What’s in a name? Creating a brand name with meaning

Category: Naming
written by Stephen Peate | 11 October 2017
William Shakespeare was famous for telling the world that we shouldn’t judge a person by their title, but he never tried to sell vacations for a company named “Carnage Travel”.

The unfortunate truth is that if you’re running a business, your name does matter. It can instantly affect the way your customers perceive you, because every word, every sound, and every letter has an impact on the way we think and feel.

Human beings form connections with words based on experience, background knowledge, and context. That’s why you feel differently when you see the word “kitten” or “cockroach”.

While countless components go into designing a successful brand, from an exceptional product, to a polished logo design, and even a strong personality, your name is one of the first points of contact your customers will use to form an opinion about your company.

Creating a brand name with meaning can make all the difference between a brand that instantly gains traction, or falls completely flat.

Just like laying the cornerstone of a building, discovering how to create a brand name can help you to set the foundation for your company.

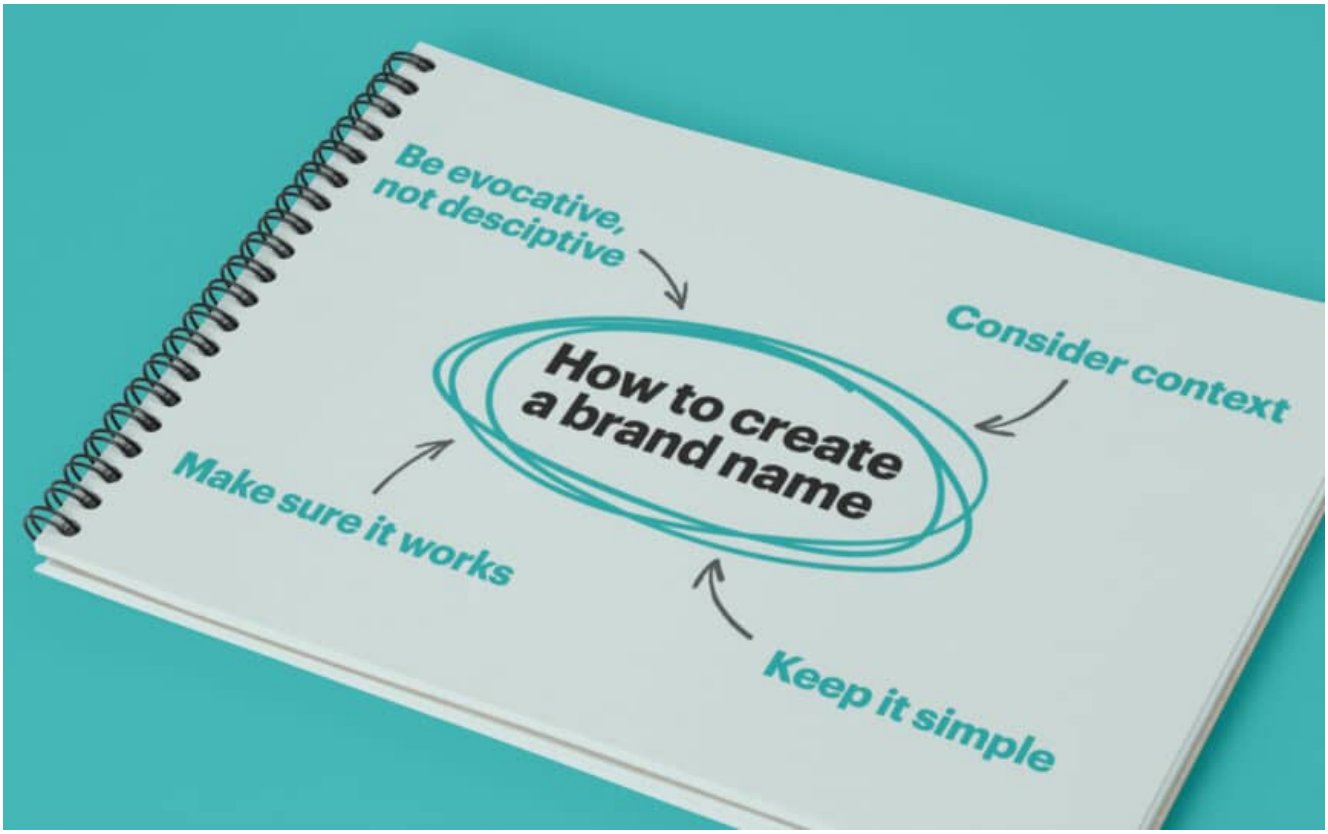
Once your name is in place, you can begin to align the entire structure of your organisation according to that first, all-important decision. Unfortunately, if your brand name just isn’t good enough, the whole brand suffers.

