, I stopped skipping the ads. I put myself in the shoes of the customer I'm working with, and try to hang out in places that advertisers in their market are advertising. If a service is great, I want to hear about it.

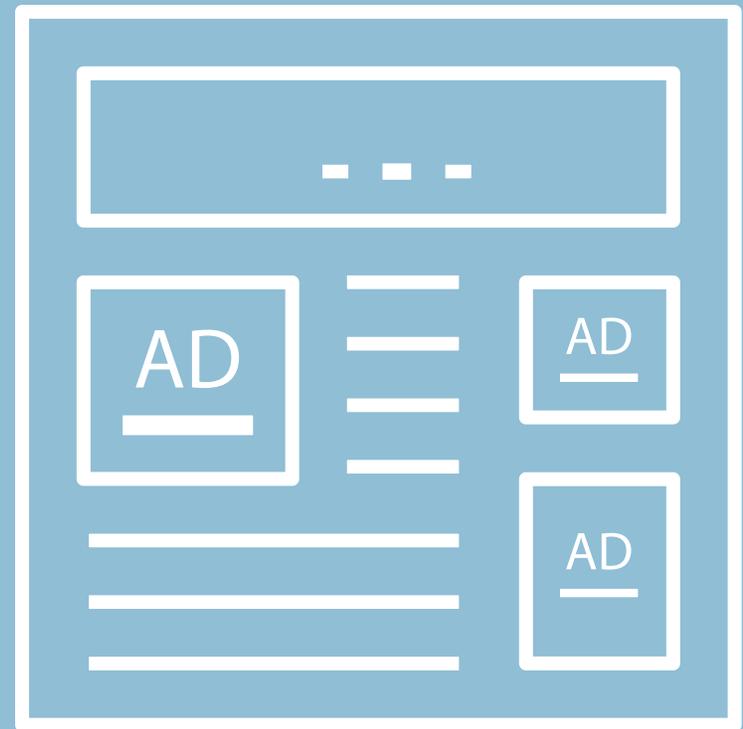
I find a lot of great apps on Facebook or Twitter, just because I embrace the ads instead of scrolling past them.





TAKEAWAY 8

Embrace advertisements as a way to learn about new tools.



9 Let Someone Else Do the Work

Ok, so if you've made it to the end of this article and decided that looking for apps is exhausting and you'll just stick to Post-it notes, then I've made it easy for you.

Since 2014, I've been curating an online directory of apps and services that have helped my customers the most - [check it out here](#). You'll also get a free download of my recent book, [100 Hacks to Improve Your Business](#), which features some great ways to automate and simplify your life.

The right suite of apps is out there! It just takes a little looking to find them.





About The Author

Chris Ronzio is the Founder and CEO of [Organize Chaos](#), and author of [100 Hacks to Improve Your Business](#).

He helps entrepreneurs develop clear action plans and get things done through operations consulting and technology.



About AppointmentPlus

AppointmentPlus scheduling software is a configurable, rules-based, pure SaaS product. Our software — combined with our deep product integration knowledge, customer experience focus, and amazing ability to both analyze synergies and synergize analogies — has made us the vendor of choice for many Fortune 500 companies. Since 2001, the AppointmentPlus Scheduling Cloud™ API has helped clients schedule more than 200 million appointments.

