

Creating a Business Name

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Introduction

You may ask, “What’s in a name?” but for small businesses the answer is plenty. Your business name is the first impression you make on a customer and dictates your brand. Your marketing, logo, brand colours, URL and online presence, product line and side projects will all reflect on your business name. Since it is difficult to change your name, you will want to make sure it works for today and the future.

Some companies face the challenge of being limited by the business name. For example, a company called Just Computers may lose prospects in the Blackberry market if people think the business deals strictly with computers, as the name suggests. A bedding company called Canadian Dreams may eventually launch internationally, in which case the name no longer fully describes the business properly.

Not putting enough thought into your business name may lead to problems, but spending too much time naming your venture can hinder your business too. Each day that you prolong moving forward with your dream is another day that you will have to wait for your first pay cheque. Can you afford to wait? There comes a time when you just have to take the plunge!

The Model: Creating a Business Name

Question	Answer
Who is your customer?	
What's special about you?	
What's memorable about your product or service?	
How is your business different from the competition?	
What do your customers say about your business?	

Overview of the Model

The best plan in coming up with a business name is to brainstorm. Be creative. This model can be used to evaluate the merit of a business name and whether it ties in with your business practice. Or it can be used to help you come up with a name if your creative juices just aren't flowing.

Before beginning this module, make sure you are feeling positive because a positive attitude adds to your creativity. Here's another tip: use one word where possible. Your best results come from the ability to intermix ideas.

Who is your customer?

Your business name should target the people you are trying to please. Outline the details of your target customer. Include details such as age, sex, income, marital status, past times, values, meeting places, etc. This will give you some insight as to which words may trigger interest for your clients, making your business more appealing right off the bat. For example, if your product is a tent and you're targeting campers, consider the values these people have, or the activities they participate in. They probably enjoy nature, in which case, use words like water, rock, tree, outdoor, nature, green, woods, or cliff, etc. to draw attention to your product.

What's special about you?

Since you are the owner of the business, take a look at what makes you special as an individual. It could be as simple as your name, like Tim Hortons, a coffee shop named after a famous hockey player. Maybe you're adventurous or humorous. The winery Laughing Stock Barrels in the Okanagan give a pretty good idea about the owners. The use of adjectives could give you a unique name.

What's memorable about your product / service?

One of the best examples in using your fame as a business name is the bookstore in downtown Toronto called The World's Biggest Bookstore. Obviously, this is what they're famous for. You might think this technique is only for companies that are already in business, which isn't true. Your business name can reflect something you want your product or service to be famous for. Take Toronto's Honest Ed's as an example. The founder, Ed Mirvish, wanted his store to be seen as reasonably priced. Honest Ed's seemed appropriate.

How is your business different from the competition?

Using the key difference between your business and the competition can help you create a unique business name. In Las Vegas, casinos differentiate themselves by their unique features.

- Luxor – a pyramid
- Circus Circus – circus performances hourly
- The Bellagio – high-end
- Caesars Palace – Roman motif

What do your customers say about your business?

Take what customers say about your business as another source of inspiration. Again, you don't have to already be in business for this to work. Consider using words you want customers to associate with your business.

Quick Conclusion

Taking the time to brainstorm your business name is the first step. If you are having trouble with this, ask people around you to help, or take a break and come back to it later. You may get an idea when you least expect it. Consider combining words from different sections to create something unique. Try lumping words together, or putting words together that don't naturally make sense, but still work. There is no science to creating a business name. It should just make sense and sound right. It might come to you immediately or it might not.

Top Mistakes to Avoid

1. Spending too much time on the business name and not moving forward.
2. Creating a name that has nothing to do with your business. It might seem catchy and interesting, but it may create an uphill battle in the long run.
3. Not considering cultural issues if you want your business to be international.
4. Not considering legal or trademark issues.

Now What?

- Check that the name is available, both to register the business as a trademark and as a URL.
- Create a tag line.
- Make everything tied into your business name consistent.
- The best names can be extended to other products. For example, iPod allowed Apple to easily brand their next product the iPhone. Virtually any product with the "i" prefix is automatically associated with Apple.

If You Learn Anything, It Should Be This...

If you can't decide on a name, choose the best current option and move forward.

The Model In Action

Charlie is planning the launch of his new coffee and gourmet snacks shop. Charlie's town lacks coffee shops where mobile professionals can meet co-workers and have access to the internet. He is having trouble selecting a name for the store that will appropriately describe his business to potential consumers. Charlie uses the model to come up with a suitable business name.

Question	Answer
Who is your customer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 25-40 • Male • Middle class • Single or married • Mobile professionals • Things they enjoy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Surfing the internet</u> • Being connected to e-mail and social/professional networking sites • Meeting co-workers in an out-of-office setting • Values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and efficiency • Care about getting their work done • Care about customer service
What's special about you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Technologically savvy</u> • <u>Adventurous</u> • Detail oriented • Friendly and social
What's memorable about your product or service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours of <u>internet</u> access per visit offered to customers who become members • 1 <u>electrical outlet</u> per seat in the café for laptops or cellular phone chargers • Atmosphere allows for conversations and business meetings • Large table tops to hold laptops and note pads
How is your business different from the competition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher quality food and beverage products • More <u>electrical outlets</u> than competitors • Staff gets to know the regular customers' names and orders • Store geared as "<u>office-substitute</u>" for mobile professionals
What do customers say about you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great place to hold meetings and work

Charlie combines the recurring themes of "Technology", "Internet", and "Coffee" to come up with a name for his shop. He settles on Sip and Surf Coffee Company. Before finalizing the name, Charlie will get input from friends and family and check that the name is not trademarked by another business.