

Finding Your Perfect Brand Name

By Silvina Rodriguez Picaro

Every company needs names for their business, for their products, for their services, for their procedures, and even for their mascots (if they have them)!



Your brand name is the first step in building a strong, memorable brand, and it is worth consideration and effort. After all, a great brand name - or a group of brand names - may be your company's most valuable assets, and definitely worth the investment.

I recently watched *The Founder*, which narrates the story of the early days of McDonald's, showing when Ray Kroc, a struggling salesman from Illinois, met Mac and Dick McDonald, who were running a burger restaurant in 1950's California. Kroc was amazed by their speedy system for preparing the food and recognized major franchise potential. Kroc soon managed to pull the company from the brothers, creating a multi-billion dollar empire. When he was asked why he didn't just copy the system, Kroc explained the name "McDonald's" was the reason; he found it compelling.

The right name can be powerful, conveying a concept, driving differentiation, fostering recognition, and communicating valuable brand attributes to consumers. Customers need to be able to identify it, remember it, and compare it to others.

But creating the right brand name can be a difficult challenge.

- How do you get a name that works?
- How do you make it catchy and memorable?
- How can you make it convey the company's values?
- How do you make sure it is original?

Finding a great brand name can be overwhelming. Neil Blumenthal, the co-founder of Warby Parker, said it took them six months and more than 2,000 options to find their perfect name. Undoubtedly, finding the right brand name takes hard work and deep thinking.

So What Makes a Great Brand Name?

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to a great brand name, there are some characteristics to keep in mind to make it straightforward (for you to use) and simple (for others to remember). Below are 10 attributes for a great trademark name.

A great trademark name should be:

- **Meaningful:** Communicating your brand's meaning; portraying its image and essence.
- **Original:** Unique and distinctive should be words that characterize your brand name. It must be all of these things to stand out from competitors.
- **Positive:** Must cultivate a positive emotional connection.
- **Protectable:** Can be officially registered and defended in court before an opposition.
- **Pronounceable:** Especially for those who speak other languages.
- **Accessible:** People can easily understand it, say it, spell it, or even Google it.
- **Memorable:** Can be remembered easily, without confusion with another similar brand name.

- **Visual:** Ease in communication through design, such as icons, logos, colors, etc.
- **Enduring:** Can grow with the company, keep its relevance, and favorability over time, and ideally be adapted for different products and brand extensions.
- Above all, a powerful trademark name should be **SIMPLE!**

Once the name is chosen, it is important to verify that it can be registered as a:

- Legal Entity (Inc., LLC, Corp.)
- Brand (in the corresponding categories)
- URL (as a .com domain)
- URL as local domain (“.com.ar”, “.com.br” or as needed)

Additionally, it is important that the brand name is available on the main social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. Although you might never need them or have an interest in using them, you should always block their use to defend the brand and avoid any future conflicts.

All this is useful criteria to help you eliminate possible names, but there is just one big question to determine whether the chosen name is successful. What matters most is: does it resonate well with people? There are online services available to make it easier for you, such as Onym, Panabee, and Network Solutions, which suggest names and domains. These tools can be us for brainstorming, but it’s essential to examine and test a brand name personally. A successful brand name is intentional and purposeful. There are three main steps in choosing a brand name:

1. Articulate Your Core Identity

First and foremost, you must understand and be clear about who you are and what you’re trying to achieve. We call this your “core identity.” which includes:

- **Vision:** Why your company exists.
- **Mission:** What your company does and who they do it for.
- **Values:** Your fundamental beliefs, which explains how you do it.

Your Mission, Vision, and Values encapsulate your purpose and influence everything you do. Once you know who you are, execute a competitive analysis to identify and understand your key differentiators. Understanding what makes your brand unique helps in finding a great brand name.

2. Brainstorm + Discard

Host a structured brainstorm. Feel free to invite your stakeholders or your most valuable creatives – anyone you think could help! While it may feel more natural to just throw around some names until you feel like one is right, we find people often need some sort of structure or set of guidelines to work with.

You may want to start this session with certain prompts or specific activities. For example, you might instruct your brainstorm group to:

- Write down the adjectives that represent your products or services.
- Do a free word association around your product or service.
- Describe how you want the consumer to feel when they use your product/service.
- Think of the different categories your brand might branch off into and identify what unites them all.

Eliminating names is absolutely the most frustrating part of the process. There's no point in moving on to testing stages for a name that's already taken, so you need to eliminate front runners that are not available.

Narrow your brainstormed names down to a list of the team's favorites (ideally around 10-20). Then, search if the URL is available. You may go to a domain name registrar like Network Solutions or GoDaddy. Once this first search is done, go to the United States Patent and Trademark Office's database of registered trademarks (www.uspto.gov) and use their Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS). If they're all taken, you must come back to your drawing board. This exercise will surely narrow your list down quickly. If you're a genius who somehow has a plethora of unregistered names, narrow down your list to your top three to test.

If a name you like appears to be available, hire an experienced legal attorney to examine it thoroughly, and then proceed to register it. When you're at a more official stage, register similar trademarks and URLs, as well (such as the Marriott hotel empire registering "Mariott," "Marriot," and other similarly spelled terms to ensure you always land on their site). A customer might search for your website with a simple typo and never find you.

3. Test!

Now that you've cleared the legal barrier, here comes the most exciting part. Play around with creating mockups (think logos, product packaging, and homepages), testing the performance of your top three names. You may be surprised learning what resonates with people and what ends up falling.

Here's one simple and straightforward testing idea:

- Create a few logotype ideas to start exploring the name's visual potential and select one per brand name.
- Build a branded landing page for each selected name. Use an identical text and only

change logo/brand name.

- Run a highly targeted pay-per-click ad to your target customers for a week.
- See which page got more conversions.
- Run with the strongest one!

Notably, this article is not exclusively for those just starting off. A brand name can make it or break it for your company, and if you feel like yours is just not working, revisit why you chose that name in the first place. It is never too late to re-name, re-brand, and regain traction in your market. The South Beach Diet, for example, did not always have that catchy, memorable, and evocative brand name; it was originally called the Modified Carbohydrate Diet, a name so forgettable that they did not sell (or really, skyrocket) until they changed it!

No matter what stage you are at in your business, a great brand name can make a huge difference. I hope you find this guide useful to help you create a powerful brand name that delivers ROI!

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