

## BRAND NAMES

### ARE THEY REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?



*“It was  
Dimension  
Six or Nike...  
I think we  
got it right in  
the end”*

*Phil Knight*

The importance of a name is so often underestimated. Names represent much more than simply a combination of letters, they allow for your brand to be recognised in the world. Typically, names are often the first measure by which we are categorised and judged by our peers. Whether you share the name with someone famous or infamous, unique or abstract, names represent who we are, and can even define our future.

The process involved in selecting a brand and identifying its appeal is much more complex than you may think. Our brains need to interpret a variety of factors before deciding in that 200th of a second if we truly like and trust the brand presented to us. We as humans have certainly come a long way in our ability to evaluate visual stimuli and this is clearly demonstrated in our ability to decipher all elements of a brand.

When evaluating a brand as a whole, we look at a variety of things. We look for colour, shape, size and, most importantly the word itself. Based on the symmetry of the type, shape, spelling and sound, our brain subconsciously analyses the word presented to us against thousands of others to 1) judge if we ourselves actually like the word, 2) assess which distinguishing elements of this name we can identify with, and 3) what associations or pairings we may have with that name.

## FAMOUS NAMES

A successful name can solidify a brand's position in its respected market for decades. Names give a brand life and are commonly viewed as an indispensable tool in an organisation's fight for growth, development and overall success. Often, a name can even be the sole difference customers see when selecting between brands (think Yellow Pages directory) if they do not have a preference based on product differences.

Many of the top naming agencies worldwide hold the belief that organisations have one "true" chance at developing a name. One that is catchy, memorable and that defines the production or services you are providing, the industry you are looking to revolutionise or simply a tool to catch the attention of consumers and competitors alike.

Just like architects create masterful homes and engineers piece together industry-changing machinery – coming up with the right name can be a work of genius in itself. Although it can be a difficult and sometimes overwhelming prospect to get right, there have been a number of organisations that have succeeded over the past century with iconic names that have significantly impacted not only their industries but the way agencies analyse and develop brand names as a whole.

Here's a little history about three of the world's most distinct and well-recognised brands and how they got their names.

### Nike

*"It was Dimension Six or Nike... I think we got it right in the end"*

After its unsuccessful entrance into the market as "Blue Ribbon Sports" co-founder Phil Knight decided that a re-brand and re-name was in order and as a result began to investigate different options. It was one of the company's longest-serving employees, Jeff Johnson who is believed to have come up with the iconic name Nike, derived from a dream he had. According to the book "Just Do It", Johnson presented the name to his co-workers, arguing that successful competing brands in the American sporting market had only one or two syllables – and was combined with a unique letter – usually included to make the name stand out. The Nike name was eventually chosen and thankfully prevailed over Knight's preference of Dimension Six.

### Starbucks

*"Who would have thought the novel Moby-dick would be the inspiration for the name behind one of the largest coffee chains in the world?"*

Cargo House was almost the name chosen by Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl, and Gordon Bowker. It wasn't until one of Bowker's

advertising partners suggested that words begin with "st" had greater power and substance when naming a company. As a result the team began to re-think the brand name and worked on a number of alternatives.

According to an interview done by Gordon Bowker, appearing in the Seattle Times, the partners started to play around with words beginning with "st." They brainstormed everything from mining towns like "Starbo" to characters in Herman Melville's classic novel Moby-Dick, eventually settling on the first mate in the novel. His name, Starbuck.

### Google

*"It all came down to a slip of the finger and google was born"*

There are many believed scenarios surrounding the birth of the Google name, however Stanford University computer scientist David Koller published the definitive account, explaining that the name came about from a simple misspelling. It's understood co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin first called the search engine "BackRub," but while Page was talking with office friends, one of them suggested variations of "googol." One name in particular that caught Page's eye was "googolplex" (a "1" followed by 100 zeros). The next step was to search to see if the Web domain for the name was indeed available, accidentally misspelled the name and searching it as "Google." Page fell for the name and within hours of its creation, the name Google was registered.

## BRANDOMETER OR "VERBING UP"

Financial success has often been the measuring stick in defining an organisation's accomplishments, but financial success has become so common amongst the largest brands in the world that it's not enough anymore to be "rich". With companies growing so large they financially dwarf most nations' GDP (currently of the top 100 economies worldwide – 52 are businesses) the focus has switched to obtaining status in the market, with many perceiving the ultimate status symbol to be reaching Brandometer.

The term Brandometer is relatively new but refers to a brand name that has colloquially become a generic term for a product or service. This act of associating a product or service with a brand has certainly become a part of pop culture over the past few decades and has begun to become better recognised for its importance... this was not always the case.

Travel back through the last decade and you will see the concern expressed by organisations who had their brand name as a verb. You need to remember, everyone likes a short cut and by using a successful and well-known product as a generic term began to cause headaches for many businesses. Businesses saw this as a major flaw, with their name being associated with rival brands in the same markets and industries.

