

BRANDGASM 101

Copygasm

WEEK 3

How to Name Things So They Sell - Including Your Company, Your Products, Your Services or Your Dog (Kidding - Who Wants to Sell Their Dog?)

Welcome to week three of Brandgasm 101! Here on the copywriting side, as promised, we're going to get even dirtier because today's the first week we talk *specifics*. As you might remember, each week we'll be learning how to create specific copy deliverables, and this week we're talking about - drum roll - *naming things*. (Far more important than it sounds.)

"Naming things" might sound trivial, but the reason why we've assigned an entire week to learning about how to name things is because it isn't trivial at all. In fact, the way you name something--whether it's a company, a program, a product, a service or something else--truly does have the power to either give you legs, **or take 'em out from under you.**

Naming a business is a lot like laying the cornerstone of a building. Once it's in place, the entire foundation and structure is aligned to that original stone. If it's off, even just a bit, the rest of the building is off, and the misalignment becomes amplified. So if you have that gnawing sense that choosing a name for your new business is vitally important, you're oh-so-right.

So, what are the situations that are going to require you to put your naming hat on (tight?)

- You're naming your business and/or website
- You're naming a service
- You're naming a product

Those are the three most common situations where we need a really marketable name, so we're going to first talk about what's in a name...and then talk about each one of these areas,

and how you can use our naming process to come up with something that grabs people's attention--**and instantly makes them want to know more.**

Because that's the power of a good name. **A name isn't just a name--it's a marketing tool.** And I want you to start thinking of *every single word you use* as a marketing tool. As I mentioned before, every word tells its own story. And you want to be telling the right one--right off the bat.

So, what is the right one?

The right one has to communicate your brand. It's a first impression that the outside world has of you. It sends many signals to the outside world about:

What you stand for

Who you are

What kind of personality your business has

Your business philosophy

Your attitude

Your size

Your ambitions

And most importantly?

Whether or not a prospect wants to do business with you

In other words, it's one of the most important decisions you have to make. Most business owners are more worried about the down-the-road details--how they're running something, what something will include, etc...and the name gets sent to the back of the line. A lot of business owners assume the company name will work itself out, or come with the help of family and friends (or so the thinking goes.) So in the rush to get to market, it's easy to think the pure genius of the idea will shine through and everyone will "get it."

But the truth is this--that's not the case. And the name needs to be at the front of the line. Period.

Because if you don't have a memorable name that's going to attract the right people? They're never going to see any of the other stuff that you're frazzling yourself over--like how much your thing is going to help the world. Because they won't care.

Names are everything.

You wouldn't just slap any old name on a newborn--and, as I think you're sensing, you certainly shouldn't for your business, your services, your programs, or your products, either.

That said, naming is also really tough! Back in the day, when there was less competition out there, naming things was a lot easier. Now, however, there's a lot more competition, which means two things: 1) You've got to do something even more memorable, 2) You can't be stepping on anyone's brand name, also known as trademark infringement. Eeeek.

So you've got a bunch of factors and constraints that all need your attention. Ideally a name is relevant, positive, memorable, reasonably short, not too generic, not too similar to a competing name, not associated with an unavailable domain name, and not something so cutesy or outer-space-like that you're going to look like an asshole. In short, the odds that a name will just pop into your head that satisfies all these constraints are against you, right?

That means the most effective way to come up with a name is to think of lots of different ideas, carefully screen and choose, and *repeat*. And that's exactly the process I'm going to show you how to do today. Because while it might seem incredibly daunting (read: I have a better chance of Michael Jordan showing up on my doorstep and asking me to go grab a beer), it's far less intimidating--and fun!--once you discover a few simple tricks to jumpstart your creativity, organize your thoughts, and see what names result. *You might be surprised.*

By the way, they say that naming is so important because of the human tendency to look for and create patterns, connections and systems. If you've never heard this before, it's a known fact that we sort the world--consciously and subconsciously--based on our previous experience, in order to better relate to it. Our previous experience, then, creates connections in our brains that allow us not only to recognize visual patterns, but also identify the perceived connection. These connections can, of course, also be found in a NAME. A name can signal modern. Traditional. Cocky. Boring. Outdated. Current. Fun. Serious. It can also signal different industries: Law firms. Banks. IT. Creative Agencies.

