

River + Wolf

Agency & Process

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overview

Agency Overview

River + Wolf is a top ranked brand naming and writing agency that creates product names, company names, and service names, along with brand stories and messaging. We work in all industries and with all sizes of companies, from solopreneurs to Fortune 500s.

Given the agency's consistently high customer feedback, media coverage, and international reach, Clutch—the leading provider of unbiased ratings and reviews for marketing agencies—has ranked River + Wolf in the top of global naming agencies. Additionally, the independent marketing review platforms UpCity and The Manifest, recognized River + Wolf as the number one New York City brand naming consultancy.

River + Wolf works with clients around the globe and in all industries, among them beauty, healthcare, arts and entertainment, education, business advisory, food and beverage, technology, electronics, finance, consumer packaged goods, media, arts & entertainment, non-profits, and lifestyle. Clients include Sephora, Burt's Bees, Coca Cola, the World Financial Center, Discover Card, Citibank, Samsung, Target, Unilever, Vulcan Productions, Calvin Klein, and Bangkok Bank, to mention a few of hundreds.





Why River+Wolf

- + Flexible, easy to work with
- + Competitive pricing
- + Agency principal 100% involved
- + Global trademark legal screening
- + In-country linguistic checks
- + Streamlined process

team

Margaret Wolfson



Margaret Wolfson
Founder & Chief Creative

As River + Wolf's Chief Creative, Margaret names for companies throughout the world, from start-ups and mid-sized businesses to global Fortune 500s such as Sephora, Burt's Bees, Unilever, University of California, Coca Cola, Auberge Resorts, and Bangkok Bank. As a naming specialist, she has been quoted in and written for a wide-range of journals, among them the The New York Times, AdAge, The Wharton Magazine, NBC News, Crain's, Forbes, Huffington Post, TNW, and Fast Company.

In 2018 she was selected as a top female entrepreneur by the Huffington Post. Margaret also lectures widely on brand naming and has appeared in such places as the Wharton School, Columbia University, the Harvard Business Club, and at the Institute Francaise de la Mode and Cinquieme Sens in Paris, France.

Margaret's work as a naming specialist is deeply informed by a long career as an agency creative director and award-winning author and performer. This work has provided her with unparalleled management skills, in-depth language ability, and a wide-ranging global perspective. Margaret received her M.A. from New York University in literature and communications.

Darren Geliebter



Darren Geliebter
IP Attorney

Darren Geliebter is a founding partner of Lombard & Geliebter LLP with over 15 years of experience in intellectual property litigation and protection. His expertise in intellectual property law includes prosecuting and managing domestic and international trademark and patent portfolios, trademark clearance, oppositions and cancellations before the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board, trademark, patent and related IP and business litigation in the federal courts, and domain name disputes, including UDRP and ACPA actions.

A few awards include Winner of New York Enterprise Report's 2011 award for Best Attorneys for Growing Businesses in the Intellectual Property category. For the past five years, Darren has been included in the Super Lawyers List in recognition for excellence in the practice of Intellectual Property law. As River + Wolf's collaborating attorney he handles trademark clearance, from preliminary screening to full search and registration.

Courtney Maum



Courtney Maum
Naming

Courtney began her branding work as a trend forecaster in Paris, France at the well-known Nelly Rodi and Alchimie agencies, before moving into naming, copywriting, and voice messaging work for a distinguished list of clients, among them L'Oréal, Lancôme, Microsoft, Bloomberg, and American Express. Courtney has worked as a consultant for some of the most respected branding agencies in the world such as Interbrand, Landor, and CBX. As a River + Wolf naming associate she works in name development, naming systems, taglines, and copywriting. As a successful author of two novels published by Simon & Schuster, Courtney brings the writer's keen eye and ear to all naming projects as well as the ability to go beyond the obvious.

Caitlin Barrett



Caitling Barret
Naming

Prior to becoming a naming associate for River + Wolf, Caitlin served as Director of Verbal Identity at the New York City Interbrand office for seven years, working with clients such as Kellogg's, Morgan Stanley, The North Face, and Wrangler, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, and Ologie. In this role, she led client relationships across multiple projects, ranging from brand strategy, research, and internal brand engagement to creative outputs like naming, messaging, brand voice, and content strategy. At River + Wolf she works primarily in naming, naming architecture, and brand messaging.

