

A Business by any Other Name ...

by Bruce A. Love

In the famous balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, the fair maiden ponders, "What is in a name? A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet." Yes, Juliet, this is true, but would you still have the same romantic affection for the sweet smelling flower if its name were Snogwart? Justly or not, the human mind conjures up images of objects and people based solely upon name. Parents deliberate and sometimes argue about what to name their children. Names that are considered honorable by one generation are sometimes shunned by the next because the name has unforeseeably become associated with an infamous historical, or fictional, figure (I won't mention any names here because I am sure there is someone reading this who has such a name).

Names are equally important considerations in business. In fact, the selection of a good business name can be a very effective marketing tool. If you are just starting a business, the name you choose for your company or product can either attract or repel customers. Even established organizations that have existed nicely for many decades have needed to reevaluate their names because of modern-day views and name associations.

Beaver College (Glenside, PA) officially changed its name to Arcadia University in 2001. The college's research showed that the 147 year-old college was appealing to 30% fewer prospective students than it should solely because of the name. It was not enough for Beaver to just add the more prestigious "University" to the existing name. They needed a complete name change.

Here are some thoughts you may want to consider if you are choosing or re-evaluating a business or product name:

- Choose a name that is easy for your customers to remember, spell, and pronounce. One local college comes to mind whose name is frequently misspelled, mispronounced and subsequently forgotten by perspective students, employers, and educators outside of its immediate geographic region.
- Make sure you are legally allowed to use the name. If someone else is using the name, you may be asked to find a new name or pay for its use.
- Avoid fad-based names. A very trendy name today will make you sound dated or obsolete tomorrow. The suffix, "o-rama" has not been in vogue since the sixties. Companies using it may want to consider a new name.
- Avoid names with negative, inaccurate, or undesirable connotations (as in the case of Beaver College).
- Avoid names that perceptually limit your product offering.
- Is the business name available for use as a (Internet) domain name?
- Choose a name that accurately represents and projects what you stand for and/or what you sell. The Altoona Mirror "reflects" and reports the ideas, opinions and attitudes of this region's readers.

There are exceptions to every marketing "rule." I'm sure we could probably find companies doing very well while violating any of the above suggestions.

You may be wondering about what sort of name I would use in business. The name is easy to remember, spell, and pronounce. I have been legally allowed to use it since the day I was born. The root of my business name is as old as the Bible, and as timeless as the works of William Shakespeare. My business name is Love Consulting. No, it's not what we do or sell; it's who we are!

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