

Breakout Names All Have Specific DNA in Common

Category-defining brand names all share a well-defined set of qualities. To find your perfect name, you need to identify and seek out these qualities.

The key is to find a fresh way into the hearts and minds of your customers, redefine and own the conversation in your space, and engage people on as many levels as possible.

Step One: Create a Job Description for the Name



Here's what a job description for a name should look like:

Qualifications:

Must be able to support part or all of your brand positioning:

- **Personality** - Warm? Fun? Futuristic? Mysterious? Sexy? Scientific? Confident? Superhuman?
- **Communication Skills** - What part of the conversation in your industry should the name address, define, redefine, express, demonstrate or dominate?
- **Personal Appearance** - The way a name looks and sounds can communicate volumes, independent of the meaning of the word.

Responsibilities:

- Redefine and own your category.
- Go viral, propelling itself through the world on its own, becoming a no-cost, self-sustaining PR vehicle.
- Demonstrate to the world that you're different, creating clear & wide separation from your competitors.

- Create a positive and lasting engagement with your audience.
- Provide a deep well of marketing and advertising images.
- Be the genesis of a brand that rises above the goods and services you provide, so that you're not selling a commodity and/or competing on price.
- Be unforgettable.

Name / Brand Development

The relative strengths and weakness of the four major categories of names are discussed in this section:

1. Functional / Descriptive Product & Company Names

When descriptive names work: When a company names products and their brand strategy is to direct the bulk of brand equity to the company name. Examples of companies that follow this name strategy are BMW, Martha Stewart and Subway.

When descriptive names don't work: When they are company names. Company names that are descriptive are asked to perform only one task: explaining to the world the business that you are in. This is an unnecessary and counterproductive choice.

The downside here is many-fold. This naming strategy creates a situation that needlessly taxes a marketing and advertising budget because descriptive company names are drawn from a small pool of relevant keywords, causing them to blend together and fade into the background, indistinguishable from the bulk of their competitors - the antithesis of marketing.

As an example of the "brand fade out" caused by choosing descriptive company names, consider the names of the following branding and naming companies:

Brand/Branding Companies	Name/Naming Companies
Brand-DNA (.com)	ABC Name Bank
Brand-DNA (.net)	Brighter Naming
Brand A	Moore Names
Brand 2.0	Name Development
Brand Design	Name Evolution
Brand Doctors	Name Generator
Brand Evolve	Name-It
Brand Evolution	Name Lab
Brand Forward	Name One
Brand Juice	Name Pharm
Brand Ladder	Name Quest
Brand Link	Name Razor
Brand Maverick	Name Sale
Brand Mechanics	Name Sharks
Brand Meta	Name-Shop
Brand People	Name Stormers
Brand Positioning	Name Tag
Brand Salt	Name Trade

These kinds of company names are easily avoided if a thorough ***competitive analysis*** is performed and if the people doing the naming understand the following basic concept:

The notion of describing a business in the name assumes that company names will exist at some point without contextual support, which is impossible. Company names will appear on websites, store fronts, in news articles or press releases, on business cards, in advertisements, or, at their most naked, in conversations.

There are simply no imaginable circumstances in which company names can exist without contextual, explanatory support, which means they are free to perform more productive tasks.

2. Invented Product & Corporation Names

There are basically two types of invented names for products or corporations:

1) Names built upon Greek and Latin roots. Examples: Acquient, Agilent, Alliant, Aquent.

The upside:

- For companies looking for a hassle-free way to secure a domain name without a modifier, this is a fairly painless route to go.
- They are free of negative connotations.
- Because these names are built upon Greek and Latin morphemes, they are felt to be serious sounding.
- For the above reasons, these are the easiest names to push through the approval process at gigantic global corporations.

The downside:

- They need a massive branding & advertising budget to imbue them with meaning and become memorable.
- They cast a cold, sanitized persona.
- These are names with no potential marketing energy -- they are image-free and emotionally void.

2) Poetically constructed names that are based on rhythm and the experience of saying them. Examples: Snapple, Oreo, Google.

The upside:

- They breeze through the trademark process.
- Easy domain name acquisition.
- By design, the target audience likes saying these names, which helps propel and saturate them throughout the target audience.
- Highly memorable.

