



Naming

What's in a name?

We all want to answer the easiest questions first and to avoid the 'tough' ones; it is only human nature.

Deciding on a name for your business is, I have to tell you, one of the tough ones.

Get it wrong and you may regret it for many years to come.

Before we go any further, don't get stressed about this. It's not rocket science, so relax. I want you to:

- Pick a comfortable seat, but not the sofa; you don't want to be too comfortable.

Before anything else – logo, packaging, website or advertising – your business needs a name. It is the beginning of your brand journey.



The basics

Some experts tell you that it's the most important part, but I don't agree. Yes it is great to have a short, powerful, emotive name for your business that encapsulates what you do and what you offer but if you can't achieve this it is far from being a disaster.

Some experts believe that the best names are abstract; others think that names should be informative so customers know immediately what your business is.

Some believe that coined names (that come from made-up words) are more memorable than names that use real words. Others think they're forgettable.

Whatever approach you take, a good name markets itself.

Where to start

Tip: If it's not memorable, it isn't a good name.

There are many things to consider when deciding on a name and you may feel happier using a professional naming company, though this can be very expensive and time consuming.

I personally prefer the bootstrap approach - meaning do it yourself! It certainly gets the grey cells working.

First of all, decide what it is that you want your name to communicate. I prefer the descriptive approach, whenever possible, but this can be difficult.

The more your name communicates to customers about your business, the less you need to explain.



Remember a name has no real meaning to the customer until it is put into context and becomes part of the brand story.

5 types of names to consider:

1. Functional or descriptive

These names literally describe what the company, product or service offers. They tend NOT to be particularly exciting, as the description is the priority. For example: British Telecom, General Motors, American Telephone & Telegraph, The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (these often end up being shortened at a later date for various reasons – BT, GM, AT&T, HSBC... see my point! However, with a little imagination one can achieve something more memorable and even with a bit of humour, if it is appropriate.

For example my latest start-up is called 'WhinnyPoo'. As the name suggests it is a product made from horse poo. One inherent problem with a descriptive approach to naming is that, as your business matures and expands into other markets and products the name no longer describes your business.

2. Invented / created

These are often created from word combinations, based on Latin/Greek or rhythmic sounds. For example; Viagra, Google or Jeep. Invented names can be very useful because they come without baggage and are very often a good option for companies that merge or have had their reputation severely damaged by scandal of some sort.

Sometimes it can be easier to rename the company than try to rebuild a reputation.



3. Evocative

These types of names evoke the positioning of the company, product or service such as Jaguar, which is evocative of strength, power and confidence.

4. Experiential

These are descriptive names, focusing on the experience rather than the function. For example Land Rover (all-terrain vehicle) or Hungry Man (frozen dinners) or Infoseek (search engine). They offer a direct connection with something tangible and real.

5. Acronyms

These often evolve from existing functional names, either deliberately or for strategic reasons such as mergers. This type of name can be easier to trademark.

Here are 7 crucial questions you should ask yourself before naming your business.

1. **Is your new name already taken?**
2. **Can the name be registered as a trademark and business name?**
3. **Is the name used in any other sector?**

Especially a product or business you would not want to be associated with or has a bad reputation. For example in 6 months time finding a sex toy on Google with the same name as your brand. Best do the research now rather than suffer the embarrassment later not to mention to cost and time if you had to change your brand name. Ouch!

4. **Is your new brand name easy to spell?**



5. **Is the domain available?**

What if the .com is already taken: will it limit or help if the domain is country specific such as .co.uk or even product specific such as .car or .salon? Finding an available domain name is fast becoming extremely challenging and near impossible in some cases. Because of this it plays a critical part in any decision you make regarding the new name of your business and brand. However, finding that the domain you really want to use has already been registered does not necessarily mean it is being used. There is still a chance you can purchase it from the owner. There are two ways to do this. The first is to go via one of the many domain resellers such as GoDaddy who can approach the owner on your behalf (for a fee) or you can contact the owner directly.

6. **Is the name available across your chosen social media platforms?**

Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat etc

7. **Does it travel well?**

For example if you plan on using it in foreign markets what does it mean in your target countries? Brand names encounter the biggest problems when they cross-borders. Federal Express shortened their name when research showed that 'federal' has negative connotations in some key countries

Answering these critical questions at the start could prevent very expensive and time consuming changes further down the road.

TIP: Don't use a hyphen in your domain name for example 'big-arrow.com'. Keep it simple it should be 'bigarrow.com' or 'bigarrow.co.uk etc