And this is really where the rubber meets the road. Because this means that WHAT THE WORDS REMIND YOU OF, IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT THE WORDS MEAN.

Sorry about the caps. It was important, and I didn't want you to miss it.

Because when customers see or hear your brand name for the first time, the associations and reactions they have to it will be defining your brand--whether you like it or not. (Remember how I was such a stickler in weeks one and two about knowing who you're selling to? Here we go - a prime example of why that is so important, because knowing them will help you predict the reactions they'll have to certain words.)

Benefits of The Right Name

- Diamonds are forever, and so are brand names. It's probably the longest standing investment you will ever make in your business, so it better be good.
- The right name will generate its own buzz--do you know how much media outlets, editors, PR folks and your customers (the most important) love a good name?
- The right name will be instantly likeable, which makes you instantly likeable. You want people to talk about you? This is step one.
- Creates differentiation, and gets you noticed in a sea of sameness. (Your biggest enemy.)

- Emotionally connects with your target customer which inspires insta-loyalty. And we like that very much.

Good names will do all of these things—even before you've spent a dime on marketing. On the other hand, a bad name will provoke little, if any, positive interest among your audience. It may even mislead them about the nature of your offering and how great it is. (And that would flat out suck.)

Before we go into the naming process, however, I wanted to share a note on the history of naming. Because this is more relevant than it seems.

Forever and ever and ever and ever (and ever), the natural name choice was the founder's surname. And, as history proves, until the mid-1800s, most companies simply used a family name – often combined with a description of what the company produced or offered. Think DuPont (founded 1793, and right down the road from my home in Philadelphia!), Colgate (founded in 1806), Schweppes (founded in 1783.)

It was only in the late 1800s and early 1900s that it became common for companies to choose an entirely unique name, like Coca-Cola (1886) and Texaco (1901). However, family names remained in the majority.

After World War II, the world was in short supply of almost everything, apparently, and mass production literally exploded. The number of businesses in each category grew like crazy, and hence came *competition*. That dirty fucking word.

Moreover, demand for services and personal experiences grew once basic material demands were met. (You remember this from high school, don't you?)

As competing products became more and more similar, and competing services relatively difficult to differentiate, the strategy grew of using the corporate or brand names as a differentiator. Those smarty pants. So, as a result, in the 1950s and 1960s, many start-ups chose names like Four Seasons (1960) and T.G.I. Friday's (1965).

The really imaginative naming wave first broke through in the 1980s and 1990s (is it a coincidence I'm an early 80's baby? I think not) and became the rule rather than the exception. Services had become increasingly global, but also increasingly difficult to describe, while availability of the most 'natural', linguistically viable and legally available names had gone south.

In addition, the advent of the Internet set a new requirement: an available URL. (Save us all.) The name's primary purpose was no longer to describe or resemble, but to convey attitude and uniqueness. And the new brands were increasingly names that were difficult, at least at first glance, to link to the product or offer, including Adobe (1982), Cisco (1984), Bluetooth (1998--and I still don't really have an affinity for that name) and 7 for All Mankind (2000).

The name's ability to both stick in the memory and distinguish the brand are today (if possible) *even more important key factors*. (As I've been nagging about since the beginning.)

A well chosen name is, without a doubt, a brand asset. Don't imagine it's just going to be you running a one-man show for the rest of your days; think big. (I know--you're thinking, "But Marie Forleo does it! But Danielle LaPorte does it!" Listen. If you're going to be the next Oprah, and your business is going to revolve solely around you forever, then be my guest. If you've got bigger plans to build a company, however, then think bigger than yourself.)

Think big. And name accordingly.

That said, now it's time to talk about the different approaches to naming stuff. Because while I can talk naming philosophy until I'm blue in the face, what you really need are ideas.

How to Name Stuff, Part One

So there are a *number* of ways you can name your stuff. There are a number of methods I could sit here and list for days. But making you read a whole encyclopedia of naming techniques isn't going to do you any good--you can Google that. What I wanted to do here, rather, was divide this section by the different types of things you'll be naming--your business, your products or your services--and then show you the methods I employ for each, based on the category.