The downside:

- Tougher for a marketing department to get corporate approval for. When making a case for a name based on things like "fun to say, memorable, viral, and emotionally engaging," you need to present a solid, quantifiable case. Igor can show you how.

3. Experiential Product & Corporate Names

Experiential names offer a direct connection to something real, to a part of direct human experience. They rise above descriptive names because their message is more about the experience than the task.

For instance, in the web portal space, descriptive product names once included Infoseek, GoTo, FindWhat, AllTheWeb, etc. Experiential names of web portals include such product names as Explorer, Magellan, Navigator, and Safari.

The upside:

- These names make sense to the consumer.
- They map to the consumer's experience with the company or product.
- Because they require little explanation, experiential names are easily approved in a corporate process.
- They work best for products within a brand strategy designed to accumulate brand equity for both the company and the product.
- Experiential company and product names are most effective for the early entrants in a business sector, becoming less effective for later adopters.

The downside:

- Because they are so intuitive, experiential names are embraced across many industries with high frequency, making them harder to trademark.
- These are names that tend to be historically common in the branding world.

- Their over-usage makes them less effective in the long run. The similarity in tone of these names across an industry is indicative of similarities in positioning. As web portal names, Explorer, Navigator, Safari and Magellan are all saying exactly the same things in exactly the same ways to exactly the same people. Consequently, they aren't pulling any weight when it comes to differentiating a brand.

4. Evocative Product & Company Names

One important way that evocative names differ from others is that they evoke the positioning of a company or product, rather than describing a function or a direct experience.

From the ride share sector:

RideCharge= Functional
Lyft = Experiential
Uber = Evocative

From the airline sector:

Trans World Airlines = Functional
United = Experiential
Virgin = Evocative

From the computer industry:
Digital Equipment = Functional
Gateway = Experiential
Apple = Evocative

The upside:

- A rare type of name, making it a powerful differentiator.
- Nonlinear and multidimensional, making it deeply engaging.
- Helps create a brand that's not a commodity.
- When created in sync with positioning, it is a branding force that can dominate an industry.

The downside:

- When created out of sync with brand positioning, it's an ugly mess.
- Because evocative product and company names are created to compliment positioning rather than goods and services, they are the toughest type of names to get corporate approval for, being a bit of an abstraction for those outside the marketing department.

Competitive Analysis

A competitive analysis is an essential early step in any naming process. How are your competitors positioning themselves? What types of names are common among them? Are their names projecting a similar attitude? Do their similarities offer you a huge opportunity to stand out from the crowd? How does your business or product differ from the competition? Can you change and own the conversation in your industry? Should you?

Quantifying the tone and strength of competitive company names or product names is an empowering foundation for any naming project. Creating such a document helps your naming team decide where they need to go with the positioning, branding and naming of your company or product. It also keeps the naming process focused on creating a name that is a powerful marketing asset, one that works overtime for your brand and against your competitors. We display the results of a given sector of names in the form of taxonomy charts.

Name Taxonomy Charts

We developed the name taxonomy format to bring an elegant simplicity to a complex set of intertwined naming elements. The taxonomy chart keeps the process focused on the competitive aspect, forces you to quantify both the negative and positive attributes of each name under consideration, sets a high standard for you to meet, and gives everyone involved a clean and easy framework in which to navigate the process.

Airline Competitive Taxonomy

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5				Virgin	5
4	JetBlue			Ted Jazz	4
3				Hooters Aloha Olympic	3
2		Qantas*	Go Zip	Song Frontier	2
1	Alitalia		Vanguard	Tower Air	1
0	Midway Trans World Pan American Delta Continental American Alaska AeroMexico Air France British Airways		United		0
-1	Northwest Southwest U.S. Airways Eastern America West World Airways				-1
-2	Express Jet ValueJet AirJet EasyJet				-2

Project Workflow Competitive Taxonomy

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5				Slack	5
4			Basecamp	Hive	4
3	GoPlan		5pm		3
2			Daylight Huddle		2
1				Davinci Merlin	1
0	Access FocalPoint AceProject AchievePlanner Action Item Manager Active Collab Liquidplanner MS project ProTasker ProWorkflow ProWorkflow Project Bubble Project Cloud Project Insight ProjectManager.com ProjectOpen Projectplace TeamWork Live WORKetc Work by Planbox WorkOtter Workbook WorkflowMax Workfront Workgroups Workspace WorkZone				0
-1		Accelo Acheivelt Acunote Advanseez Asana Attask			-1

SUV Competitive Taxonomy

This chart of SUV names reveals a singular positioning strategy that permeates most of the brand names, resulting in the bulk of them being assigned low marks. It's not that the names themselves are poor, it's because the names don't help to differentiate one vehicle from another; most of them are variations on the same themes (rugged, outdoorsy) and not pulling any marketing weight. Why does Suburban rate an elevated position? Because it's the most refreshingly different and honest name in its category.

