

How to pick the perfect name for your company

THE NAME of your business is the first thing customers see and hear. Choosing the wrong one could spell disaster for your new company or lead to stalled growth later on.

1

BE VAGUE Think about what you want to represent now and in the future, says Maria Cypher, principal of Catchword, a naming firm in San Francisco. You may be selling lamps today, but do you anticipate selling furniture one day? Do you hope to go international? If so, you wouldn't want to name your company U.S. Lamps and Lighting. A name that could be interpreted more broadly, such as Bright Ideas, will open up bigger possibilities for your brand.

2

EVOKE AN IMAGE JetBlue stands out from airline names such as Southwest and American by bringing to mind clear skies and limitless soaring, says Sasha Stack, head of the naming group at Lippincott, an international brand agency. Dove, a delicate white bird, conjures gentleness and purity, all positive characteristics of soap.

3

MAKE IT MEAN SOMETHING The best names stand for something, even if the meaning isn't obvious, says Margaret Wolfson, founder and chief creative direc-

tor of River + Wolf, a New York City-based brand-naming agency. Google comes from *googol*, the mathematical word for the digit 1 followed by 100 zeros, which is apt for a search engine tasked with generating infinite answers. (The spelling was altered for ease of pronunciation.)

4

KEEP IT CONCISE The easiest names to remember roll off the tongue, have straightforward spellings and are short, says Wolfson. It was with good reason that a company once known as Starbucks Coffee, Tea and Spices changed its name to the simple one-word brand we now all know. Think about how people will search for your company online, how the name will sound when you answer the office phone and how it could look printed on your product.

5

CONSIDER LITERARY DEVICES Some tricks that appeal to the human ear, says Wolfson, are alliteration (Jamba Juice, Lululemon), rhyme (Fitbit) and assonance, which is the repetition of a vowel sound (as in YouTube). The odds are low that you'll find an English-language word that isn't already in use, so also think about compound words or mash-ups (SoulCycle) or foreign words (Nike is the Greek goddess of victory). —RACHEL RABKIN PEACHMAN @rachelpeachman

47%

Percentage of female entrepreneurs who are interested in starting another business in the next three years, compared with 18 percent of male entrepreneurs, according to the report *The Psychology of Entrepreneurship*.



DITCH YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

IN MY DECADES of coaching entrepreneurs to communicate effectively, I've noticed that most elevator pitches are wordy, boring and generic. There's a better way to introduce yourself and your business: Create an *intrmercial*. Think of it as a cross between an introduction and a commercial.

DON'T START WITH YOUR NAME People won't remember it anyway.

INSTEAD Ask a question or tell a personal story. I once coached a client for a pitching contest. All the other contestants started with their name, but my client, who owned a lingerie brand for curvy ladies, started with a story: "It's Valentine's Day, and a curvy girl like me would like to buy something sexy..." Guess who won the contest?

DON'T SAY YOUR TITLE What is a marketing strategist anyway? Millions of people have the same title; there is only one you.

INSTEAD Tell your audience what sets you apart. A financial adviser I work with says this: "During the huge economic downturn in 2008, I didn't lose one client."

DON'T RELY ON FACTS AND FIGURES

They will underscore your message, but they won't make it memorable.

INSTEAD Use vivid language to help people understand how your business can save them time or money. A marketing specialist I know compares herself to MacGyver, so people associate her with someone who will solve problems. —ROBYN HATCHER

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