

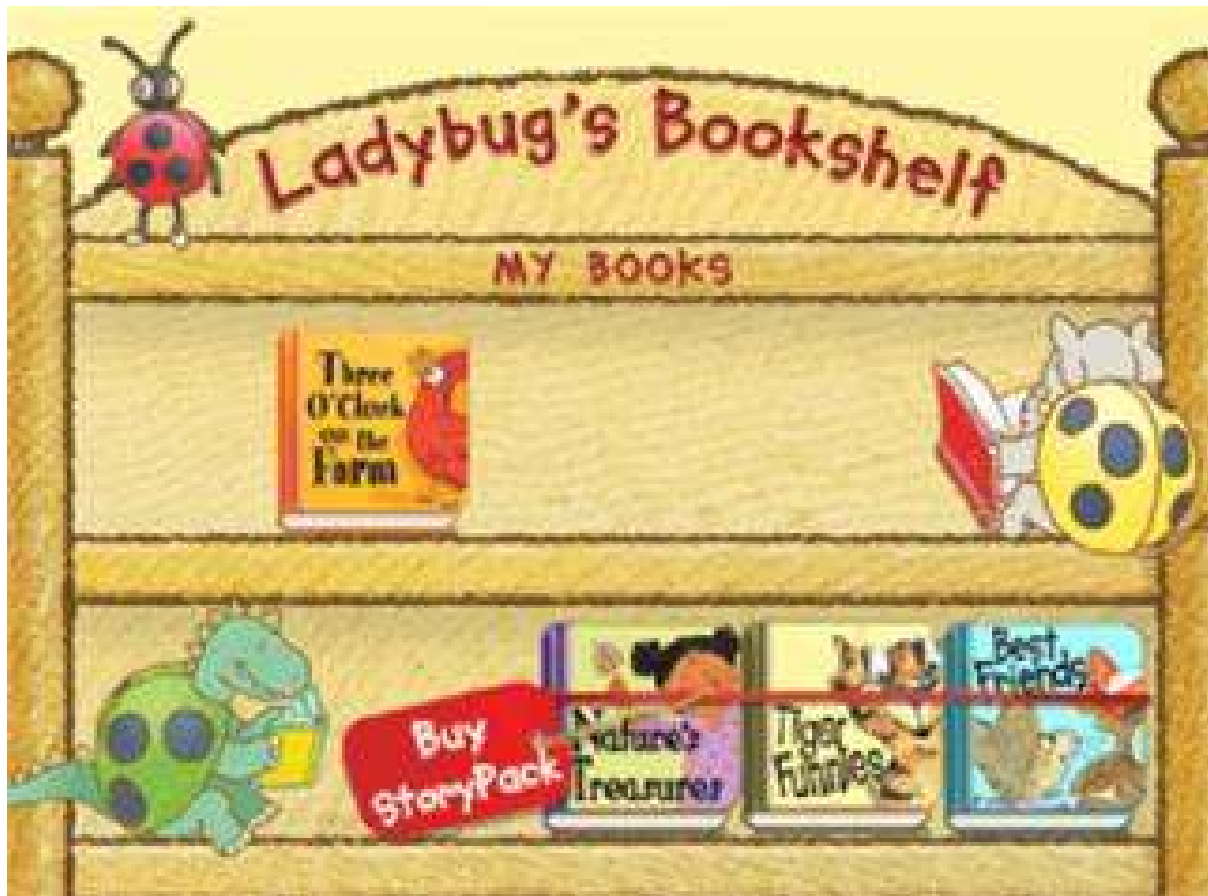
App Essentials: How a Traditional Publisher Built a No. 1 App

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Dawn Reiss

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Traditionally, book and magazine publishers were the last to convert to a new technology. Despite initial hesitations, Jason Patendaude, President and CEO of Chicago-based Carus Publishing, a children's magazine and book business, got creative and took a calculated risk. Carus, under Patendaude's direction, created a mobile app.

Patendaude thought it might be a great way to interactively connect with kids. It was a gamble. It left Patendaude unsure if creating an app was the right decision that would give children the same literary experience everyone expected.

To test the market, Patendaude launched an app created for the Cricket magazine "**Ladybug's Bookshelf**" that is geared towards children ages 3-6. For \$2.99, parents can download the **Ladybug's Bookshelf app** which includes a story pack and three game-like activities. With each touch of a hand, the story comes alive with bees buzzing and other interactive sounds that complement the text. The idea paid off and was featured by Apple the first day, helping Carus Publishing hit the No. 1 spot on the iTunes Education page. The app netted more than 100,000 downloads in the first month.