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5		Jeep	Suburban		5
4					4
3					3
2		Hummer Jackaroo Jeepster		Element	2
1		Xterra	Amigo Aviator Sidekick	Avalanche Cayenne Safari	1
0	Land Cruiser Overland Range Rover Pathfinder TrailBlazer Travelall	Unimog	Blazer Discovery Defender Escape Excursion Expedition Explorer Forester Freelander Mountaineer Navigator Scout Tracker Trooper Wrangler	Armada Frontier Highlander Matrix Passport Samurai Silverado Tundra Typhoon	0
-1	4Runner Rav4	Grand Vitara Korando	Envoy Liberty Rendezvous Tribute	Aztek Bordeaux Bronco Cherokee	-1

				Comanche Durango Kahuna Montana Montero Murano Navaho Rainier Rodeo Santa Fe Sequoia Sonoma Sorento Tacoma Tahoe Touareg Yukon	
-2	CR-V EVX EX LX 470 MDX ML55 QX4 SLX SRX X5 XC90 XL-7	Terracross VehiCROSS	Bravada Escalade Sportage	Axiom	-2
	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	

Positioning

The more specific and nuanced your positioning is, the more effective the name will be. All great names work in concert with the positioning of the business or product they speak for. The best positioning finds a way to reinvigorate or change the conversation that an industry has been having with its consumers.

Don't confuse brand positioning with name positioning. Sometimes the brand and the name carry an identical message and tone, while some companies choose to have the name positioned to carry a very different message and tone than the rest of the brand touch points.

While it's important to understand what competitors are doing in order to act in a distinctive and powerful way, it's also useful to learn from their mistakes and successes.

For instance, the company that became Apple needed to distance itself from the cold, unapproachable, complicated imagery created by the other computer companies at the time that had names like IBM, NEC, DEC, ADPAC, Cincom, Dylakor, Input, Integral Systems, Sperry Rand, SAP, PSDI, Syncsort, and Tesseract.

The new company needed to reverse the entrenched view of computers in order to get people to use them at home. They were looking a name that also supported a brand positioning strategy that was to be as *simple, warm, human, approachable, different with cutting-edge design with an upscale price*.

The name "Apple" doesn't convey the entire positioning and in effect is counter to "*cutting-edge design with an upscale price*". That's over.

Of course, once they had a clear positioning platform in place, there were still hundreds of potential names for the new company to consider. The process for finding that one perfect name is detailed in the next section.

NAMING TOOLS

Evocative Name Filters

One of the keys to successful company and product naming is understanding exactly how your audience will interact with a new name. Creating a filter that evaluates names in the same way that your target market will is essential to both creating the best name possible and to getting that name approved and implemented by your company. Since an evocative name is one of the toughest to develop and obtain buy-in for, we've detailed one of the necessary filters here.

The biggest challenge that evocative names face in surviving a naming exercise is the fact that they portray the positioning of a company or product rather than the goods and services or the experience of those goods and services. Unless everyone understands the positioning and the correlation between it and an evocative name, this is the type of feedback that evocative names will generate:

Slack

- In business, Slack means “characterized by a lack of work or activity; quiet”
- A Slacker is someone who works as little as possible. A terrible message for our target audience
- Slack means slow, sluggish, or indolent, not active or busy; dull; not brisk. Moving very slowly, as the tide, wind, or water. Neglect, reduce, tardy

lululemon

- We are an upscale brand for women.
- lululemon sounds like a character from a 3-year old's picture book: “lululemon and her best friends annabanana and sallystrawberry were climbing Gumdrops Hill, when suddenly from behind a rainbow the queen of the unicorns appeared...”