Since a name will last longer than almost any other investment

you make into your business, it’s worth acknowledging right here and now, that creating a brand name with power is crucial. Fortunately, we’re here to help you do just that.

Here, we’re going to give you the resources you need to create a brand name that not only resonates with your customers, but delivers a memorable, meaningful experience that sticks with your company throughout time.

What’s in a name?



How to create a brand name that matters

Whether you’re a new startup company choosing your very first name, or you’re renaming a brand that doesn’t seem to have the right buzz, creating a brand name requires careful attention to detail, and plenty of planning.

Choose the wrong word, or even the wrong letter in your name, and you could irreparably damage your reputation.

If you want to know how to create a brand name that sticks in the minds of your customers, and goes some way towards establishing brand recognition and awareness, then you'll need to keep the following factors in mind. Your name should be:

Evocative

A lot of companies use "descriptive" names to help their customers understand what their business is all about. However, simply describing your product or service could make your name too generic.

A better option is to choose words that evoke the positive associations you want customers to have with your brand. For instance, "Amazon" makes you think of a huge, exotic place, and that's exactly what the company has become.



Meaningful

What does your company stand for? Today's customers want to interact with companies that have real ethical values and

community spirit. Try to decide what you want customers to think about when they're interacting with your company.

Creating a brand name with meaning often involves creating images in the minds of your customers, like "Range Rover" for instance.



Timeless

A name shouldn't be something that restricts your brand. If you're planning on finding opportunities for growth in the future, by expanding into new markets, or exploring new customer bases, then your name needs to leave you plenty of room to do just that.

The best way to make sure that your name is "timeless" is to ensure that you create something that resonates with the emotions of your target audience, rather than limiting yourself to a basic descriptive term.

For instance, Lush cosmetics didn't just call themselves "Bath Bombs UK". Lush chose an evocative name with room for growth.



Creating a brand name: What to consider before you begin

It might surprise you to learn that a lot of companies and entrepreneurs, consider learning how to create a brand name as something of an afterthought.

That's part of the reason why there are so many businesses out there that have ineffective and inappropriate names, chosen on a whim, or as part of a last-minute meeting.

While it's true that naming your business can be a challenging process, it's also an important element in brand awareness, and something that shouldn't be overlooked.

You need the right plan, guidance, and resources to make sure that you're choosing a name that will last, outline your company's distinguishing characteristics, and earn the respect of your audience.

So, how can you get started?

How to create a brand name: Start with your brand promise

Creating a brand name that's truly meaningful and memorable, means starting with a solid understanding of what sets your company apart.

Your brand promise isn't what you do, or what kind of product you create– but the deeper emotional connection you make with your audience based on how you make them feel with every transaction or experience.

Your brand promise will help you to determine how you want to be perceived by your audience. For instance, do you want to be seen as:

- Ethical and community-based.
- Professional and innovative.
- Quirky and modern.

How to create a brand name: Be evocative, not descriptive

We discussed the benefits of choosing an "evocative" name above. While descriptive names can help you to gain instant understanding among your audience, these often aren't the names that are going to change the world.

Look at Apple for instance, in a world owned by companies like "IBM" and "Microsoft", the organic "Apple" name brings a fresh approach to the world of technology.

The name evokes ideas of freshness and human development taken not just from its natural background, but also its connection with the bible and Isaac Newton's discovery of gravity.

Creating a brand name means choosing words that don't just

announce what your company does, but help to create an idea of your business for your customer.

How to create a brand name: Consider context

Context is crucial when you want to know how to create a brand name that's meaningful. While your business is still in development, you need to think about words not just as a combination of letters, but as an element of your overall business context.

Think about how your name would look in combination with a logo or website – working with a branding company can help with this. Or try using it in a conversation.

Creating a brand name that you can put into action helps to make your future easier to envision. The name you choose should make sense not just on its own, but as a clear representation of everything your company entails.

