



What's In A Name
(A Name Branding Primer)

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Choosing A Name

Although the importance of naming your company can hardly be overstated, it is best to start with a sense of reality about the process. Intangible and serendipitous factors have been major contributors to the success of many great company names: Yahoo and Apple, for example.

Start with the knowledge that although your company's name is important, it is more likely in the long run that you will become more closely associated with your products or services than with your company name. Your company's name should be a reflection of how you wish it to be perceived: fun, creative, business-like, etc.

Naming Strategies

When naming, you can use many of the traditional strategies for product naming:

- **Start with Your Positioning**
Who are you customers? What are their demographics, key differentiators, etc?
- **Collect Ideas**
Gather your people together in a comfortable environment for one or more brainstorming sessions. Encourage creativity. Gather as many suggestions as possible, no matter how seemingly ridiculous or fanciful. Post the suggestions in a place where they can all be viewed at once.
- **Keep It Short**
Shorter names are easier to remember and will make it easier for you to find a good domain name.
- **How Does It Feel?**
Try words that conjure images or feelings that fit with your own image as identified by your positioning.
- **Stay Visual**
Think of words and phrases that will translate easily into images that could be used for logos and other graphics.

What to Avoid

- **Hard to Pronounce Names, Puns or Plays on Words**
What may seem cute or funny to you can turn out to be just plain frustrating for your customers.
- **Dated Names or Phrases**
Avoid phrases like "Ye Olde" and "-o-matic" unless it's key to your products or services.
- **Obvious Trademark or Copyright Infringements**
There are lots of resources for identifying possible infringements; be sure to check them before you get too far along in the process.
- **Personal Names**
While tempting, naming your company after yourself can create a boring and sometimes pretentious brand.

Resources

There are several on-line naming services and books that can help inspire your process.

Services: The Namestormers (www.namestormers.com)
Macroworks.com (www.macroworks.com)

Books: *Emotional Branding* - Daryl Travis and Richard Branson
Brand Yourself - David Andrusia and Rick Haskins