Virgin Air

- Says "we're new at this"
- Public wants airlines to be experienced, safe and professional
- Investors won't take us seriously
- Religious people will be offended

Hotwire

- It has one meaning, "to steal a car!"
- Crime is the last thing we need to be associated with

Oracle

- Unscientific
- Unreliable
- Only foretold death and destruction
- Only fools put their faith in an Oracle
- Sounds like "orifice" – people will make fun of us

Clearly, the public doesn't think about names in this fashion, but internal naming committees almost always do. Getting a committee to acknowledge this difference and to interact as the public does by evaluating evocative names *based on their positioning* is the next step:

Virgin

- *Positioning*: different, confident, exciting, alive, human, provocative, fun. The innovative name forces people to create a separate box in their head to put it in.
- *Qualities*: Self-propelling, Connects Emotionally, Personality, Deep Well.

Oracle

- *Positioning*: different, confident, superhuman, evocative, powerful, forward thinking.
- *Qualities*: Self-propelling, Connects Emotionally, Personality, Deep Well.

Slack

- *Positioning*: naming the problem we solve!
- *Qualities*: confident, different, focused on solving the target's problem.

Hotwire

- *Positioning*: a travel hack, exciting, fun. (Hotwiring a car is a hack, that's why this name works)
- *Qualities*: Exciting, different, memorable, viral

Name Evaluation

When considering potential names for your company, product or service, it is vital that the process be kept as objective as possible, and that subjective personal responses to names, such as "I like it" or "I don't like it" or "I don't like it because it reminds me of an old girlfriend/boyfriend" are exactly that – subjective and personal, and have no bearing on whether or not a potential name will actually work in the marketplace as a powerful brand that supports all your positioning goals.

All well and good, but clients often ask us to be more specific, to explain objectively just what makes a name work. With that in mind, we created a straightforward way to dissect potential names into the following nine categories to make it easier to understand why name work or don't work, and to more easily weigh the pros and cons of one name versus another:

Appearance – Simply how the name looks as a visual signifier, in a logo, an ad, on a billboard, etc. The name will always be seen in context, but it will be seen, so looks are important.

Distinctive – Being distinctive is only one element that goes into making a name memorable, but it is a required element, since if a name is not distinct from a sea of similar names it will not be memorable.

Depth – Layer upon layer of meaning and association. Names with great depth never reveal all they have to offer all at once but keep surprising you with new ideas.

Energy – How vital and full of life is the name? Does it have buzz? Can it carry an ad campaign on its shoulders? Is it a force to be reckoned with? These are all aspects of a name's energy level.

Humanity – A measure of a name's warmth, its "humanness," as opposed to names that are cold, clinical, unemotional. Another – though not foolproof – way to think about this category is to imagine each of the names as a nickname for one of your children.

Positioning – How relevant the name is to the positioning of the product or company being named, the service offered, or to the industry served. Further, how many relevant messages does the name map to?

Sound – Again, while always existing in a context of some sort or another, the name WILL be heard, in radio or television commercials, being presented at a trade show, or simply being discussed in a cocktail party conversation. Sound is twofold – not only how a name sounds, but how easily it is spoken by those who matter most: the potential customer. Word of mouth is a big part of the marketing of a company, product or service with a great name, but if people aren't comfortable saying the name, the word won't get out.

"33" – The force of brand magic, and the word-of-mouth buzz that a name is likely to generate. Refers to the mysterious "33" printed on the back of Rolling Rock beer bottles that everybody talks about because nobody is really sure what it means. "33" is that certain something that makes people lean forward and want to learn more about a brand, and to want to share the brand with others.

Do an A.S.S Count



Associations + Slogans Score - Let's say you've got two metaphorical names under consideration for your new computer company, Apple and Strawberry. Both names meet your brand positioning criteria:

Simple, warm, human, approachable, organic, disruptive.

Half your team champions Apple and the other half love the name Strawberry. The names couldn't be more similar, so why not flip a coin and move on? The Chief Obfuscation Officer calls for a month of testing, reliably in the unreliable form of crowdsourcing or focus groups. At which point you play the hero, jumping in and shouting, "I demand an A.S.S. test!" - an ASSOCIATIONS + SLOGANS SCORE test.

When leading name contenders are locked in a battle, tallying up the number of associations each have in our collective consciousness tells you how emotionally connected people are to them. And reveals what each brings to the table for marketing, branding and advertising campaigns.

