



“Get the word out and get your Word’s Worth!”
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Naming Your Business

‘What’s in a name?’ Shakespeare posed. If asking today, he’d get new-age answers like ‘recognition’ or ‘reinforcement’ more so than ‘roses’. But, would Willie think Microsoft smelled as sweet if it were called Enron? Business names matter. They matter big time – for marketing, memorability and branding. One cliché claims that actions speak louder than words. Yet, surely our actions become our word, our word our reputation, and our reputation links us, full circle, to our name. So you see, names matter.

My late father worked amid fellow ‘war years’ contemporaries who knew and respected the initials ‘FDR’. Coincidentally, Dad shared Roosevelt’s initials and, an entrepreneur, benefitted from its reputable connection. He’d often walk downtown and hear, “Hey, FDR!” That’s branding. I enjoy no such celebrity. The only remotely rich and famous initials that match mine are Sally Jesse Raphael’s.

Anyway, your business name matters, so craft it carefully. If it’s named, and you have regrets, don’t despair. You can re-brand it (with strategic communication) – well worth it to re-educate publics and prospects. I recommend a short, catchy name. It’ll be appreciated in voice messages, and make for a crisper website address. Your biz name is 24/7 marketing, so make each word count, especially the first – the gist of what you do. Unless you’re famous, avoid “Your Surname and Associates”. It won’t differentiate whether you’re in grommets or graphic design. If you’re noodling more than 2-3 words for your biz name, put them in a tag-line descriptor under your logo, not in the name. And don’t spend one of your 2-3 words on generics like ‘Quality’ or ‘Solutions’. Weave the name into a slogan, too, for rewards noted earlier – reinforcement and recognition.

As examples, here’s how I wordsmithed my biz names. Word’s Worth reflects poets, puns, and smacks of nostalgia, of the craft of communication. It puts me alphabetically near ‘writers’, and rests rhythmically in a slogan, ‘get the word out – get your Word’s Worth’. Its positioning within the slogan is purposeful (what’s heard last is retained). Likewise, The Homepreneur Network defines its demographic immediately, and gets listed near ‘home-based’ (alphabetical lists overlook ‘The’, filing this by the ‘H’). It has alliterated, poetic pacing in its slogan, ‘A.I.M. for Affiliation, Information, Motivation’. And, to clarify ‘homepreneurs’, I put ‘home-based entrepreneurs’ nearby in the copy.

One thing I’m bad about, though: I tend to tweak my tag-line often. (Writers are really re-writers.) I fiddle, in part, because my business isn’t stagnant. It shifts. I guess it helps me to articulate my focus in a phrase. I just keep edits subtle enough so as not to blur my identity. Funny, I know it’s risky to try on tag-lines in public (like modelling thongs in front of throngs), but I just can’t stop myself from seeing if they fit, if they seem like “me” to me. How 1970’s – trying to “find myself”.

For now, though, I conclude with this counsel: know your core competency, and put that in a tag, but only after you brainstorm a great business name. ❖