Once we get through this part, we'll dive into How to Name Stuff, Part Two, which will go through a brainstorming process to actually come up with the creative ideas to support these methods, and see how all the pieces fit together to come up with your ideal name.

Because, remember: With the right name, you've got a much better shot at success than with the wrong one.

The trick is knowing which is which.

How to: Name your business

By far, the toughest task of all. *Your business name*. It's your everything. Your identity. Your ticket to fame. Your shot at success. Your business cards. Your *life*. What you name your business really can be as hard as naming a child--and then some, because you can't just go with whatever name you happen to like. There has got to be some strategy involved, as we discussed earlier, and you've got to take into account all of those factors and limitations such as who your target is, what the personality of your brand is like, and so forth. We'll be talking more about incorporating this into the process in part two, but for now, let's go through a few of the methods for creating a business name. This part is for all of you non-creatives who can't seem to think of anything better than, "Sally's Cupcake Shop." Wink. Speaking of that, let's first go through a few methods that are in common practice, but that I strongly

recommend against: Stating the obvious, naming it around your product/offering, or using acronyms.

Method #1: Stating the Obvious

Okay, so before we get into the other stuff, we *should* make mention that “Sally’s Cupcake Shop” is perfectly fine, and you CAN just state the obvious. Jane Doe Web Design is a legitimate business name--it’s just not the most compelling, and that’s why it’s on this initial list of do-not-do’s. And I think we’re all here for compelling, right? Beyond that, there’s one big reason I’m not recommending going the obvious route for anything, and that reason is:

Using words so plain makes it hard to stand out in a crowd. The first company in a category can get away with this one--General Motors, General Electric, etc., but since you’re probably not that, once you have competition, it requires differentiation. If Google had come out as “General Internet Directory,” they would have been screwed. And for all of you life coaches in the crowd--how many of you are already naming your business, “Anne Taylor Life Coaching?” Probably an abundance of you. I’m going to encourage (read: scream and shout and kick and scream) that you don’t do that. Why? Because for one, nobody knows (or cares) who Anne Taylor is (unless you’re famous), and so you’re detracting from your message by inserting your name in there for lack of a better idea. And two, because it doesn’t have any legs for you to grow. What happens if you want to grow into a new direction? Into a bigger direction? You’re going to have to revamp your entire brand. The life coach that is well-known that everyone follows, Martha Beck, is an exception. Not the rule. Unless you’re a marketing superstar, or plan on hiring someone to market your name until the cows come home, don’t pick your own name as your company name. I know there’s going to be a lot of lash back about this (But but but!), but you wanted my opinion, and you’re paying me for it, so this is it. I know that Danielle LaPorte does it. I know that Marie Forleo does it. I know many of you look up to them. But keep in mind that: Danielle Laporte started as White Hot Truth, and Marie Forleo started with her brand of Make

Every Man Want You. They had something to give them legs before anyone gave a damn about them as a personal brand. Right now, you're an unknown. You're not a brand on your own. And while you can try to position yourself as one, it's going to be a lot harder to convince someone that Anne Taylor is worth following, than it is if they can instantly perceive a benefit for them. (Make Every Man Want You, for instance.)

On the other hand, think of the possibilities if you were to name your business something like, "Screw'd." The cornerstone of your brand could be life coaching for people who are screwed, and you'd be able to set up an entire brand around this concept. Screw'd the book. Screw'd the TV show. Screw'd sessions. Screw'd tee-shirts. You could have other life coaches under you offering Screw'd sessions. Wherever you want to go with it. Way more compelling--and memorable--than Anne Taylor Life Coaching. We'll talk more about other ways to devise company names in a minute.

Method #2: Name it around your product or offering

Similar to number one. Maybe you sell notebooks. Maybe you sell umbrellas. Maybe you sell handmade purses. Whatever it is you sell, I've got two things to say about it: First, congratulations because you're going to have a much easier time marketing yourself, because you've picked such a specific niche. Second, uncongratulations because now you've got a new challenge: Coming up with a name that doesn't entirely pigeonhole you now and forever and forever and forever and forever. (Think Burlington Coat Factory. Why do you think they came out with the jingle we all started hearing everywhere on the radio that said, "We're more than great coats?" They're still trying to overcome the notion that all they sell is coats. And I'm still trying to convince myself why I'd ever go there for anything else.)