Apple

- **Garden of Eden (apple w/ bite logo)**
- Isaac **Newton (product name)**
- William Tell
- Snow White
- The Tree of Life
- **McIntosh (product names McIntosh, eMac, iMac, Power Mac, MacBook, Mac Mini)**
- One smart apple
- A bad apple
- Easy as apple pie
- An apple a day
- Apple of my eye
- Apple polisher
- Big Apple
- Apples and oranges
- How 'bout them apples?
- Apple doesn't fall far from the tree
- Upset the applecart

Strawberry

- Strawberry Fields
- Strawberry shortcake
- Strawberry blonde

Sometimes the positioning of the name you're looking for is simply a single big idea - an iconic, definitive name that captures the imagination.

This was the case for a B2B software startup we named, so the first and winning tactic was to find a name that had the most cultural connections that were really big ideas.

The clear winner was Seven:

- Seven wonders of the world.
- Seven musical notes.
- Seven seas.
- Seven days a week.
- Seven continents.
- Seven deadly sins.
- Seven virtues.
- Seven colors of the rainbow.
- Seven chakras.
- Seven years of bad luck.
- Seven visible planets.
- Seven heavens.
- Seven dwarfs.
- Seven samurai.
- On the seventh day god rested.
- Lucky number seven.

Of course, there are many more, but you get the idea. Before we presented Seven to our client, we needed to determine if Seven could possibly be trademarked around the world, given the 700,000+ trademarked software names globally. We came up with a strategy, and Seven is trademarked worldwide. The ability to legally finesse a name like Seven is critical, because naming is not simply about finding the best name for the job, it's about finding the best name for the job that you can legally use.

Apple vs. Strawberry isn't a fair fight. But it's not always so lopsided. If the A.S. portion of the test doesn't produce a winner, move on to Slogans. Put two names side by side and see which inspires the most taglines that play off the name.

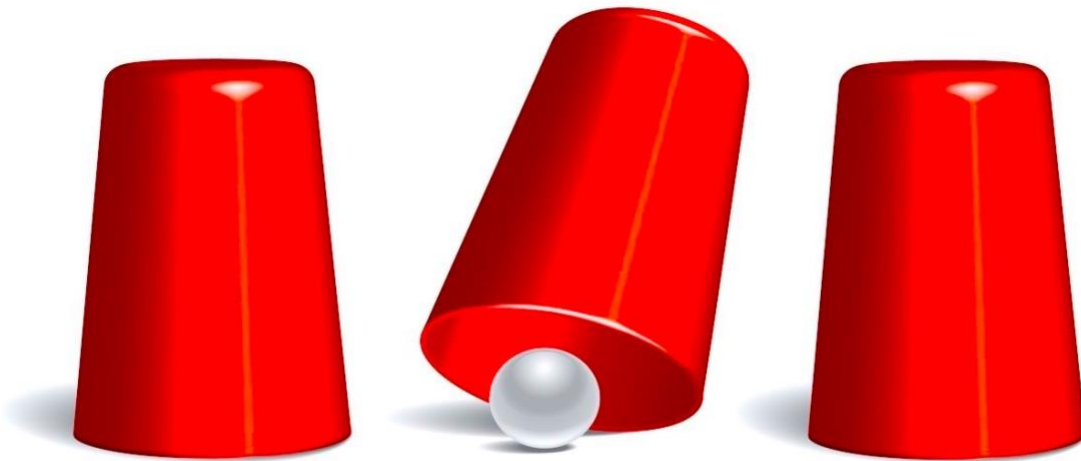
None of the taglines anyone can remember actually play off the company name, they're too expected and make the name one dimensional. Imagine, "Virgin, A Brand New Experience" or "Apple, Easy as Pie". Deadly. But the exercise does reveal the power, connectivity and relevance of an unexpected name. Let's say you're naming a creative agency and a leading name contender is:

Igor

- Igor. Bringing Your Vision to Life.
- Igor. Get Over the Hump.
- Igor. A Few Spare Parts and a Good Storm.
- Igor. Throw the Switch.
- Igor. A Moveable Beast.
- Igor. Own Your Shadow.
- Igor. No Job Too Horrifying.
- Igor. The Other White Meat.
- Igor. Never Say Die.
- Igor. A Good Brain Is Hard to Find.
- Igor. Alive!
- Igor. Better Living Through Science.
- Igor. Building the Perfect Beast.