How to create a brand name: Keep it simple

Creating a brand name that's meaningful is great. Creating a brand name that's both meaningful and memorable is even better.

Consumers who can't understand, pronounce, or spell your name are unlikely to share your company with their friends and relatives.

In a world of social media marketing and viral content, it's crucial to make your name as shareable as possible. After all, if consumers can't spell your name, then they can't post it on their social network, or even find you online when they're typing queries into Google.

Keep in mind that short, simple names almost always work best, although there are exceptions.

How to create a brand name: Make sure it works

Your company is one of the most important things you'll ever create – so you need to protect it.

Creating a brand name precludes choosing a fantastic domain name, so you'll need to make sure that you perform an internet search and track down any instances of people in your market that might be using a similar term or phrase for their own name.

If your name is already being used, or it's too similar to someone else in your industry – then don't use it. The last thing you want is to lose your traffic to your competitor because you chose the wrong name.

Make sure that you test your name out on a few people from your target audience group before you put it into action. A little testing will help you to avoid some pretty embarrassing mistakes.

Creating a brand name with "feeling"

Coming up with a great name is difficult, but it's always easier to leave a lasting impact on your customers if you can connect with them on an emotional level.

Creating a brand name that's appealing, contextual, and remarkable is a fantastic way to ensure that you start on the right track for success when cultivating brand engagement. After all, people are more likely to remember the way a name makes them feel.

That means that names that sound good are more likely to be encoded into long-term memory.

While there are numerous ways that you can adjust your brand name strategy to implement more “emotion” into the mix, such as connecting your name to your brand story, or giving it its own distinct background, the quickest method involves using poetic techniques. After all, the poets of the world have been making words sound delightful and memorable for centuries.

Here are just a few poetic devices you can use when creating a brand name with meaning:

Creating a brand name with feeling: Alliteration

Alliteration is the process of repeating the same sound at the beginning of two or more words during a phrase or word. You know countless brands who have done this with their name, such as Coca-Cola, Dunkin’ Donuts, Krispy Kreme, Range Rover, and more.

Creating a brand name with feeling: Assonance

Assonance is similar to alliteration in that it uses combinations of similar-sounding letters. However, with assonance, the sounds can usually be found in the middle of the word. Examples of creating a brand name with assonance appear in “YouTube”, and “Fedex”.

Creating a brand name with feeling: Rhyme

Rhymes can be annoying, but they’re a powerful strategy to use when creating a brand name. They make your company more recognisable because rhymes naturally stay in our minds for longer.

They’re simple, catchy, and roll off the tongue, just like a musical note. Plus, they’re fun to say. Think of brands like 7 Eleven, or Stubhub, for instance.

Creating a brand name with feeling: Imagery

Imagery is by far one of the most powerful poetic devices to use when creating a brand name with meaning. Research shows that people experience sound in the same way we experience taste or colour.

That’s why some of the best phrases in all of literature earned their popularity because they evoke images in the reader’s mind. Think about how you can use imagery in your name to convey an idea of your brand. For instance, “Typhoon Lagoon”, the Disney park, instantly creates the perception of a wild waterpark.

Creating a brand name with feeling: Metaphor

Metaphor is another powerful poetic device when used correctly.

The key is to make sure that you don’t choose a metaphor that goes over your customer’s head. For instance, “Amazon” is a metaphoric name meant to evoke the idea of a large, exotic place. At the same time, it’s easy to spell, say, and remember – which makes it a fantastic name.



Creating a brand name with feeling: Invented words

Shakespeare, who we mentioned at the beginning of this article, was famous for inventing numerous words and phrases. In fact, we use a lot of those words today.

Inventing a word can help when it comes to creating a brand name that's memorable, because people are more likely to recall something that's catchy, new, and novel.

Just remember not to choose something so abstract that you lose the interest of your target market.

How to create a brand name: What not to do

Discovering how to create a brand name should be a process that involves careful consideration of the personality you want to communicate to your customers, and the audience you

want to appeal to.

Starting off with a great plan, and using poetic devices can help you to make your name more meaningful, and easier to remember, but it's important to be wary of the mistakes you need to avoid on the path to success too.

Haphazard or quick decision making can be incredibly dangerous when it comes to creating a brand name, so before you get your team together to start brain-storming, make sure you avoid these common mishaps:

Mistake 1: Rushing the process

Naming your company is far more complicated than most people realise.

