



What's in a Name?

Many start up companies begin with passion for their product and excitement for the work. It is, after all, one of life's great achievements to start and run a successful business. You carefully plan a strategy that offers your expertise and fulfills a market need. You know your process, understand your costs, are planning inventory, recruiting talent... so what about your marketing plan?

Wait a minute! What about your company name? Your marketing effort should include a branding and identity plan that has given careful consideration to your organization's name. Brand names are a valuable asset, and a company should consider performance, flexibility, cadence, and positioning, as well as any potential legal issues. The goal should be a long-lived name that indicates who you are and what you do, differentiates you from the competition, and connects with your customer. Time spent up front in naming will balance the many years of brand building that will rest on this first decision. Brainstorm many names and variations, then run tests. Leave yourself voice mail, send an email, mockup an ad or webpage. Does it reflect who you are and the niche you will fill?

Once you have a few options, consider your stakeholders. What does your name mean to them? Is it easy to say? Will they find you among your competition? Are there any cultural considerations if you grow your company to foreign markets? If you form an external focus group, you may learn something completely unexpected about your name choice. It's important to stay flexible and set high goals. After all, what company doesn't want to be the Kleenex of tissues, or the iPod of MP3 players?

Naming is the first step in your branding effort and should be a sturdy foundation for your identity moving forward. - Cathy Copeland

*Copeland Art is a branding and visual design studio based in the metro-south Boston area.
For more information: copelandart.com, or call 781-784-6396.*