Jacqueline Lisk



Jacqueline Lisk
Writing/Research

Jacqueline's work has appeared in dozens of publications and newspapers, including Inc. Forbes, USA Today, Washington Post, Entrepreneur, AdExchanger and AdAge. Prior to joining River + Wolf as a researcher/writing associate, she served as the head of Mediaplanet's global production, overseeing production teams for 25+ offices in North America and Europe. Jacqueline graduated summa cum laude from Boston University's College of Communication.



Elisabeth Evans

Client Support/Research

Prior to joining the River + Wolf as researcher and project support assistant, Elisabeth Evans worked as an educational administrator, professor, and researcher. Most recently the director of School Year Abroad in Rennes, France. Elisabeth holds a Ph.D. in Foreign Language and ESL Education from the University of Iowa, an M.A. in French Literature from the University of Colorado, and a B.A. in French Studies from the University at Albany, SUNY.

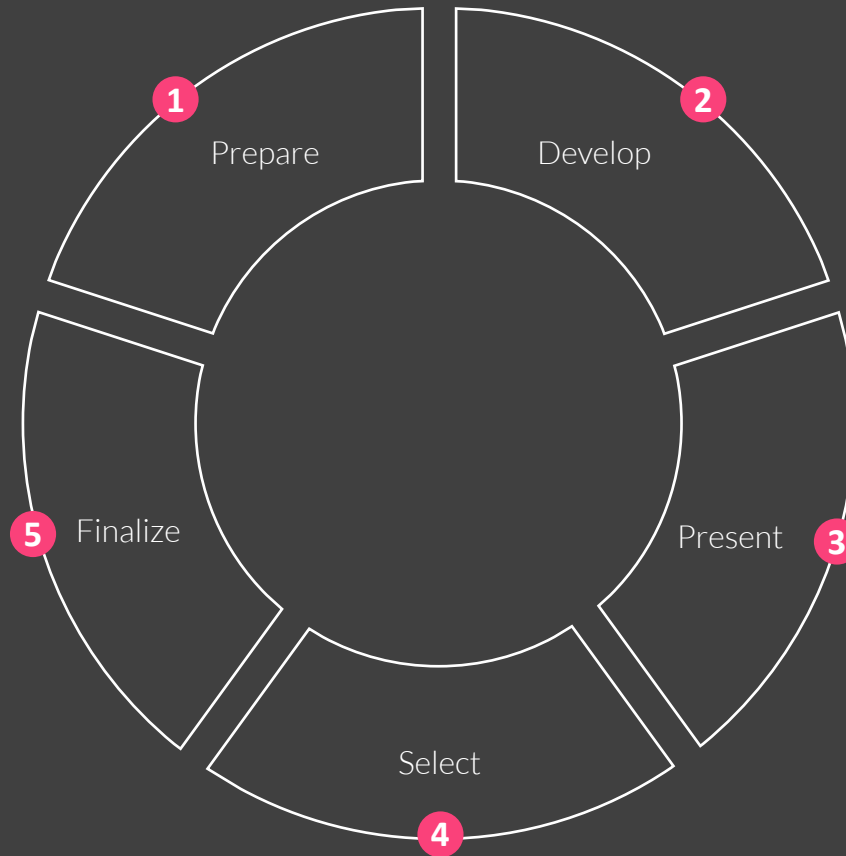


Irasema Rivera

Visual Branding

Irasema partners with River + Wolf in all areas of visual branding. Her experience spans the development of brands through various channels including identity, digital, print, video and event design. Prior to establishing her own studio, she has served as Creative Director for several companies, among them, Real Estate Arts, Disney Publishing (NYC, Denver and Mexico City), Bill Smith Studio (NYC and Texas), Haymarket Media (New York /London) and Latina Media Ventures. In addition to her work with River + Work she works as a Senior Art Director at NBC Studios in New York.

process



Prepare

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Prior to any naming, River + Wolf does an in-depth dive into the client's business, searching competitors, existing naming structures, and client's interests in terms of communication, character, and construction of the name. Preparation also includes a teleconference with client and its key stakeholders to get additional clarity on interests and orientations.