You're probably confused--particularly if you've taken a course from me in the past. I'm all about narrowing your offering to get KNOWN for one thing, because it's much easier to start there and get known for one thing, than it is to try to get known for a lot of things at once. That said, you *don't* want to pigeonhole yourself, because while

you're getting started by becoming known for one thing, eventually you'll want to expand into other things. **And your company name has to be flexible enough to support that growth.**

So if you're wondering what the point of me adding this category to our list is? It's to deter you from naming your business in this fashion, too. Because both naming your business around the obvious and naming your business around the product (which, sometimes, are one in the same) are two of the most common naming practices that I see, and two of the most common naming practices that will hold you back faster than they'll thrust you forward. And here? We're all about the forward thrust.

Method #3: Using a Meaningless Acronym

I'm not sure why anyone does this, really, but these acronym-based names always invoke a series of painful conversations that go something like, "Wait, was it D-L-M or D-M-L?" And then you've got to go into the annoying explanation of, "Well, D stands for my father's middle name, who passed away right after the Gulf War, and then L stands for my youngest daughter Lucy..." You can see where this is going. Nowhere in these cryptic acronyms is there any room for your name to serve as a marketing tool. It does nothing to make a statement about your brand, and it does nothing to help your prospective customers decide whether or not they want to do business with you. So on those grounds alone, I'd like to dismiss this from your potential list of business names. Ditch the alphabet soup.

Alright. Now that I've dished on the three ways I wouldn't recommend going about naming your business, let's talk about a few methods for naming companies that I would recommend. These are some naming methods you can come up with something more creative than "Anne Taylor Life Coaching," while developing something that's catchy, short, memorable and relevant. (Again, we're going to talk more about the actual process in part two--this is just the framework.)

Method #4: Make It a Statement

Company names like:

- I Can't Believe It's Not Butter
- Hey, Sweet Pea (which I almost accidentally spelled as "Sweat Pea," a neat little branding studio I once came across online.)
- Then They Ran Away To Paris (Jewelry Store)
- Seven for All Mankind (Jean Company)

Surprisingly, most people forget that their company name doesn't have to be one or two words; it can be a statement, too. And when you think in these terms, it opens up a whole new playground of ideas!

Best for: Creative businesses. Businesses struggling to stand out. Businesses with a quirky personality.

Pros: You'll instantly stand out. You can demonstrate your creativity. (And, remember, when other creatives see this, they'll be instantly attracted to it, because they'll want to put up their totem pole that they're a creative, too, by doing business with you.) You won't have a lot of same-same sounding competitors. You'll have no issues trademarking. The URL will be available, most likely. You have a lot of room to play with themes in your product and service names. (More on this soon.)

Cons: Long and tedious to say and write. Can be difficult to come up with one that you really like. It might not be immediately obvious what you do, so you'll definitely need a tagline. (But that's okay, because I'm an advocate for taglines for everybody. More on this later, too.)

Method #5: Make it a Pun

Company names like:

- Facial Attraction (Spa)
- Pulp Friction (Recycling Service)
- The Blue Legume (Restaurant)
- Fringe Benefits (Hair salon)
- The Winey Neighbor (Liquor store)
- Brand Aid (Branding agency)
- Bread Pitt (Bakery--and my personal favorite)

These work because they make people smile; that said, these types of names probably aren't suitable for industries like banking, law or private practice anyones. Again, it comes down to knowing your audience. Will they appreciate some creativity in your name? Or will they be turned off by it?

Best for: Blog titles. Personality-based businesses. Product-based businesses. Online businesses trying to differentiate themselves. Businesses whose target audiences don't take themselves too seriously, or whose subject matter isn't too serious. (Again, this isn't going to work for a law firm. While I'm the first to advocate personality in business, there are also huge social mores we need to take into account, and find a good balance between personality and not completely turning off the entire population.)

Pros: Instantly charming. Instantly memorable. Communicates volumes about your personality. Will create instant rapport with prospects. (Smiling when you see something tends to have that psychological effect.) Short. Snappy. Clever. Also good for differentiating yourself from the crowd. (Though I would argue that all of these methods, when done right, will accomplish that, since that's really the overall goal.)

