

11 Top Tips for Selecting a Brand Name

by Rick Jacobs,
Principal of Monigle Associates

Developing a name for your company or product is crucial in brand building. It's not a process to take lightly, nor is it wise to rush to a decision because letterhead needs to be printed or the Web site is ready to launch. Here are 11 tips to help you successfully develop a brand name:

- 1 Don't describe—distinguish.**

The biggest mistake companies make is being too descriptive with their names. A name should not attempt to simply describe; it should have the ability to suggest the essence—the unique characteristics—of your company. To be effective, a name must have brand potential. A name that is narrow or too descriptive does not have the depth or dimension to become an effective brand.
- 2 CEO involvement is key.**

Because selecting and adopting a new name is a highly emotional and political decision, you will not succeed without support from the top. Be sure that you have buy-in from the “C-Suites” in the beginning and that you keep them on board throughout the process.
- 3 Avoid alphabet soup.**

Names that are comprised of initials are meaningless. They get lost in the marketplace clutter and are extremely costly to support and promote. Jack Trout says in *The New Positioning*, “A no-name name is the corporate equivalent of a disguise.” Unless you are a GE or an IBM with millions to spend on advertising, avoid initials. Real or invented words are many times easier for consumers to remember.
- 4 Research cannot replace decision making.**

While research is a valuable tool to test for unforeseen red flags in a potential new name, there is a tendency for many to fall back on research to select the name. No one understands your organization and your positioning objectives better than you do. Don't allow popularity to determine the name. The most popular name is not necessarily the strongest name for the long term.
- 5 If it's comfortable—forget it.**

Everyone else will. The most successful names over the long term are often those that are initially the most controversial (think Google, Yahoo!, Chipotle, and Ikea). When you select a name, you are looking for something to punch through the marketplace clutter, not add to it. Overtly literal meanings can sometimes limit growth and show a lack of company creativity.
- 6 Keep it brief.**

One word brands are most effective. Lengthy, multiple word names lead to truncation. When people abbreviate your name, you lose control over your brand.
- 7 Employee contests don't work.**

While they are often well-meaning, they do not result in names that are based on the appropriate strategic rationale.
- 8 It's about strategy, not emotion and politics.**

Many clients are surprised that selecting a name is such an emotionally charged decision. Naming decisions are fraught with politics, turf issues, and individual preferences. Stick to the strategy and do not allow the lowest common denominator solution.
- 9 Manage the decision-making process.**

There is always someone who will try to derail the process. Determine at the outset who the decision-makers will be, and then work diligently to keep the process on track.
- 10 Always be prepared for leaks.**

It is very difficult to keep a new name a secret. At the beginning of the naming process, prepare your press release and press kit in the event of a leak.
- 11 Don't expect unanimity.**

In the first few weeks following introduction, there is often a lot of discussion and publicity about a new name. Familiarity breeds comfort. As people become more familiar with the name, they will become more comfortable with it.

Excerpted from the presentation entitled “Brand-Building Strategies,” given by Rick Jacobs, Principal, Monigle Associates, at various professional conferences.

Corporate Identity and Branding

Brand Research

Brand Strategy & Positioning

Brand Architecture

Naming

Design

Branded Environments

Digital Media

identityManager™

Brand Ambassador™ Programs

As the country's largest independent brand and design consultancy, Monigle Associates offers the deepest and most unique integration of services available, delivered by a team of passionate and committed experts. Our commitment to independence drives us to create innovative and high-value offerings in the areas of brand strategy, creative expression, and comprehensive implementation that allow our clients to build and sustain their brands over time.

**For more information, please
contact the marketing
department:**

Telephone
800 346 4710

Facsimile
303 321 7939

E Mail
mail@monigle.com

Internet
www.monigle.com

Monigle Associates Inc.
150 Adams Street
Denver, Colorado 80206

MONIGLE ASSOCIATES