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How to Write a Great Slogan for Your Business

By Harry Joiner

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Need to build brand awareness in an over-communicated market? Consider using a tagline. A snappy tagline tied to your firm's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) can answer the prospect's question "Why you, not your competition?" before they even ask it. Slogans like DeBeer's "Diamonds are forever", Barnum & Bailey's "The Greatest Show on Earth", and Maxwell House's "Good to the last drop" can make it dead simple for consumers to justify a decision to buy. Try it, you'll like it!

Action item: If you want to develop a new tagline for your product or service, start by asking your coworkers to fill in the worksheet at http://www.reliablegrowth.com/agline_worksheet.pdf. Do this for two reasons: 1.) You might get some great ideas from this exercise, and 2.) Getting their input will make it easier for you to "sell" your final tagline to the organization later on. Next, visit <http://www.yudkin.com/generate.htm> with the goal of creating several taglines. Marcia Yudkin has designed an excellent 19-step plan to help you get through this process. How many taglines can you create? Don't be too quick to dismiss ideas! If you need some inspiration, check out <http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/slogans/index.asp>.

Finally, decide on two taglines with <http://www.adslogans.co.uk/slogananalysis/slogananalysis.html>. This is a fantastic tool that will help you appreciate the pros and cons of both finalists. After you've tweaked both finalists for a day or two, let your senior management team vote on the one tagline they like best.

For Business Names And Tag Lines, Popularity Shouldn't Rule

By Marcia Yudkin

Don't turn your search for the perfect name or tag line into a popularity contest! Two instances of this have crossed my path recently.

First, someone I know asked people to vote on the best title for a forthcoming book. That's unwise, because what people say they like in a book title:

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* Doesn't necessarily distinguish the book from others * Isn't necessarily clear, spellable and free of negative connotations * Doesn't mean those who are the best audience for the book will "get it" * Isn't always easy to remember and repeat * May not perform well in search engines

Second, according to The New York Times, the state of New Jersey put its prospective new tourism slogan to a vote. The winning entry, "New Jersey: Come See for Yourself" received just a few more votes than "New Jersey: The Best Kept Secret."

Both the winning and the runner-up New Jersey slogans flunk an elementary test for the effectiveness of a tag line or slogan: It should distinguish the company, or in this case the state, from most or all others. Try this out yourself by plugging in names of other states besides New Jersey – most of the time, the slogan becomes no more and no less applicable. This means the slogan cannot make a strong case for the Garden State. More bluntly, it's mainly hot air.

The New Jersey contest had another serious flaw. To be eligible to vote on the best slogan, you had to be a New Jersey resident. While residents do have the greatest stake in improving the reputation of their state, they by definition don't belong to the target market of the tourism slogan. To understand what would appeal most to non-New Jerseyans, don't look to New Jerseyans en masse. Many will be clueless about this and get it upside-down. Outsiders are the ones who need to understand the slogan and respond.

I'll never forget an ad for a Great Plains software company that obviously assumed that a photo of a flat-to-the-horizon landscape without trees was an appealing image. For me, a die-hard New Englander accustomed to heavily wooded hills, this picture had the opposite effect – it filled me with horror.

Of course, someone who lives in New Jersey or North Dakota may be perfectly capable of portraying their region appealingly to outsiders. Instead of asking any group to vote on a winning name or tag line, set up your contest so that people can submit suggestions. Then have either one person or a committee cull the entries according to a list of criteria drawn up beforehand.

By selecting and judging rather than mass voting, you're most likely to end up with a name or slogan that wins over your audience.

Marcia Yudkin is the author of 6 Steps to Free Publicity and ten other books hailed for outstanding creativity. Find out more about her new discount naming company, Named At Last, which brainstorms new company names, new product names, tag lines and more for cost-conscious organizations, at



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