Cons: You have to find the right line between playful and still getting taken seriously-

-particularly if you're in an industry that's got some heavy stuff going on (i.e. body image or eating disorder treatment). You would never want to make your prospective customer feel like you're mocking them in any way. You've got to really strike the right balance between playful and overly cutesy, too. Cutesy isn't going to do you any favors, unless your target audience collects unicorns.

Method #6: Use a Sound Associated With Your Business

Company names like:

- Twitter
- Yelp!
- Legal Zoom (zoom like a race car)
- Meow Mix
- Yahoo!
- Kerplunk (Remember that game?)
- Zip Car

Your company name doesn't have to be (and in many cases, shouldn't be) just the obvious; if you can expand a little and think of related words that might embody the concept, by all means. Sounds. Sights, even. Think of the senses that accompany your business, your product, your service, or your brand. How could we incorporate one of those?

Best for: Service-based businesses. Software-based businesses. Technology Automated services. (i.e. So you're starting a single mom's match up site? Here you go.) Companies that you plan to expand.

Pros: Memorable. Does a good job of seeming clever, while still remaining relatively neutral in appeal. Fun spin-offs would be easy to create. (Imagine a series of ads with different people saying "kerplunk," for example, out loud, scratching their heads?)

Cons: You're going to have a hard time trademarking, because a lot of these are taken. You'll really have to play to find some sound or combination of words that is novel and relevant to what you're doing.

Method #7: Use alternative spellings

Company names like:

- Krispy Kreme
- Flickr
- Publix
- Populr (I added the link because you've likely never heard of it)

Best for: Businesses appealing to a younger demographic. Modern, web-based businesses. Businesses looking to have a hip feel to them.

Pros: Eliminates the trouble of not being able to find the word you want because it's taken as a URL or registered as a trademark. Does a good job of appealing straight to the younger target audience.

Cons: You don't want your brand to be a puzzle; you still want it to be obvious what it says, so you can't go overboard. Some people get annoyed with improper spellings. This could also go very out of style, and not be as timeless as you hoped.

Method #8: Invent a word

Company names like:

- Firefox
- Google
- Travelocity
- Frutopia
- Adobe
- Shatterboxx

A few ways that you can make up your own word include mixing and matching prefixes and suffixes, or combining relevant words (that's how Travelocity got theirs - travel + velocity). One word of caution, though: Try to avoid the predictable adjective + noun smush up, like "QualiServe" or "TranquiSpa." These don't sound like anything anyone wants.

Best for: Anyone

Pros: Zero competition. Zero trademark issues. (Since it's a made up word, it's automatically yours! Though you definitely still need to take this to a lawyer and have them run a comprehensive trademark check.) Can be memorable. Makes an impact.

Cons: These types of names usually aren't obvious to the consumer about what you actually do, so they're going to require a lot of marketing to make it resonate. While something like Travelocity might be borderline obvious, something like Adobe certainly isn't. While a tagline could help with this, you're going to have to take a lot of steps on your homepage to make it 100% clear, right off the bat, what you do, and why anyone cares.

Method #9: Pair an unexpected adjective + noun

Company names like:

- Irish Blessings (nick knacks store in the Mall of America)
- Pink Vanilla (graphic design)
- Blackberry (ah haaaa)

This is also another one of my favorite ways to name a company - they come across as creative and fresh, because they're unexpected, but familiar, because we know what the words mean. (Unlike using a word translated from a foreign language, which I don't recommend, because if your target market can't pronounce it, can't spell it, and it doesn't resonate with them psychologically--most likely because they don't know what

it means--then you've just gone and shot yourself in the foot. Oops.)

Best for: Anyone, but leaning toward more creative, open-minded businesses--service, product or otherwise.

Pros: Originality. Inspires curiosity. (Why would they name it pink vanilla?) You can mix and match words to create the right feeling and effect in the minds of your target market. You won't have competition.

Cons: Sometimes, instead of inspiring curiosity, you might get the customers who just get frustrated and think, "Why name it pink vanilla? Why not just call it what it is?" This goes back to knowing your target market. How will they feel determines how much room you've got to play with.