It's a process that requires equal parts creativity and strategy. After all, you need to choose something that's not in use, memorable, and powerful enough to grow with you as a company. In other words – the perfect name is going to take some time to find.

Begin the naming process by designing a naming brief that outlines some of the key terms or personality traits that your company wants to be associated with.

When you start brainstorming, play with a range of different naming strategies, trying out descriptive, abbreviated, and even invented terms before you narrow your search down to a few final candidates.

Mistake 2: Being too clever

While a memorable name can be witty, clever and meaningful, it doesn't mean that you should spend too much time trying to blow your customers away with how imaginative you are.

A name that's too obscure or intelligent will make you look

like you’re trying too hard, and that’s not how you want to start building your brand.



Choose something that’s smart, but not too complex. Test your name for clarity by asking for feedback from your target audience, and test out how it feels to say the name in everyday conversation.

If your customers won’t instantly understand what you’re trying to convey with your name, then it might be time to go back to the drawing board and begin looking for something new.

Mistake 3: Forgetting to do your research

Remember, creating a brand name that stands the test of time is a process that requires a significant amount of homework.

You need to get online and check that no-one else in your industry has a similar name, and you also need to make sure that the words and phrases you’re choosing mean the same in all nationalities – not just your own.

As you’re doing your research, try looking for people in your

audience that you can test your ideas out on. You could even consider reaching out to people in your social media following if you're choosing a name for "rebranding" purposes, and ask them to help you choose your new title by suggesting their favourite ideas.

Mistake 4: Choosing a name that's too long

Although it might be tempting to go for a long and complex name that completely describes whatever your business does, the truth is that all brand names should be limited to two words maximum.

After all, long brand names aren't just difficult to say and spell, they're also hard to fit into a domain name too.

A longer brand name will even make it harder for you to rank online, because customers feel uncomfortable sharing links that are too long. On top of that, scientific research shows that the average person is only capable of remembering up to seven numbers at a time.

While we're better at remembering letters, short is still the way to go.

Mistake 5: Letting your emotions decide

Finally, we all have names or words that we get attached to for whatever reason. The chances are that during your brainstorming sessions, you'll choose a "favourite" name that you desperately want to work.

Although it's a good idea to trust your gut in a lot of branding strategies, creating a name is something that needs to be done with equal parts strategy, and creativity.

Remember that your brand name isn't there to keep you happy. It exists to communicate your meaning and value to your

customers. Choose the title that's going to resonate with the people you're selling to – not just the one that you like the most.

Why creating a brand name with meaning matters

If brand building relies on so much more than just a great company title, then why do you need to figure out how to create a brand name in the first place?

Surely, if your customers see the same name enough times, then that'll be enough to cement your identity within their minds and make your company more memorable?

While it's true that a bad brand name won't necessarily destroy your company, it does make it infinitely harder for you to achieve any kind of lasting success in your industry. After all, a good brand name is your first chance to explain to your customers what you're all about.

It's your opportunity to make an impression before clients have had a chance to experience your personality, or voice through social media and content marketing.

Creating a brand name is the first step in building your brand identity. It helps customers to decide exactly what they should think, and feel when they see your company, or hear about it from a friend.

When the brand "Godiva", took their name from a historical figure, known for her freedom, luxury, and independence. All those positive connotations naturally lend themselves to the brand, because of their name.



Just remember that “meaning” doesn’t relate just to your own personal experiences with a word or phrase.

Companies often benefit from working with a brand naming agency when it comes to establishing their identity, simply because it’s difficult to look at any word from an objective perspective.

We naturally assume that if we hate the word “moist” everyone else will too – but that’s not necessarily the case.

A brand naming agency will help you to consider meaning for your company from a range of different perspectives.

They’ll help you to think about things like cross-cultural meaning, and global meaning for your brand.

A brand naming agency can even help you to avoid dangerous meaning mishaps, such as when Chevy Nova introduced their product to a Spanish-speaking community where the words translated to “No Go”.

Your brand name is one of the elements of your company that

you should avoid changing for as long as possible. That means that creating a brand name requires careful consideration, and powerful strategies for future-proofing.

With the right help, you can learn how to create a brand name that defines, supports, and enhances your company. Don’t let your brand name hold you back.

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