Should you misspell a company name? Intentionally misspelled brand names

Category: Naming
written by Steve Harvey | 24 October 2022
Should you misspell a company name? Most brand naming experts would usually say “no”. After all, the purpose of a good brand name is to make your business more visible, and easier to remember. Intentionally misspelled brand names can be more complex than well-known words.

However, in today’s world, where countless new companies are emerging all the time, misspelled company names aren’t as uncommon as you’d think. You’re probably aware of a few already, such as Tumblr, Xero, or Reddit.

While a misspelled brand name might make it harder for customers to “search” for your organization online, it doesn’t necessarily doom your brand to failure. In fact, with the right research and in the correct circumstances, a misspelled brand name might actually help you to stand out.

Today, we’re answering the question “why do brands misspell words in their name?” and looking at the potential benefits of obvious misspellings.

Why do brands misspell words?

If you’re asking, “should you misspell a company name?” you’ve probably already noticed the success of some of the most common companies with obviously altered spellings.

Misspelled business names have actually become more common in recent years, as a result of the cluttered landscape.

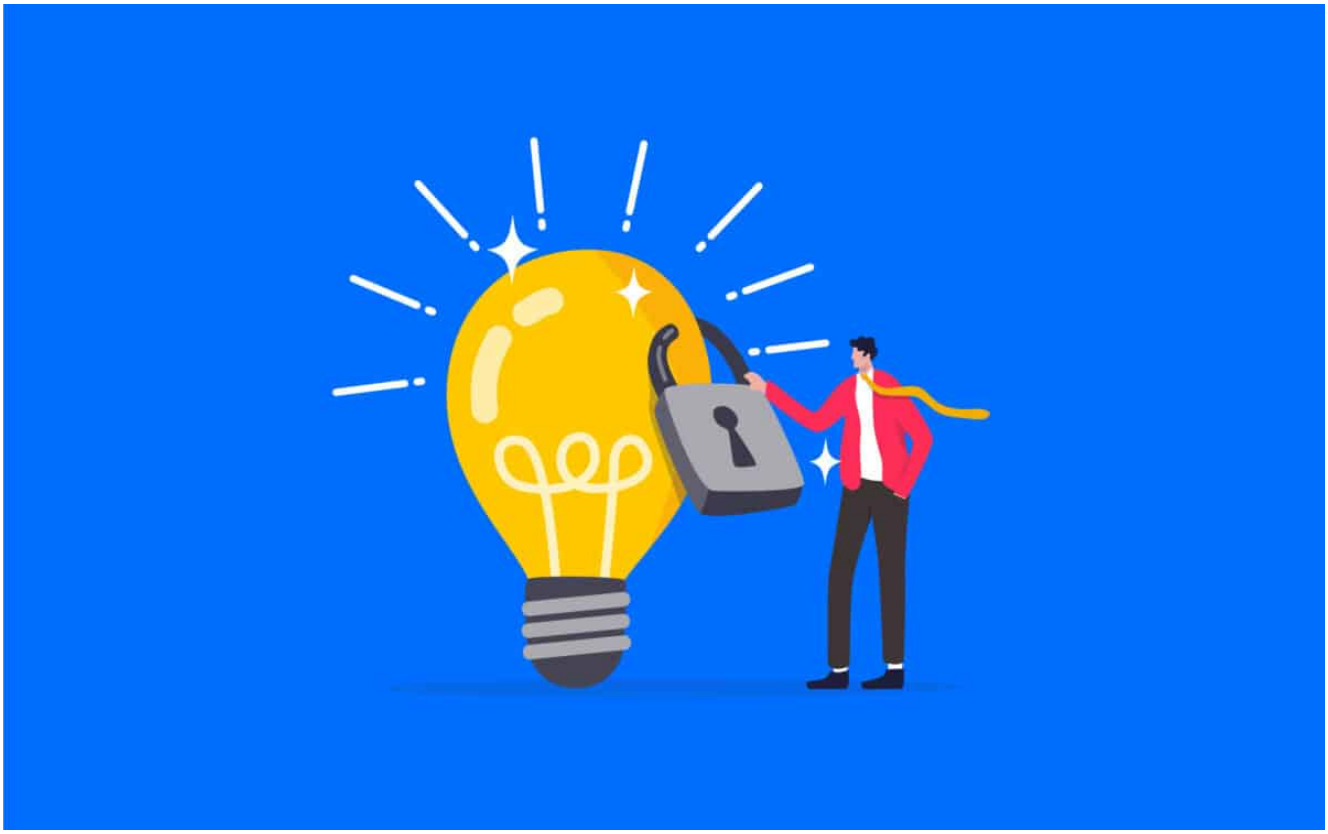
There are literally millions of companies around the world today, spread across every industry. In this world, it's extremely difficult to choose a name based on a well-known, correctly-spelled word which hasn't already been adopted by another brand.

