

# The End for Taglines?

## Not Just Yet...

Why do some businesses stand out over others? Is it location? Price? Product? Or the way they promote their business? You could make an argument for all of these elements, they're all valuable components for an organisations' success. However, here at UNO we feel the key lies in the fundamentals of a business, those which differentiate you from your competition. That is certainly your branding. More often than not, branding can be the only differential point for customers when making comparisons between your business and a competitor .

Branding is all about leaving an unforgettable image in the minds of those who see it. Usually if this is done effectively it's likely to resonate in a customers mind long after the purchase has been made and continue to be a key factor in their return to your business for years to come.

Typically, branding is made up by two key elements. The first and more glamorous side is logo design. Characteristically, seen as the most vital tool in helping your business stand out. This visual aid does wonders for organisations worldwide, and is a crucial element for success. The second, and potentially forgotten component is the humble tagline. No thrills, no spills. To put it all into perspective, if the logo design is the Ferrari of the branding world then the tagline is seen as the equivalent of an '87 Corolla, unappreciated and overlooked.

Somewhere amid the ebb and flow of the 21st century (which saw the boom of technology and social media, along with the decline of answering machines and disposable cameras ... just to name a few) businesses turned their back on the once prominent tagline.

Personally, I feel blame was unfairly placed on taglines for failed branding exercises, wayward marketing movements and subpar advertising campaigns. Businesses needed a scapegoat and unfortunately taglines were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Ryan Millbern, chief writer and creator of thoughtcatalog.com, looked at the tagline in depth, particularly in the last decade. In his article 'Taglines are dead: who killed them, and how can we bring them back to life', he attributes its' decline in businesses branding phases to three key factors. These being expectations, writing by committee (group influence) and group testing ... and I'd have to agree with all three.

### Expectations

The initial focus of expectation was, and still is, a major concern for the tagline. Businesses commonly make the mistake of expecting that a tagline will solve all of a company's branding issues. Unfortunately, this is incorrect. Taglines are capable of doing three distinct things;

- Giving your brand a voice and helping to inform customers about who you are, what you do and why you're different.
- The second centers on the idea of standing out or being noticed in a sea of competition (which is always a difficult task).
- As a tool designed to frame your branding campaign – taking those rough edges and adding polish to make your brand shine.

Personally, I feel that ever since the introduction of taglines like 'Just Do It' (Nike) or 'I'm loving it' (McDonalds) the expectation surrounding taglines have exploded tenfold. Taglines now have a target on their backs and, we feel, unfortunately they have been the scapegoat for many branding failures over the years.



### Writing by Committee

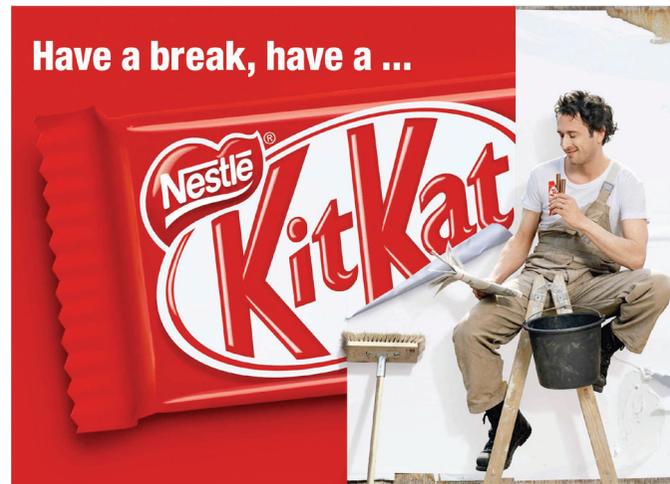
The idea of writing by committee is another interesting factor to evaluate. Most assess the process and idea of creating a tagline as 'simple' yet this is slightly misleading. The end result can seem simple but the process can usually be quite complex. It begins with research and brainstorming, designed to investigate every nook and cranny of the organisation and market, taking

the desired aim of the tagline and refining a set of words that provide substance to satisfy the needs and expectations of the organisation. The problems arise when the tagline is set (or thought to be done), it's then poked and prodded, pushed and shoved into place – with what could be deemed unnecessary input coming from various parties - ending up in the constant refinement of the tagline and the unsettling of the carefully put together phrase. Like the saying goes 'a camel is a horse designed by committee' and there's no better way to describe a failed tagline after too many individuals have tried to get involved and have their own input.

### Group Testing

The third component lies with group testing, predominately through market research and focus group related feedback. An effective method used by various organisations, designed to gain customer feedback on a variety of products and services entrance into the market – focus groups can sometimes create more headaches than good. What's unfortunate is that companies are willing to totally scrap a tagline based on the outcome of focus groups, even though the tagline may satisfy the desired aim or needs a business had set out to achieve. What's forgotten is that everyone is different and a small sample size of 10 - 20 may not accurately reflect the opinions of thousands, or hundreds of thousands of people. Yes, it may be our best representation of the target population, but it still does not mean a company needs to scrap the idea solely on the back of some poor feedback.

What if Larry Page and Sergey Brin gave up on Google just because of a few bad reviews? Or because in 1998 no one thought a search engine would be a valuable commodity for the future?



Whatever your opinion may be about taglines, it's difficult to argue that this small (typically 5 word) piece does not provide some sort of value to your organisation, product or service.

Personally, I love a good tagline, something that's funny or witty, typically describing the organisation or industry that a company may be in, or, one that simply makes fun of themselves while being able to get their point across effectively always makes me stand up and take notice. Besides, isn't that what we want from our branding, for people to stand up and take notice of it?

We are inundated on a daily basis with large quantities of business-related messages, and the need to stand out - getting your message across quickly and efficiently - is now more important than ever before. Taglines are still integral for a brand, typically their value grows over time and when your company's name, logo and taglines are all working together, effectively, they

become one of the most valuable assets an organisation can ask for and an exceptional piece of advertising. By investing in this small piece of 'brand expression' you're ensuring your brand has its best chance of success in the market place.

How is your tagline performing? Is it in need of a face-lift? If you feel like your tagline isn't up to scratch or you are seeking something catchy to accompany your brand's image, seek out someone with years of experience and success in the respected industry.



see  
inside  
think  
outside.

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

If you want to join in the debate or introduce a friend to the channel then you can mail us at [info@uno.net.au](mailto:info@uno.net.au)