

Product Naming

Naming Approach and Rules

Goal

Your mission is to either name an individual product or product family. At its simplest level, the product name can stand-alone.

When you have a family of products, you need to connect the names in some logical way. This could be as simple as **Family Name + Descriptor** where the descriptor stands for a benefit or feature. For example:

- » Benefit ABC
- » Benefit XYZ

Of course, it can get far more complicated as you mix multiple related products and services. Decide what you are naming and define your overarching strategy before starting this process.

The Team

This is extraordinarily hard to do internally as your team is often focused on the product mechanics and features. You need folks with a broader perspective who can combine your team's detailed product knowledge with broader industry expertise and an understanding of how the product resonates with your audience.

The idea is to put a combination of folks with differing perspectives and skillsets in the room. You need:

- » Product manager
- » Engineers who have worked on the product
- » Company leaders
- » Marketing / naming experts
- » One person who will make the final decision

Guidelines

At a general level, your names should resonate with your audience and be as simple as possible. It is typically critical for the name and URL to be exactly the same. As in your ABC product has a URL of ABC.com.

You should also secure the .net and .org URLs as a protective measure. For certain industries there are URL extensions that are frequently used (such as .tv or .aero). You may want to purchase those as well. Similarly, you should secure the ABC name for all relevant social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

All names should be put to these tests:

- » **Meaningful** – allows the audience to attach relevant meaning. This often manifests itself as a feature or benefit of the product. It must also clearly place the product in your industry niche.
- » **Unique** – differentiates you from others in the space. Similarly it cannot be too generic as to be confused with products in other industries.
- » **Memorable** – as in you would easily remember it from a cocktail party conversation (even after a drink or two).
- » **Easy to Spell** – should be spelled just like it's pronounced.
- » **Easy to Pronounce** – should be pronounced just like it's spelled.
- » **Brief** – you can't tell the whole story in a name – limit it to one word or a compound word. Should be as few syllables as possible – limit to 4 or 5 – preferably 3 or less.
- » **Weighty** - should have the strength and cachet of a leading product.

While every name may not pass every test, you need to have a great reason for allowing it to move on in the process.

The Process

Kickoff Meeting

During this meeting, the Product Team will:

- » Describe product in general terms
- » Outline features / benefits
- » List competitors and distribution partners

The group will:

- » Discuss and finalize naming strategy
- » Generate list of relevant key words and phrases
- » Generate list of

Round 1 Process

- » Get creative and come up with a list of names.
- » Put them through the memorable, spelling and pronunciation tests.
- » Cull the list.
- » Apply the URL and USPTO tests (see below).
- » Cull the list again.
- » On a single page, print out your favorites and those that you threw in the “garbage can”. Bring enough copies for everyone at the meeting.
- » At the meeting, people present their favorite names and rationale behind each.
- » The group selects their favorites and identifies the phrases and words that best resonated.

Round 2 Process

- » Do not skip this step – even if you think you found the perfect name in Round 1.
- » Repeat the process from Round 1.
- » Narrow the collective list of favorites to around 10 names.
- » As a group, define how you will test your names (in addition to the guidelines on page 1). This varies by company and product, but you must create an ordered series of rules such as:
 - Directly relates to industry.
 - Describes the most important benefit.
 - Etc.
- » Ruthlessly apply the rules and choose one favorite and 2 backups.
- » Put all 3 through the Urban Dictionary and Google tests.

Additional Rounds

- » Sometimes you simply have to go more rounds. Better to do it now than live with a bad name for years to come.

URLs

- » Buy the URLs for all 3 names.
- » They're cheap to buy initially and there is always the chance your first choice won't work out.

Test, Test, Test

- » To the extent your budget allows, test the name out with your target audience. This can range from running it by trusted advisors to surveys to formal focus groups. Go as deep as you can at this point.

Bring in Legal Counsel

- » The tests we apply from USPTO are preliminary in nature. You must ensure the name is legal to use in all 50 states and possibly internationally.
- » You need legal counsel to check.

Hints

- » Consider technical terms as part of the name.
- » For some markets, commonly used foreign language terms may work as well.
- » Try combining technical terms with more general words that describe features or benefits of the product.

Helpful Tools

- » Online thesaurus such as thesaurus.com
- » Translate app such as translate.google.com
- » Rhyming dictionary such as RhymeZone.com

URL Search

- » Only use this site – instantdomainsearch.com
- » Other URL search sites track the searches and often purchase the URL before you decide to.
- » Never hit enter after searching on this site. That takes you to GoDaddy which then tracks the results as discussed above.
- » You want the .com URL – preferably the .net and .org as well.

US Patent and Trademark Office

- » Use the Basic Word Mark Search on the TESS system at uspto.gov/trademark.
- » If you find related trademarks, note their status (live or dead) and how the trademark owner and product relate to our world.
- » Note that trademarks issues generally arise within an industry – not across industries.

Urban Dictionary

- » Go to UrbanDictionary.com
- » Look up the name as well as close variants.
- » The idea is to be sure the name doesn't have some sort of hidden meaning that would come back to bite us later.

Google Search

- » Search for the name in quotes – as in “Newname”.
- » If you have a name that combines terms search for both “New Name” and “Newname”
- » Browse through the first 100 hits and look for matches in our industry or negative connotations.
- » Note any hits that are close to your world.
- » The idea here is that while a name may not be registered with USPTO or have an associated domain, it could be in use by a business.