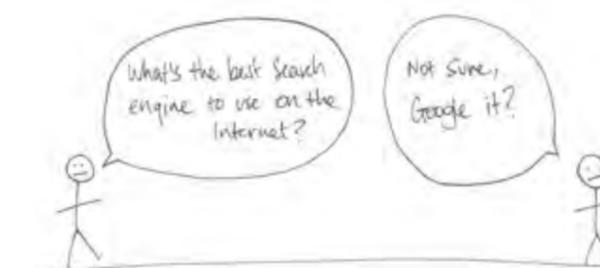
Companies such as Xerox (2004), Google (2006) and Adobe Photoshop (2011) all expressed concern about the issue of

their brands becoming too 'common' in the marketplace and felt they would lose their appeal if something wasn't done.

Since then a lot has changed with research indicating it's now beneficial when consumers start to "verb up" with your brand's name. The growth of the Internet in particular, along with a variety of other mediums has meant reputations are being made as quickly as they are being destroyed and as a result to get ahead you can't worry about the minor details.

Having a brand that is at the forefront of consumer's minds is a lethal commodity and should be considered an invaluable tool in your brand's fight for success.

Think about it. When consumers "Google" something instead of "web searching" for it or when they need a "Band Aid" for a cut they are acknowledging that brand as a leader – a new standard in that market or, even an inventor. What organisation wouldn't want that?



### Walmart is bigger than Norway



Norway's GDP: \$414.46 billion

Walmart's Revenue: \$421.89 billion

Walmart would rank as the world's 25th biggest country.

Source: Fortune/CNN Money, IMF

# UNO'S GUIDE

## BUILDING A BRAND NAME

We like to work through a process that must tick most, if not all of the following categories when developing a name.

Working in the industry for over 30 years, the UNO team has certainly evolved our process over the stretch.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Our first step in building a brand name begins with the suitability of the word. We like to ensure that there is a reasonable fit between the name and the intended business, not just solely from a descriptive stand point. If the business is fun then we like to take this into consideration, if its more serious then the name must reflect this.

### UNIQUENESS

The uniqueness of the name is very important for a brand. You need to weigh up a number of options such as; how does the name stack up against its competition, especially from other brands with similar names? Does it stand out from the crowd? Is it memorable in its appearance and written form? Once you can tick a few of these boxes then is time to take a look at the word itself.

### BREVITY, SPELLING & PRONUNCIATION

The form of the word becomes an integral part of its success. Something that is too long, difficult to pronounce or that has a level of ambiguity in its spelling can result in a tragic outcome. As a result we typically like to keep the word short and avoid unusual spelling of a name, unless it simply fits in with the playfulness of the brand being created.

### AMIABILITY

Another important component of the word is simply its likability. Will people enjoy using it? It is fun, stimulating; does it feel good on the tip of the tongue? Providing a brand with a name that reflects this will certainly go a long way to standing out against competitors and ensuring you remain in your customers minds.

### EXTENDABILITY

A point to keep in the back of your mind is the extendibility of the word. Although this may not apply to all cases, having a word that provides itself to playful marketing campaigns and opportunities to expand upon 'brand play' certainly works in the favour of the brand and business.

### PROTECTABILITY

The final point is the "protectability" of the word. This looks at whether the name can be trademarked and if it's availability on the web. So many companies make the mistake of devising a name without ensuring all protectable elements have been met. Do yourself a favour and put a bit of research into this point before you move forward with a name.



## WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

If there is one thing that we like to do with a level of scrutiny, it's ensuring that our name does not portray the wrong message. As touched on previously, the brain is an amazing asset. It loves to interpret colour, shapes and even words in unique ways, usually based on past experiences or even language barriers (slang) and these can sometimes be detrimental for your brand.

There's one repeating issue that commonly occurs with naming projects and that's language barriers. What you need to take into consideration is whether than name can be interpreted in various ways depending on language barriers in the country it is entering. Maybe one of the most famous examples of this was Fords entry into the South American market with the Ford Pinto, a car that had seen success in America. After a few months, Ford couldn't understand why the car was performing so poorly. It wasn't until Ford had undertaken some research on the topic that they discovered the word 'Pinto' in Brazilian was slang for 'tiny male genitals'...

## FINAL THOUGHT

A name truly is an integral part to your business and brands success. It can be a tough process to manage and even tougher to get right, but one that is necessary. If you're planning on doing it yourself try to at least take some of our methodologies and considerations on board when starting out, if not leave it to the professionals... we're here to help.



# UNO 2

This is our channel for airing opinions; a few of ours, our International Design Partnership friends and if you've got some, yours. Our aim is to start a few fires, kick a few tired ideas into shape and stir up a healthy debate on what we see around us.

Two Heads Offices: Hamburg, Melbourne, Mexico City, Stockholm, Tokyo