

What's in a name? 7 wacky tech monikers on the Web and where they came from

July 16 2009, By Wailin Wong

Last week, Google said it's working on a Web-based operating system called Chrome, sharing a name with its Web browser.

In technology lingo, chrome refers to a Web browser's user interface. A cluttered interface can slow the loading of a page and distract users. [Google](#) wants to "minimize chrome" to make Web-surfing more efficient and focused on the application, not the browser's own features. It's a nice back story, but the name doesn't resonate with everyone. Tech writer Kevin Maney said last year that Chrome "sounds like a men's fragrance from Calvin Klein."

In that spirit, we decided to look at other names from around the Web and how they came to be.

BING

What it is: Microsoft's search engine that aims to help users make faster, more informed decisions.

Origin: Chief Executive Steve Ballmer has said Microsoft wanted to name its new search engine something short, easy to pronounce and adaptable to a global setting. The tech giant also is hoping Bing will become a pop-culture verb in the same way Google has entered the vernacular.

Success-o-meter: Hard to say. Bing is just over a month old.

VIMEO

What it is: A [Web site](#) for uploading and sharing videos.

Origin: It's an anagram of "movie" and also a mash-up of "video" and "me."

Success-o-meter: Solid, at least by wordplay standards. Try coming up with a pronounceable anagram of "bing."

GOOP

What it is: Actress Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle Web site with tips on healthy eating, travel and culture. Its tagline is "nourish the inner aspect."

Origin: Paltrow told USA Today that it's a nickname reminiscent of her initials_G.P. Goop also "means nothing and could mean anything," she said.

Success-o-meter: It doesn't matter. Any Web site whose Caesar salad recipe calls for "dulse flakes" (an edible red algae) is not gunning for mass appeal.

FLICKR

What it is: A photo-sharing Web site owned by Yahoo!

Origin: Co-founder Stewart Butterfield explains on the site's forum that he and his wife/co-founder liked the word "flicker" for its connections with pleasant things like screens, images and candles. But flicker.com was taken, so they removed the "e."

Success-o-meter: Great, judging from the number of Web sites that have

also thrown out their "E"s. A sampling of real sites: Wishlistr, Talkr, Tumblr.

NING

What it is: An online platform where users can create their own social networks.

Origin: Co-founder Gina Bianchini explains on the company Web site that "ning" is short and sweet, and that it was possible to get the domain name. Ning is also Chinese for "peace."

Success-o-meter: Bonus points for resourcefulness. Microsoft's Ballmer has said it's difficult to find a pronounceable, four-letter word that's not already taken as a domain name.

ORKUT

What it is: An online social networking site owned by Google.

Origin: The Google engineer who created the site is named Orkut Buyukkokten.

Success-o-meter: Mixed. People initially thought the name was a reference to Finnish slang for orgasm, which is arguably a more interesting origin than just taking the founder's name.

YAHOO!

What it is: One of the biggest and best-known Internet service providers.

Origin: Co-founders David Filo and Jerry Yang liked the dictionary definition of yahoo: "rude, unsophisticated, uncouth," according to the

company Web site. Yahoo! is also an acronym for "Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle."

Success-o-meter: Huge (you've heard of it, right?); this site is the most well-established of all the ones listed here.

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