CHARACTER

Like people, names have different personalities. In the branding world, this is referred to as “tone of voice.” Tone of voice relates to the personality of your written communications.



COMMUNICATIONS

Names can be formed in many ways. Common constructions include a single or fusion of dictionary words, clipped words, the merging of word parts, or short phrases.



CONSTRUCTION

Names can generally convey one or two communications. It is also important to note that a name doesn't always have to map back to a clearly defined message.



CONTINUUM

In trademark, names exist on a *Spectrum of Distinctiveness*: on one end is the generic and on the other, the fanciful/abstract with descriptive, suggestive, and arbitrary in-between.

Develop

MASTER LIST

Once naming routes are established and approved, the River + Wolf team develops a creative brief (based on responses on questionnaire). This serves as the blueprint for name development. For every project, vast numbers of names are developed. At this stage, many ideas and types of names are considered if they adhere to the naming parameters defined in the creative brief.

Present

NAMING DECK + RATIONALES

River + Wolf develops a vast number of names per project. This list is winnowed down with a quick AI assisted search to avoid obvious issues. A large pool of names is then submitted for a preliminary trademark screening conducted by River + Wolf's collaborating attorney. Names are then assessed for possible conflicts with names already registered in relevant PTOs (Patent and Trademark Office) and are ranked as high, medium, and low risk. River + Wolf uses the specific naming criteria described on slides 21- 23 to winnow the surviving candidates down to 5-10 names (sometimes more) to present to client. Presentation is in form of PPT deck. The thinking behind each name is detailed. The PPT deck is presented via teleconference. Clients can expect ~5-10 low to medium risk names post legal screening depending on industry, name construction, number of countries name needs to clear, etc.).

Select

POST PRESENTATION

After Round 1 presentation, clients can stop or move to a Round 2 with refined naming parameters or, using criteria on slides 22 and 23 (if helpful), they can select a name for full/comprehensive search. River + Wolf takes client through multiple exercises to help winnow names down to final choices.

Finalize

FULL SEARCH/DISASTER CHECK

After selecting a top name (and back up name) of interest, River + Wolf's collaborating attorney (or client's own attorney) conducts a **full trademark** search on this name. This is a deeper search than a preliminary screening—it includes searching additional databases and relevant sources, such as periodicals, journals, the internet, domain names, state business filings, state trademark filings, and so on. For global projects, River + Wolf's translation partner can perform a check for negative meanings or pronunciation issues on final names of interest.

Naming Criteria

when evaluating each name, consider the following:

APPEARANCE

How does the name look: the letterforms themselves, in an identity or on an object or package?

DISTINCTION

Does the name feel right for industry orientation while still being memorable within the company it keeps?

DEPTH

How many layers of meaning does the name have?
Will it reveal more associations over time?

ENERGY

How much vitality does the name have—can it generate “buzz” (if that is important)?

HUMANITY

Does the name feel approachable or is cold and distant?
Does it reflect the values of the company?

POSITIONING

How relevant is the name to the product, service, or industry?

SOUND

How does the name sound when spoken? Is it easily articulated and enjoyably heard?

TRADEMARK/URL/LINGUISTICS

What is the risk level of the name? Is the URL available/for sale at reasonable cost? Is the name free of negative meaning?

Score Card

rate the selected names on a scale of 1-10 for each criteria

	NAME 1	NAME 2	NAME 3	NAME 4
APPEARANCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISTINCTION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEPTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENERGY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HUMANITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
POSITIONING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOUND	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TRADEMARK/URL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Select

choosing the name

Don't

REJECT NAMES YOU DON'T LOVE.

Names are more like friendships—they accrue power over time.

EXPECT A NAME TO PLEASE EVERYONE.

People have different responses to names. A great name doesn't have to be loved by all.

ACCEPT ONLY EXACT MATCH DOT COM.

Be open to adding a suffix or prefix to secure an available dotcom URL.

