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Guidelines for Naming Your Business

This paper gives some very basic guidelines for choosing a name for your business and website.

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1. Qualities of a Good Name

One of the important steps in starting your business is choosing a business name. A good business name should:

- describe your primary product or service;
- be meaningful, distinct and memorable;
- be easy to remember, spell and pronounce.

Ultimately, the success of your business will depend on the quality of your products and services and your ability to find your target market and to retain a client base. Your business name will not compensate for poor business execution. However, a good business name will make your marketing efforts more effective.

2. The Message in the Name

Your business name should describe what you do and how well you do it. Your name may be the first and only piece of information that a prospective client will know about your business. Take full advantage of this short but critical sales opportunity by providing a clear message about your primary product or service. A business name that captures the essence of your offering will leave a positive impression with a new prospect and help them to remember you. People tend to remember information that can help them in the future and your name should conjure up an image of the services and benefits that your business provides to your clients.

3. Meaning and Memory

Your business name will be easy to remember if you chose recognizable words that evoke a positive quality that you want to associate with your business. Avoid made-up words that are not part of a language (similarly for acronyms) since such words are difficult to remember and do not describe anything about your business. If your business name is easy to pronounce, then people will be more willing to tell others about your company. If you have a website, make sure that your business name is easy to spell so that people are more likely to type your domain name correctly.

4. The Distinction of Your Name

Your business name should be distinct from the name of other businesses in your area. You can check with your local or state government to see if your business name is available for your use. You want to be sensitive to trademarks and avoid infringing on someone else's intellectual property. As a start, you can do a trademark search at the **U.S. Patent and Trademark Office** website at www.uspto.gov.



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5. Your Name on the World Wide Web

If you are going to register a domain name for your business website, check that the domain name is available. It is possible that some other business in another part of the country or the world is already using your name of choice. If the .com extension of your domain name is unavailable, you may be able to register another top level domain such as .net or .org, but this could create confusion and possible trademark infringement issues. Alternatively, if your domain name is available with .com, register both the .org and the .net extensions to prevent others from copying your name. Domain names are relatively inexpensive (approximately \$10 per year) so you should secure as much intellectual property space on the World Wide Web as possible. You may also want to register any variations of your business name so as to prevent others from trying to copy your name.

Take advantage of free email accounts from Yahoo, Hotmail and Gmail, for example, `yourbusiness@yahoo.com` and so on. These emails are free so it is a good idea to secure them. Furthermore, each of these email accounts come with free Instant Messaging capabilities which you can use to your advantage. Finally, register your company name for any Free Voice Over Internet (VoIP) services such as Skype.

6. Further Help

Your business name is part of your brand and your image. There are many other factors to consider in choosing your name and you can get more insight from the following references, *Wordcraft* by Alex Frankel (Crown Publishing, 2004) and *The New Positioning* by Jack Trout (McGraw-Hill, 1996).