

YOU NAME IT!

The name is the single most important expression of the brand. So creating the name should be governed by everything we have learned about the brand profile of “intangibles.”

Although the name is so essential, there are many possible solutions that can work. This is because the name acquires a life of its own once it is in use. ***The most important quality of the name is that it can easily be imprinted with the brand personality over time.***

Naming is one of the most emotionally charged aspects of the marketing game and is fraught with false mystique and needless anxieties.

Compare the names “Whataburger” and “McDonalds,” both fast food restaurant brands. Which name has more meaning? Which name took more trouble (and fees) to come up with? And which has the stronger brand?

If you look at some of the world’s strongest brand names such as Ford, Forbes, Marriott, or Dell, you realize these names ***mean absolutely nothing*** in themselves. Yet they work. And actually, they work the same way as “meaningful” names like — to take a small example — Microsoft.

After a time, the name becomes ***saturated with the brand*** and all it entails. The brand literally overpowers any meaning originally invested in the name. Who but a few historians hear the name “Gap” and associate it with a perceived gap in the apparel market? And who, on seeing the name “Microsoft,” mentally glues together microprocessors and software?

Does that mean the choice of name doesn’t matter? No – but it matters in a way most people do not realize. The name is like melted wax, waiting to be imprinted with the personality and feeling of the brand. What makes a great name is one that ***takes the imprint easily and holds it permanently.*** When we choose a name, we choose the best wax for the job.

The name is not a brochure or nanosecond TV commercial. It is a vehicle for carrying your brand into the minds of our audience. What matters more than the meaning of the name is its tone, feel, sound and look. A good name carries a kind of electrostatic charge. It pulls into itself all the most positive qualities associated with the brand. Not by spelling them out, but by simply ***feeling right.***

1. CURRENT NAME

The current brand name is:

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2. CURRENT NAME: REVIEW Here we review the pros and cons of the current name.	
PROS	CONS

3. LEGAL AND BRAND

The official, legal name of the entity should be distinguished from the brand name. Our purpose here is to define the BRAND NAME.

The brand name gets visual treatment in the logo and acquires a “personality” through use. This is the name people use casually in conversation.

The legal name appears in standard type on appropriate documents.

Examples

Legal name: **The Coca-Cola Bottling Company**
Brand name: **Coca-Cola**

Legal name: **International Business Machines**
Brand name: **IBM**

4. TYPES OF NAMES

There are many types of name. Each type tends to have its own tonal qualities. Listed here are some of the most common types of brand name.

Type	Example	Tonal Quality
Surname	<i>Forbes</i>	Neutral – depends on sound & look of name
First name	Michael's	Informal, approachable
First + Surname	Ralph Lauren	Personality-centered
Place	Washington Mutual	Qualities associated with that place
Descriptive	Whole Foods	Straightforward, unglamorous
Global	General Motors	Massive, faceless
Abstract-evocative	Fortune	Depends on choice of word
Mascot/symbol	Jaguar	Depends on choice of symbol
Idiomatic / conversational	<i>Whataburger</i>	Populist, broad market appeal
Mutated word	Mobil	Often slightly techie
Composite word	<i>Microsoft</i>	Often more techie, less human
Invented word	<i>Vioxx</i>	Usually techie, quite inhuman
Initials	IBM	Faceless, forgettable
Numbers	7/11	Odd, quirky

5. TYPE OF NAME: CHOICES

Bearing in mind the special considerations and our brand profile, we see the following possible solutions.

The type of name we seek for our brand is:

Either

.....

Or

.....

Or

.....

6. GENERAL CRITERIA

These are universal criteria for a successful brand name.

Easy to pronounce

Pleasant to look at

Easy to remember

No negative associations

Available for trademark (pending formal search)

Available for URL (or a good approximation)

Passes the phone test: *"Hello, this is..."*

7. SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Specific criteria match the name against our Singular Idea and brand profile.

Appropriate to Brand Profile — the intangible qualities of the brand

Distinct or unique within its market

8. POSSIBLE NAMES

Based on the foregoing analysis, we are considering the following naming solutions.

9. TEST THE NAMES			
We now check the possible names against our criteria. (Mark with an X)			
	Check Name (by number):		
Name:	1	2	3
General Criteria			
Easy to pronounce			
Pleasant to look at			
Easy to remember			
No negative associations			
Available for trademark (pending formal search)			
Available for URL (or a good approximation)			
Passes the phone test			
Specific Criteria			
Appropriate to Singular Idea			
Appropriate to the brand profile			
Distinct or unique within its market			

10. TEST THE NAMES (cont.)			
We now check the possible names against our criteria. (Mark with an X)			
	Check Name (by number):		
Name:	4	5	6
General Criteria			
Easy to pronounce			
Pleasant to look at			
Easy to remember			
No negative associations			
Available for trademark (pending formal search)			
Available for URL (or a good approximation)			
Passes the phone test			
Specific Criteria			
Appropriate to Singular Idea			
Appropriate to the brand profile			
Distinct or unique within its market			

11. ADDING VALUE TO THE NAME

Every possible name has both an upside and a downside. This is what makes choosing a name challenging.

The good news is that the function of the name is to be imprinted with our brand over time. This means that it is possible to mitigate the downside of almost any name.

Here are some ways to add value to any solution we select:

Logo design

Color choice

Tagline

Repeated "core messages"

Visual icons and design elements

12. PROPOSED NAME

We believe any of the selected names will serve us effectively. We show here the name we propose for our brand.

13. REASONS

These are the reasons we believe this name is the best name for the brand.