BOTTOM LINE: The number or strength of ASSOCIATIONS + SLOGANS that potential brand names generate tells you how emotionally connective each name is and how much branding, marketing & advertising ammunition they contain.

Don't Fall for the Happy Idiot



The Happy Idiot is a naming process designed to be fast and smooth by persuading a client to happily embrace an ineffective name.

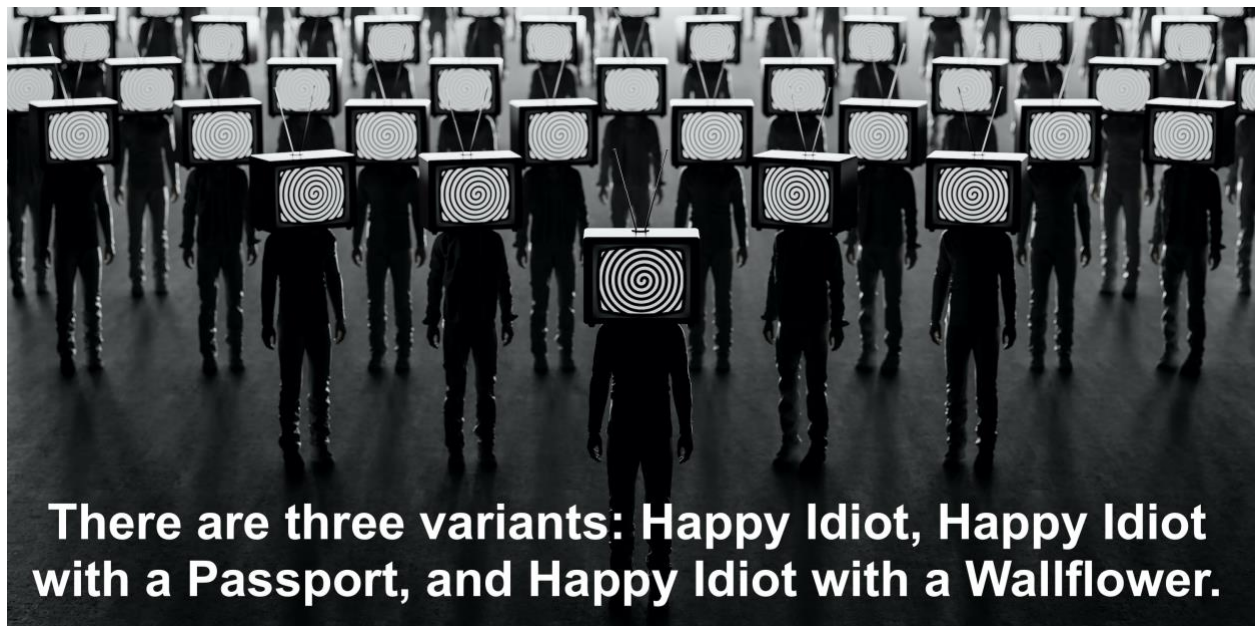
If you've seen *The Sting* or an *Ocean's* movie you know every con game has a name. The Happy Idiot, as it's known in professional naming circles, is the reason ninety percent of agencies produce ineffective, forgettable names that are a money sucking drag on your branding, marketing and sales efforts.

It's called The Happy Idiot because an agency deliberately delivers a name that's a liability to a smiling client who's happy with the result.

The Happy Idiot was designed to be the fastest, smoothest route to client buy-in on a name, with the least amount of effort by the agency.

It means the naming agency sees your naming project as a consensus building exercise only, and not a quest for a powerful name that consensus is then built around. If a Happy Idiot practitioner presents a strong name candidate and there is any pushback from a client, they'll defer and smooth down the edges until there is nothing interesting or effective left in the names they are presenting. Going forward they'll only present names of the vanilla variety, *because getting buy-in on breakout brand names require brains, time, commitment and hard work.*

The first step to protecting yourself is learning to spot The Happy Idiot.



To illustrate each, we'll use actual names and case studies created by a single naming agency.

