



Naming Your Brand

Naming is probably the most challenging of all branding tasks. This is true for several reasons. Availability of names that can be owned (trademarked) in many categories is at a critical stage. Compounding that challenge is registered URLs in any given category.

More often than not, you've got to dig for the answer. In fact, you will have to come up with multiple satisfactory solutions to clear one for trademark status. That's because there are hundreds of thousands of trademarks granted every year. Not to mention that countless more identities are taken up by URLs. Think about it and you begin to get the picture.

Regardless of the challenge, the name is arguably the most important aspect of product development. Why? A good name helps your customers understand your brand before they can learn more about your brand, either by word-of-mouth, marketing communication, or trial by sampling. Names that bear no connection with the product burden the marketing task even more than necessary.

To create a name for your brand, you can use computer programs and naming specialists and consultants. You can also create a naming "task force" or simply solve it through collaboration between agency and client. Names can also emerge out of focus groups or other research.

Steve Rivkin, a well-known naming specialist, created a list entitled "Generating Names" and here are a few of his pointers:

1. Work backwards from the selling proposition. The name should communicate or have some relevance to the product benefit.
2. Spell it in a different way. Forget what you learned in English class. This is branding.
3. Go against the grain. "Zig" when everybody else is "zagging." Dare to be unconventional.
4. Generate ideas first/judge later. This is good process advice. Don't get bogged-down in the early stages by being overly critical. Go for quantity vs. quality in the early going.
5. Acronyms can have surprising results.
6. Make up a new word. These are usually coined by "word fusion": Using pieces of words and "fusing together". These are pieces of words that are relevant to the brand.
7. Think of the brand's promise. Will it articulate into a unique name?
8. Try different languages. Latin or mythology can also be added.
9. Place names. Geography can bring an added dimension to the brand.
10. Listen to your customers. Names can spring out of research.

Keep it memorable, keep it short, keep it descriptive and keep it translatable and you're on your way to a good brand name.