How to: Name your services

So, here's the thing. The name of your company or business is paramount, here, because ideally, you're going to be in a position to set up some type of *name architecture*. In other words, a name architecture structures all of your company's brand names (that includes the names of your services) so they make sense in relation to each other. Cohesion. Ahhhh.

Without structure and a big picture perspective, having too many different, unrelated names of your services, versus your products, versus everything else can be a maze. And very off-putting to would-be customers who want to buy your stuff...but aren't sure how anything relates, if at all.

There are lots of ways to establish relationships between your services (and even products) through naming architecture. For instance, you can go by theme, like I do on TMF, and many things I do have a tongue-in-cheek racy reference. I had the One Night Stand copywriting offering. I had the Behind Closed Doors private mastermind group. This is called Brandgasm. And I'll be running some new business support groups called Private Parts: Because nothing

at TMF is TMI. So that theme works well, and my customers have come to expect it.

You see this kind of thing all over the place: Take the Audi A3, A4, A5, etc. Or, you can keep things cohesive by naming everything with the same letter, like Ford does, with their Escape, Explorer and Expedition. (Obviously this works for products, too.) You can link brands by using the same prefix for each name, as in Nestle, Nescafe, and Nestea. You can even use a metaphorical theme, like Apple did with its Mac OSX operating systems: Cheetah, Puma, Jaguar, Panther, Tiger, etc.

What's important, however, is that there's some kind of theme or cohesion.

And the only method I've got for naming your services goes like this: Try not to include too many details about the service in the name. Keep the name more broad, and leave the details to be included in the details. The reason is because if you're a web designer and you come up with a service called "24 Hour Splash Page Creation," and then find out that - holy smokes - you're pulling your hair out trying to get all of this done in 24 hours, and you need to change the offering to be more like 48 hours, or a week, you'd have to go back and change the entire service name..and all the branding and marketing you might have done around it. On the other hand, if you named it something like, "WhipSplash," (a play on words with "whiplash," implying speed, and "splash" for the splash page--AREN'T I CREATIVE), you've got a little room to play with the details, and change them as your service evolves and your offering changes and grows. Because it WILL happen.

Again, the most important here is to just be mindful to create some kind of connection between the things you offer, so your customers can clearly see the difference--and they also play into your greater brand. It would be really off-putting if you had a fun, big brand personality, and then service offerings that were very ho-hum and expected, because it would create a disconnect. And psychologically, when consumers see a disconnect, they subconsciously trust you less. And that might mean the difference between them moving forward with a sale, and them clicking off your page. And we don't want that.

How to: Name Your Products

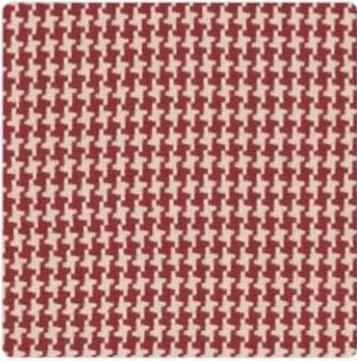
Products. Oh, products. So here's the straight and dirty--this is going to vary for you, depending on your business model and what type of products you're offering (do you have 100? 10? 3?) but maybe you've got an entire product line (think: iPhone wallpaper designs, tee-shirts, wrought iron picture frames.), or maybe you've just got a handful of digital products you're rolling out.

Either way, the ideal is that your products have brand cohesion, too. We like families. It makes sense to a new prospect when they see that your products belong, so to speak. And when it makes sense to them, it reduces one of their defensive buying walls.

So my first recommendation is this: If you've just got a few big product offerings (like programs, for example), think as far in advance as you can about any other products you'll be introducing to your business over the next 1-2 years, and then try to make connections between them all, so you can come up with a naming strategy that will be cohesive. If you can't do that, then just make every effort to stick to your brand's voice and personality when naming your products.

On the other hand, if you've got a bunch of different products, can you group them into collections? Into mini families, each with their own theme? And then can you use that theme to guide your product names? For me, the catchier, the better.