The Happy Idiot

In this classic version the agency invents a word with no resemblance to any existing word. Because it doesn't mean anything, there are no objections from the client. It's been sanitized for their protection. But to sell the name they need to convince the client that the invented word has positive, relevant meaning. They break the name down into morphemes (the smallest meaningful unit of a language) and assign positive meaning to each. Then someone with a master's degree in linguistics from Berkeley or Stanford certifies the meanings – in languages neither the client or their target audience speaks – to give it weight and to assure the client that this meaningless construction is not only full of meaning, but also perfect for them.

When an agency rolls out morphemic rationale, you're being played:

Mirvie

"Mirvie is a rich coining that draws on several Romance languages: Mira means "objective" in Italian, "purpose" or "look!" in Spanish, and the feminine form of "wonderful" in Latin. Vie is "life" in French and "means" or

“paths” in Italian. Mirvie suggests the wonder of pregnancy, a means to your objective, and lifesaving, targeted insights”

Is it possible the naming agency believes, “Mirvie suggests the wonder of pregnancy, a means to your objective, and lifesaving, targeted insights”? Depends on what they’re smoking. What matters is the client believes it. Nobody objects, a positive meaning was established by an expert no one feels qualified to argue with, job done! Client is happy.

When agencies rely heavily on this strategy, it’s referred to as *morpheme addiction*.

Invented words have their place in naming, but their rationale cannot be morphemic pretzel logic based on multiple languages foreign to the audience. An invented name has to work on its own, without explanation, in the context of the company or product it represents.

The Happy Idiot with a Passport

Same basics as the original, but it uses real words from foreign languages that neither the client nor their target audience speaks. It produces names that no one can object to because they don’t know what they mean.

When an agency tries to sell you on a meaning in a language unfamiliar to your customers, you’re being played:

Ikena

“Ikena, a Hawaiian word meaning “vista, perspective, knowledge.” The name also recalls “I ken” (an older English word for “know”) and “I can”

The Happy Idiot and Happy Idiot with a Passport both reveal an essential naming truth: *having a meaning doesn’t make a name meaningful*. Ikena has a meaning but is meaningless unless you speak Hawaiian. Mirvie’s morphemes may have meaning, but Mirvie is meaningless to everyone. Which is why in our opinion, both naming approaches are scams. They’re nothing more than a sales pitch to a client to end a project.

Foreign language names can make reasonable brand names, but they have to work based on their look, sound and personality. Their “meaning” is irrelevant to anyone who doesn’t speak the language.

The Happy Idiot with a Wallflower

The Wallflower version employs the one thousand most common words used by brand names, words like Active, Arc, Atlas, Blue, Bridge, Care, Clear, Complete, Core, Curve, Edge, Engage, Ever, Expert, Flex, Fly, Force, Front, Fusion, Future, Gain, Go, Green, Hill, Hub, Key, Lead, Light, Line, On, Next, Now, Path, Plus, Point, Power, Pro, Pulse, River, Sense, Scape, Shift, Sky, Span, Splash, Star, Stream, Sun, Up, Via, Vista, Wave, Wise and Zip. A single word Wallflower is rarely presented. They are overwhelmingly “Compound Wallflowers”, as a combination of two excruciatingly common words is much easier to trademark than one. These words are so generic they don’t draw any objection from the client, and each contains a slight, one-dimensional positive attribute. And so common their effect is that of white noise on the audience. They’re Wallflowers, forgotten in a heartbeat.

When an agency takes the path of least resistance by presenting pairings of white noise words, you’re being sold a Wallflower.

Combining these wallflowers has gifted six different clients of this one agency with these six names:

Bridgescape

Bridgespan

Everbridge

Flybridge

Gainbridge

PSI Bridge

Takeaways

- *When an agency rolls out morphemic rationale, you're being played.*
- *When an agency tries to sell you on a meaning in a language unfamiliar to your customers, you're being played.*
- *When an agency takes the path of least resistance by presenting pairings of white noise words, you're being sold a Wallflower.*

Preventing a H.I. Jacking

If you're looking for a branding or naming agency to create a brand name, have a quick look at their naming portfolio. Agencies who've somehow found a way to ethically rationalize The Happy Idiot don't just dabble, they're all in. The vast majority of their portfolio will be chockfull of Compound Wallflowers, Invented Words and Foreign Language names.

All Happy Idiot names are brand zombies, neither interesting, differentiating nor memorable. They create a marketing money pit that you may never climb out of. If you can spot a Happy Idiot, avoiding the trap is straightforward.