REQUIRE NAMES TO BE FAMILIAR AND UNIQUE.

If a name is familiar, it won't be unique. If it is unique, it won't be familiar.

GET HUNG UP SHORT.

A well-designed longer name can work just as well as a short name.

DENY THE CHALLENGES OF TRADEMARK

Many names need to be screened to find marks with reasonable risk levels.

Quotes

“

Communication was very clear, and each step of the process included an in-person (Zoom) session to review the results together. We were very impressed by how quickly their team worked to meet our deadlines. The research they did in order to explore various routes for naming options was apparent. The team is also highly creative, with a gift for creating beautiful names and words out of different elements of language. We were very happy with the entire process.

Whitney Peak, Senior Brand Manager
Proximo Spirits (global beverage)

“

Margaret and her team go above and beyond to make sure they conform to our expectations. They worked so hard to ensure they found the perfect name for our company. The name they developed, Stella Rising, has won praise all around. Margaret and her team gave such great rationales for the names they suggested, and it makes messaging so much easier. We're very satisfied.

Marlea Clarke, VP Marketing & Insights
Stella Rising (digital marketing/PR)

“

I was impressed by how they pinpointed our needs and provided a list of names that hit our brief perfectly. Within two rounds, they gave us a list of names that thoroughly fulfilled our requests. They were collaborative and communicative throughout. The workflow was great. When we provided feedback, they adopted it and evolved the product (names).

Meridith Miller, VP Marketing
Amperсанд (media company)

Quotes

“

I expected River + Wolf to be a creative wildcard, and that's what they turned out to be. Their level of creativity and passion for what they do set them apart from other vendors. We had the budget to hire two naming companies simultaneously. After testing the top five options presented by both companies, River + Wolf had the winning name by quite a large margin. We were incredibly happy with them.

Perry Abbenante, VP Marketing
Beyond Good (global chocolate company)

“

From the beginning of our partnership, Margaret understood my brand. She understood what I wanted and presented many great options, which made it hard to choose a name. I can't emphasize enough the quality of River + Wolf's storytelling abilities. Margaret understands people and their needs. I would highly recommend River + Wolf. They take the time to sit down and learn about your brand and your vision for it.

Kimberly Verge, Founder
Apparel (maternity lingerie)

“

They were able to deliver something that I wouldn't have thought possible given the timeframe. I'm personally happy with the outcome (Tenth Revolution), and my team is as well. Margaret (Founder & Chief Creative), moved mountains to make sure that things got done on time and to my satisfaction. They were available to us for feedback 24/7. They are experts in the naming industry.

Kashif Naqshbandi, CMO
Tenth Revolution (global cloud solutions)

Quotes

“

The workflow could not have been more efficient. Margaret was always willing to be flexible around timing and scheduling and was kind yet efficient and action oriented. River + Wolf, by far, had the most soul of any naming agency we interviewed. Throughout the process, we felt empowered and heard. impressed or satisfied with the process. It was flawless.

Brophy Tyree, Co-Founder
Earthtones (Regenerative travel company)

“

River + Wolf was very clear and methodical throughout the process, with written and verbal questionnaires and discussions, keeping us informed throughout the process. Their principal was incredibly responsive and continues to be so even though the project is completed. We were very impressed with their understanding of the legal limitations of naming as well as the wide net they were able to cast in order to present us with so many good options.

Dana Miller, VP Marketing
Crisp (data analytics/AI)

“

I've worked with Fortune 500 companies in the past, and we talked to a vendor who was in the same category. What I found is that we got the top experience and expertise from River + Wolf at a reasonable cost which you don't always get from other agencies. River + Wolf hit the nail on the head, and they developed a thoughtful brand name and logo that will revolutionize the higher education market.

Susan Scholes, CMO
Anthology (higher ed technology company)

Get in touch.

Naming is not easy, so don't get discouraged. If you need help, whether a consultation or a full naming engagement, we'd love to hear from you.

In addition to working directly with brands, River + Wolf also partners with advertising, design, and branding firms. If you want to learn more about River + Wolf, including what our clients have to say, visit: clutch.co/profile/river-wolf

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Thank you

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