For example, one of my amazing copywriters, Lyndsay, recently completed a series of product names for a fabric company. Some of the product names she came up with included:



Foxy & The Hound - Red
Luxury Fabric



Less is Moorish
Premium Fabric



Heartchoke - Pistachio
Basic Fabric



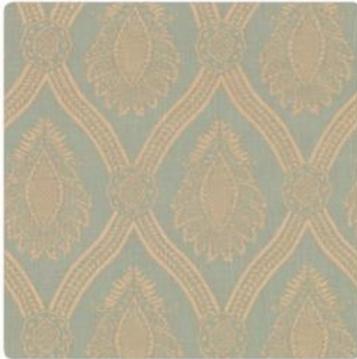
Nom De Plume - Sky
Premium Fabric



Suzani Q - Cinnamon
Premium Fabric



Drive Me Daisy
Premium Fabric



Period Peace - Spa
Premium Fabric



Burlap of Luxury
Premium Fabric



How Bazaar
Premium Fabric

And that worked really well here, because it took something so common like fabric, and turned it from any old commodity, into something really special. (If you didn't notice, puns work really well here, too. One of my favorite product puns is called Tricerahops, and it's a beer.)

And that brings us to:

How to Name Stuff, Part II

Creativity doesn't come easy to everyone. You might have read every single part of this lesson, but maybe you're still thinking, "Okay, I get it, but I still can't make it happen. I'm not creative." And that's precisely what part two is all about: How to brainstorm like a naming *pro*.

Where do you start when you've got the high task of coming up with a name that could potentially mean *everything*? I know. It's not easy. But that's what we're here for.

So I'm going to walk you through my own brainstorming process, and hope that you'll find this as useful as I do when I'm staring at a blank screen.

Ready? Let's go into brainstorming mode! First I'm going to walk you step-by-step through the process, and then I've made a little video of myself actually going through the process so you can see what I mean.

Step 1: Close all the other distractions on your computer screen. Especially things like Twitter and Facebook.

Step 2: Open up a blank document. I like Google Docs. I'm a Google Docs whore. This is a well-known fact. (Alternatively, whip out a blank sheet of paper. I'm also a big fan of freewriting, and sometimes getting away from the screen might help the creative process along.)

Step 3: Make five columns on that blank page. In Google Docs, you go into "Table" ---> "Insert Table," and you'll come out with something like this:

--	--	--	--	--

Step 4: To get started, in the far left column, I want you to write down a list of verbs that your business or your product or your service DOES.

Step 5: In the second column, I want you to write down what the BENEFITS are of what your business or your product or your service does.

Step 6: Now, the fun part--in the third column, I want you to write down any things/ideas/objects that PROVIDE THE SAME BENEFITS. Think metaphors. Look at all of the benefits in column two, and brainstorm other things in life that provide those same benefits, and accomplish the same thing.

Step 7: In the fourth column, now I want you to rewind, and write down some words that get to the heart of what your business/product/service IS. (Not what it does.)

Step 8: In the fifth column, it's time to mix 'n match! Can you match up any metaphors with what your business/product/service IS? Start seeing if anything instantly jumps out at you. Start pairing words up. See what unexpected, delightful pairings result.

Because all of this might seem overwhelming, I recorded an example of myself doing this live, brainstorming a name for an actual resource I'm in the process of creating right now.

Watch this live in action on a screencast located in the Copygasm folder titled “Week Three Name Brainstorm.”

And last but not least, in case you're really stuck, here are some additional tools you can use to really help the brainstorming process along:

- [morewords.com](https://www.morewords.com): You can search for any words that contain _____. For example, maybe I need to search for words that contain a double “e.” Almost any sound or letter combo you want to find, this site will do it for you.
- [wordlab.com/name-generators/](https://www.wordlab.com/name-generators/): I'm not even going to tell you what's over here. All I'm going to say is that you're going to LOVE IT.
- [rhymezone.com](https://www.rhymezone.com): Because sometimes, you need the perfect word that rhymes to make for the perfect ending. I use this way more than anyone would ever imagine. Just be sure not to go too cutesy or overboard.
- [This thesaurus](#): Because it really helps you see everything at once, including relationships, which is just rad for anyone trying to figure out what the hell to call something. Ideas...INSPIRED.
- [This visual dictionary](#): You can look at pictures of objects and have all their individual parts labeled, to give you any kind of spin you can possibly think of on a common name.