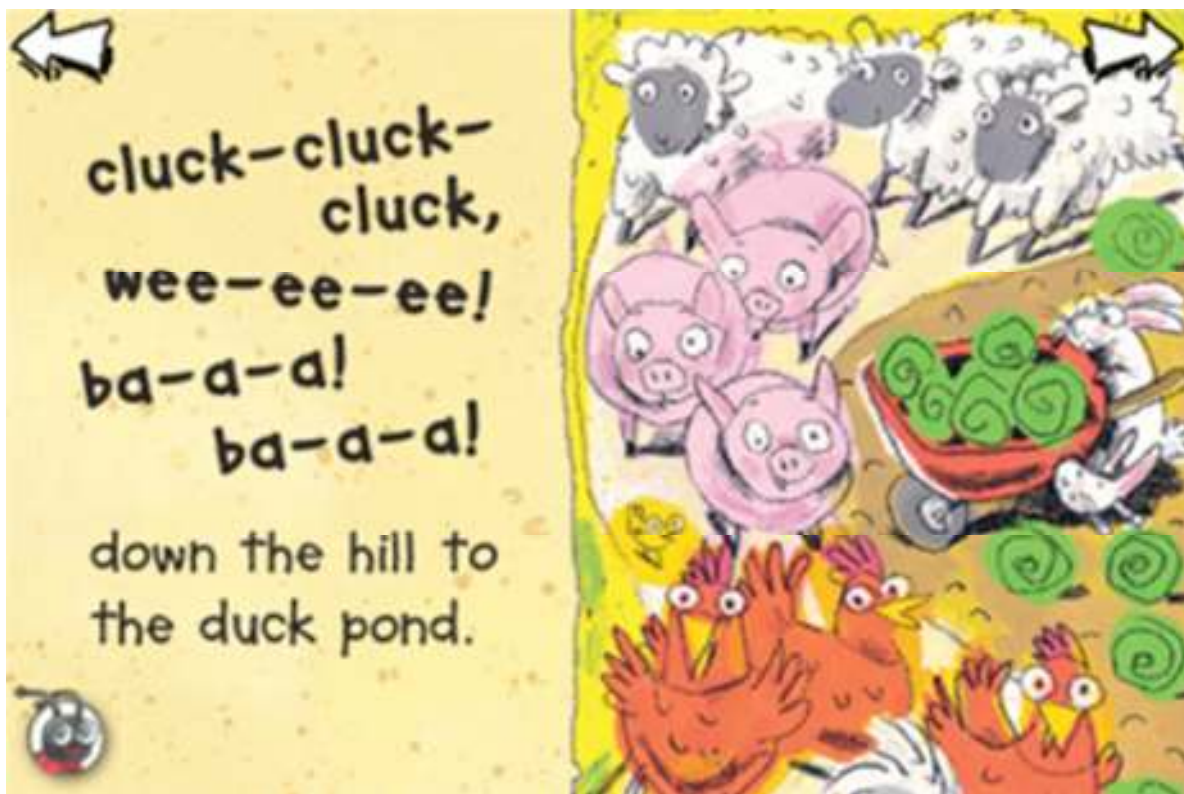


"I knew I had a winner when my daughter started laughing about a mouse trying to pick an elephant," said Patendaude. "We were afraid we couldn't be

true to our mission and what we found out was we were true to it and expanded and improved on it.”

Like anyone in the youth industry, Patendaude knew tapping into a child’s imagination was the strongest tool he had with kids. “But what we experienced really surprised and delighted us,” Patendaude said. “The kind of interactivity you get in the app, in a touch screen world, is something kids know intuitively. It creates a depth to the experience and they love it since they can control the content and the experience.”

From a financial standpoint, Patendaude said Carus still does business in the traditional media market, but is reaching thousands of new customers.



Tips on How to Design a Killer App, as told by Carus CEO Jason Patendaude.

For our app design, we picked a bunch of apps already made that we liked, and looked up the designers of those apps. At that point, we interviewed some of these developers and narrowed the field based on a sense of whether the designer seemed to be enthusiastic about our core business, and whether they were willing to enter into the kind of business partnership that we were interested in pursuing.

What to Ask

1. Ask to see representative work from an app designer

Does it look good? Is the user experience smooth? What are the rankings for the apps like?

2. Ask about what kind of honors these apps received.

Our app partner has been featured by Apple 20 times, and that Apple feature is very valuable for getting an app noticed.

3. Does the designer “get” your business?

Coding an app is not all that complicated, but to create a great app, you need someone who can connect the technological possibilities with the possibilities offered by your product or service.

Why Did Apple Feature Ladybug’s Bookshelf App First on the iTunes Education Page?

I wish I knew why iTunes picked our app. I’d make a fortune consulting! Sadly Apple is a bit mysterious about these things. I can say that in my general opinion, Apple looks for something that’s very high-quality, and something that uses the potential of the devices in a way that is well done and unique. It also probably doesn’t hurt if you have an established, high-quality brand.”

Find more ideas here: [App Essentials: Top Trend for 2011.](#)

[**Dawn Reiss**](#) is a Chicago-based journalist who has written about everything from eating crickets in Cambodia to the trial of former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich.