

BUSINESS NAMES FOR THE NET: GET IT RIGHT!

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What's in a name?

When it comes to naming your business (this discussion also applies to products), what are the most important factors to consider? You have to like it, it has to be catchy, and others you poll must think its cool...or cute...or bold (or whatever you're looking to project). Nice, but is that it?

A great name can make a big difference in business success, and can help drive targeted traffic to your website and thus, what you're selling.

Naming for the Internet

Any decision on names (besides making sure the name is not taken) should be researched thoroughly. This is especially important if you are going to use the internet as a sales channel (ecommerce) or simply communicate information - benefits, features, and value. (Who wouldn't use the internet and market their services online these days?)

Besides the "nice" things we want out of our name, we have to think about it a bit more strategically. What factors will contribute to it being readily "found" online? How easily can people remember it? What will the search engines think of it (huh?)?

A Few Naming Tips

1. Short is Good

Try and keep the name to 3 syllables, max...preferably 1-2. Look at the top brands – Google, Coke, GE, Wal-Mart, IBM...these rank among the most highly recognized brands in the world.

2. Match URL

Your business name, ideally, matches your web URL. So, Annex Media Marketing is www.AnnexMediaMarketing.com. Kind of long, but it's intuitive to searchers conveying the type of service offering. Also take Google, thought of synonymously as Google.com. If you're matching, chances are searchers can find your site directly (by typing the URL, not even trying a Google search) quickly by guessing. That's great brand recognition.

3. Keywords Are Good

Might be tough, and perhaps not the most important thing, but historically search engines have been known to reward engines with URL words that mirror the site content or offering. This appears to be less of a factor these days. It still makes sense in other ways. Say you want information on pets and instead of a search, you simply enter URL pets.com – you will likely find a website with information on pets. Not necessarily the best one, but nonetheless likely information related to the term of interest.

4. Rare & Unique is Good

The more unique the name, the fewer pages on the net will be likely to have those words, diminishing competition and providing a high rank opportunity. Let's say you're selling software, and of course you think it's the best (or your last name is "Best"). You name your business Best Software. Nice, but ineffective.

Type "Best Software" into Google.com and you'll find about 63 million results at last count. Happy climbing! It's not only too generic, but it's a too common a combination of terms. Think of the countless posts, pages, or promotions where people are using the term in a variety of ways. "This is the best software we ever reviewed" (a consumer magazine) or "We have the best software on the market" (the countless other vendors making this claim). Think about all the possibilities...*best software* can be followed by so many terms that make sense on a huge range of subjects and in countless contexts.

Making up a word is not a bad idea at all! Let's say your software is point of sale (POS) software and its advantage is its speed. How about a name like POSGO Software? How about PosGo.com or PosGOSoftware.com? Well compared to the nearly 63 million results, a search of PosGo on Google results in a measly 1500 results. Even though *Software* itself results in HUGE (1.6B) in Google, combined with PosGo to form PosGo Software, provides only 31 results! Now we're talking. Short, sweet, unique, and conveys (although not directly) the service offered or and a key feature.

Consider too that a combination of fairly generic terms that are rarely combined can have few page results. How about Lava Life (lavalife.com). Sure, there are about 2 million results, but the vast majority of these belong to or is about this adult dating service!

Get Started!

Besides a name, you ultimately want to be found and rank well for the key terms that drive goals and conversions, whatever they may be. This speaks to the need for a comprehensive approach to brand building. Just as Google is now synonymous with search (Google was only born 10 years ago and completely unknown) your business name can be synonymous with what you offer. Consider these tips to get you off to a great start!

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