

What's in a name when starting a new business?

Description

What's in a name? A lot, as it turns out – especially when it comes to naming your business.

Choosing your company's moniker is one of the most important decisions you'll make when you start a new business, as it sets the tone for all your future branding initiatives. For better or for worse, your business name helps create a first impression with potential customers and investors, so it's not a decision that should be taken lightly.

While it's not impossible to change your business name once you've filed your legal paperwork and set up your digital properties, it's much easier (and less costly) to choose the right name from the get-go. Below, 15 Forbes Agency Council Members share the top mistakes entrepreneurs make when naming their business and how to avoid those errors.

1. You Haven't Considered Branding And Timing

While the business name is important, what matters most is the image you create around that name. Whether a name is perceived well or not mostly depends on perception management in the first six to 12 months. Additionally, a business name is never set in stone and can be changed, so if you are waiting for the right name to cross your mind, don't. It's better to start now than wait and lose momentum. [Christina Baldassarre, Zebra Advertisement](#)

2. It's Too Hard To Say, Hear Or Spell

When you are naming a new business or product, make sure the name is easy to say (If it is difficult to pronounce, nobody will remember it.), easy to hear (for example, remember the letter 's' can sound like the letter 'f') and easy to spell (spelling your name out every time will get old quickly.) Following this simple formula will help you find the perfect name for your business or product. [Brent Lollis, Creative State](#)

3. You Failed To Do A Trademark Search

One of the worst things that can happen to a new business is that the owners spend time and money promoting a certain name, only to find out someone else has been using it. Even if they haven't registered a trademark, someone might own the rights simply because they were using it first. A quick Google search is an absolute must and you may want to supplement it with a professional trademark search. [Gil Eyal, HYPR!](#)

4. Your Name Is Too Descriptive

Ensure to stay away from a name that's too descriptive to avoid costly rebranding as your core focus may shift in the future. The uncertainty surrounding a rebranding effort could cost you time, money and even loyal customers. At the very least, you'll confuse them. [Fabian Geyrhalter, FINIEN](#)

5. Your Name Is Too Generic

How many companies do you know that are ABC Services or XYZ Technologies? If you just said the name, would you be able to tell what industry you are in? Being too generic will cause people to overlook you if you sound like every other company out there. Get to the heart of what you do. What's your story? [Debbie Williams, SPROUT Content](#)

6. You Haven't Researched Competitor Names

Many businesses don't realize the power of brand recognition and will have almost the same exact name as another business, especially in the same industry. The name should be creative and strategic, sets you apart from the pack, and can summarize what the company does. [Solomon Timothy, OneIMS](#)

7. You Spell Your Name Creatively

One of the biggest mistakes business owners make when naming a new company is trying to spell the name creatively. The issue with having a name like Xobni, Bawte or Wesabe is that you'll always have to spell it when you say it because it isn't spelled how people hear it. This may not only cause confusion but could also cause an issue with potential customers finding your business. [Ryan Pezzotti, Knowzo.com](#)

8. It's Too Long For Twitter

When creating a business, your complete digital marketing strategy should be laid out first. This includes creating social handles across all platforms that are identical, so consumers can find you on any platform by typing the same handle. If your business name is too long to be a handle on Twitter, your handles will need to be adapted on other platforms as well. Make it less than 15 characters. [Kelly Samuel, Qode Media](#)

9. You're Following A Short Term Trend

Do your best to select a name that will stay relevant for years. Many phrases are catchy, so they get overused and get annoying within a few years. Businesses can influence trends, but they don't have complete control over them. Trends frequently develop associations with certain groups or stereotypes, but those stereotypes don't always overlap with your intended target audience. [Ahmad Kareh, Twistlab Marketing](#)

10. You Chose Your Name Based On Domain Availability

Choose a brand name that has recognition and alignment with your industry. Consumers, Google and other search engines are now more comfortable with domain name endings like .oi and .co, so don't feel compelled to name your business based on which .com is available. Before pulling the trigger, make sure to use a tool like [knowem.com](https://www.knowem.com) to make sure other social handles are available. [Dan Golden](#), [Be Found Online](#)

11. People Can't Tell What You Do

The most common error I see in the creative space is getting a little too creative with your name. You shouldn't have to think "I wonder what this company does" when you hear its name. The name should directly or indirectly clue people into the types of services or products you provide. [Leila Lewis](#), [Be Inspired PR](#)

12. Your Name Is Too Cute

If you fall into the trap of spelling words wrong, using odd words to make a rhyme or trying to play off words with different meanings, you are setting yourself up for headaches. Of course, you want to have a business name that is memorable and lends itself to unique branding but getting too "cutesy" with the name can lead to long-term issues. [Katie Harris](#), [Spot On Solutions](#)

13. You're Overthinking Your Name

Here's the thing with company names: people always overthink them. Your name does not give your company value. It works the other way around - your company (and people's perception of it) gives your name value. Your brand is much bigger than a name (or a logo, or a font, or a color, for that matter). Don't make your name do the heavy lifting - it's only one small tactical expression of your brand. [Kelli Corney](#), [Mightily](#)

14. You Haven't Thought Through Your Name's Associations

When coming up with a business name, a company may fail to thoroughly assess its meaning and associations. Ask questions such as: How will others perceive the name? Which competitors have similar names? And of course, is the domain available? Start with those; there are more. Leverage foresight when starting up, because hindsight doesn't get you anywhere. [Bernadette Coleman](#), [Advice Local](#)

15. You Haven't Tested Your Name With Your Target Audience

Naming a company may be one of the most important strategic decisions a company will make. Once you have the name (or names) you are considering, take the extra step and test it with the target to make sure it delivers the image you want and it resonates correctly. And make sure that the target can easily pronounce the name; this will eliminate market confusion. [John Gumas](#), [Gumas Advertising](#)

Category

1. Startup

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