While you could solve this problem by choosing an invented or abstract naming process, many companies want to elicit the evocative nature of the words their customers are already familiar with.

A misspelled name might not look the same as its origin word, but it often sounds identical, which means it can evoke the same feelings and thoughts. A misspelled name can ensure businesses can continue to use the words they prefer, without the threat of copyright issues.

Sometimes, misspelled names can also be the result of a sudden stroke of inspiration or a unique story. For instance, Google, was actually supposed to be "Googol" – based on the mathematical term.

The unique name seemed to work better for the business after it was misspelled on a trademark filing form, and the title stuck.



What are the benefits of intentionally misspelled brand names?

When it comes to choosing a business name, it’s often a good idea to opt for something meaningful, emotional, and memorable. Misspelled names, though unusual, can actually help with making your title a lot more impactful.

They share the same value as evocative names, thanks to their connection to pre-existing words, while allowing you the creativity of an “invented” moniker.

Misspelled brand names help to differentiate a business from the competition, in a world where many of the most common words have already been trademarked.

Some of the biggest benefits of this kind of naming strategy include:

Memorability

We're pre-disposed as human beings to recognise things we consider to be different or unusual. We pinpoint anything that doesn't go with the status quo, and remember it more than we would something we'd consider to be commonplace.

A misspelled name can have a more significant impact on a target audience than a word they're used to seeing every day. It grabs attention, even if its just because your customer starts wondering why you would choose to spell your name incorrectly.

Differentiation

As mentioned above, creating a truly unique title in today's marketplace is much more difficult than it seems. Misspelling a word gives companies an opportunity to make the term their own. They can separate themselves from other organizations already using similar terms and phrases.

Personality

Misspelling names is a good way to identify your business as one that doesn't necessarily "go with the flow". If you want to create an image for yourself as being rebellious and creative, or even just modern, then a misspelled name can be a good idea.

Many of the most popular startups, like "Lyft" and "Netflix" highlight their modern personality with a misspelled and quirky name.

Emotional impact

Because a misspelled word isn't an entirely made up term, it has existing connections in the mind of your target audience. "Lyft" is still pronounced like "Lift" and reminds customers of the concept of getting a ride.

A misspelled name can allow companies to be creative, without requiring them to invest a lot of time and effort into helping their customers understand what their name stands for.

Ownership

Incorrect spellings of words are usually easy to gain ownership of than correct terms. You'll usually be able to purchase a domain name for a misspelled name without too much trouble, and you may not have the same challenges as other brands with descriptive names when trademarking the business.

In some cases, intentionally misspelled brand names can also be a good way to identify yourself as a member of a specific industry. It's common for technology startups to use misspellings in their name to differentiate themselves and appear more "contemporary" for instance.

However, the same effect may not be evident for all industries.



Is there a downside to misspelled company names?

So, should you misspell a company name?

There are various popular companies in the world today proving misspelled names are effective at delivering great results. However, this doesn't necessarily mean a misspelled term is the right option for every brand.

Like all forms of naming strategy, misspelling a moniker can have its pros and cons.

On the one hand, you'll be more likely to keep your name in the minds of your target audience with this kind of title. Plus, you may find that you have a bigger impact on your customers from an emotional perspective.

However, you could struggle to get the attention you need in a digital space.

If customers simply "hear" your name before they see it, they may not know what to search for when they're looking for more information about you online. If another company has a name with a variation of your spelling, then you could end up sending business to them instead.

At the same time, misspelled names can be harder to remember for sharing purposes for some customers. Although your client may remember your name as being different, they may not know exactly what makes it unique until they've seen it a few times.

This means most companies with misspelled names will need to invest heavily in marketing strategies, to ensure they're getting enough reach and attention.

In some circumstances, a misspelled name can also be confusing. If a company chooses a completely random letter to

replace in their title, or changes the spelling too much, it can end up rubbing customers the wrong way.

There's also a risk your misspelled title could end up meaning something else in a different language, or as a "slang" term. This means it's crucial to do your due diligence before you commit to anything.

Can a company name be misspelled?

The answer to "should you misspell a company name?" is complicated. Intentionally misspelled brand names are becoming increasingly common in the modern world, particularly among certain industries.

Used correctly, these terms can have a lot of power for branding.

A well-chosen misspelled company name can be an excellent way to draw more attention to your business, and personality. It can demonstrate what makes your organization unique, and help you to gain more ownership over your brand.

A misspelled company name also has the power to evoke certain thoughts and feelings in your target audience, thanks to connections with pre-existing words. However, there are some downsides to consider too.

Choose the wrong name, and you could risk making your business harder to find for your customers. Plus, there's always the risk your name won't make the impression you hoped for.

The key to success with misspelled company names, as with any other form of moniker, is doing the right research. If you're not sure what kind of title will work for you, you can leverage the assistance of a specialist brand naming firm.

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