This is where I get started with every naming project. It takes a lot of scribbling. Jotting. Brainstorming. Crossing out. Re-writing. And re-hashing. It can be a time consuming process, but once the perfect name jumps out at you? It will have been all worth it. You're going to have to say it over and over and over again, so you have to like it. But more importantly? Your customers have to like it, too. And not just like it--*but want to buy it.*

That said, there's one more thing I want to talk about this week with regards to naming, and that's *taglines.*

What is a tagline?

Well, a tagline is a slogan, or a motto—you've probably heard them referred to as those things more often. Tagline is what we use in the industry, however, and it's a succinct phrase, situated under or alongside your logo, that communicates a single but powerful brand message designed to **resonate strongly with an intended audience.**

The reason why these are particularly important is when you've got a company name that doesn't make it 100% clear what you do--so you use a tagline to reinforce your message, and make it easy for prospective customers to think to themselves, "Yes, I need THAT."

A tagline is not a proverb, maxim, saying, mission statement, or generic description of what your organization is and does. Rather, taglines:

- Express the meaning of the vision or mission
- Convey essential qualities of the brand character (For example, in TMF - Dropping f-bombs and jaws in the marketing world since the dawn of time (rough estimate), the

second half of that tagline serves purely to give a hint at what the character of the brand is like...helping to draw in the right people.)

- Emphasize a key differentiator or competitive advantage
- Align your message to a specific audience or target market

In sum, it's the distilled essence of your brand message – conceived strategically, expressed artfully, and delivered persuasively.

As an extension of your organization's brand, a tagline should say something essential about who you are, what makes you special, and why the world should care. This is the epitome of getting to the heart of why anyone gives a shit—because if you need to express that somewhere, the best place to do so is IN THE TAGLINE.

So, alright. A tagline. But what's the big deal?

On the internet, they're more important than usual; since visitors all have ADD, and they're all trying to make snap decisions on whether they're in the right place. The tagline is the ONE crucial element of any website that's going to help them make that decision. So you or your clients HAVE to have one. This is non-negotiable. NON NEGOTIABLE. The only companies that can get away with it are huge Fortune 500 players that have been around for years and the public has known them for years. You probably aren't that. You need a tagline.

That said, what makes for a good tagline?

Bad taglines are typically vague, awkward, pretentious, inane, underwhelming, confusing, complicated, negative, or ambiguous – and often communicate an unintended message.

Examples:

- Excellence through total quality. Ames Rubber
- We get you there. Delta Airlines

On the other hand, what makes for a good tagline is going to depend on what your goals

are—the majority of you will have the goal of simply trying to convey why anyone should give a shit and pay attention to you. This is particularly relevant for new businesses that you're writing for. On the other hand—let's say you've been in business for 50 years, and the company is trying to go in a new direction. This is another way you can use taglines—since taglines aren't set in stone, you can change them. Think about all of the different taglines Coke has had over the years---Always Coca Cola, The Coke Side of Life, Life Begins Here, Open Happiness.

How to craft a tagline *that works*

1. Take a look at the list of words that define your business, from your naming exercise. What makes you different from other organizations working in your field? What attributes do you use to describe yourself? If you could own one word in your audience's mind, what would it be?
2. Why does anyone give a shit?
3. Now, to whom are you communicating. Who's the target audience? Write down a list of their characteristics.
4. Start to look at your combinations of words and ideas. And remember: the expressions you create should tell a good story – your story.

Some tags we've crafted for clients:

- Love is the Cure :: Because life doesn't define you. Love does. (CD album)
- Lather your home with the luxury of clean (Clean Avenue)
- Because self-realization is your bottom line. (Life coach for entrepreneurs)
- Because there's no such thing as guilty pleasure. (Pleasure coach.)
- The art of going raw...without going overboard. (Raw foods coach who wanted to emphasize balance.)
- You bring the cause, we'll bring the buzz (event planning for non-profits)
- It starts with the people, and ends with the product. (Consultant for high level companies with org problems.)
- Put your conflict to the vote (website)

HO! HO! HO!

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