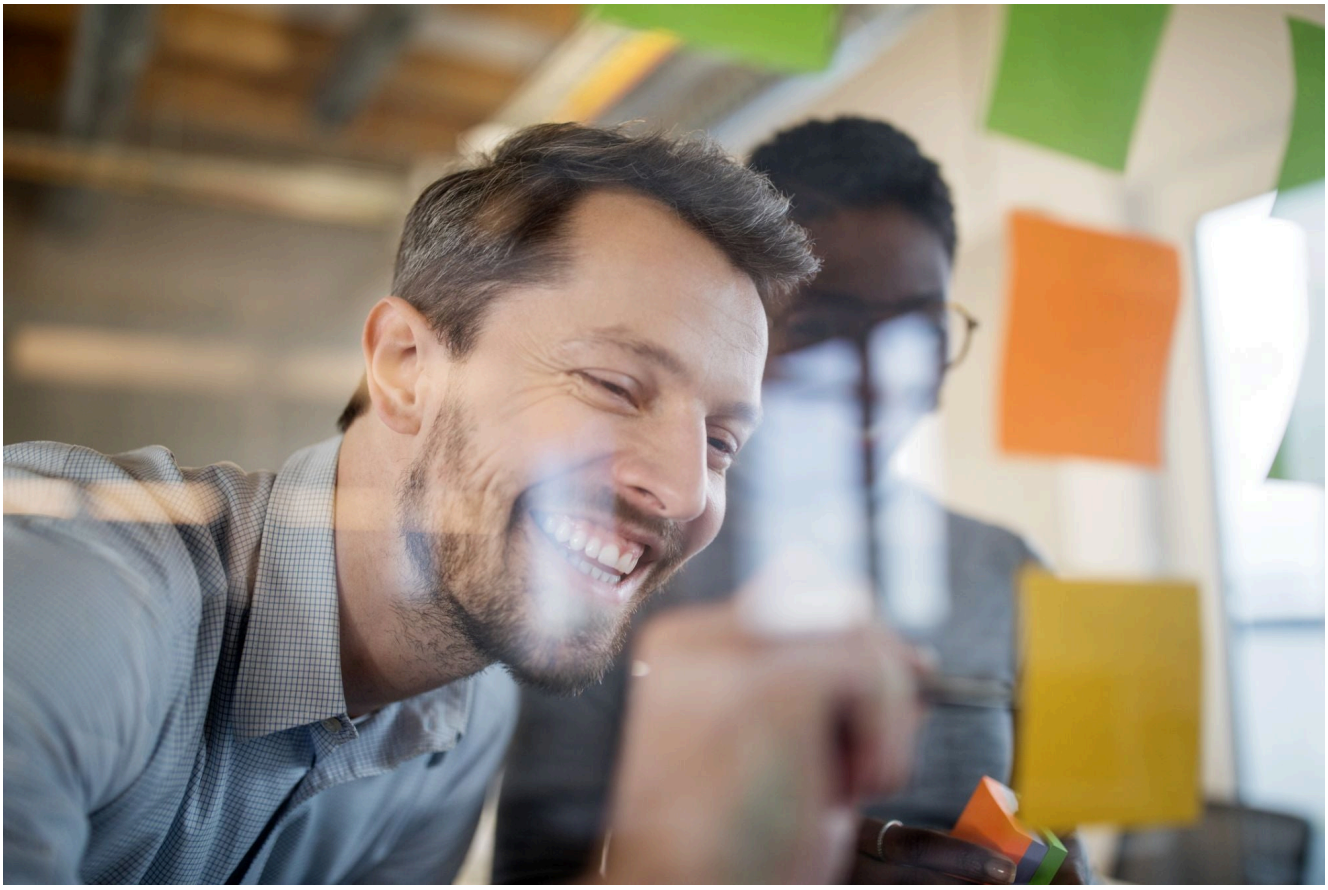
7 Ways to Make an Unforgettable Business Name



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The following excerpt is from Brad Flowers's The Naming Book. *Buy it now from* Amazon | Barnes & Noble | IndieBound *or click here to buy it directly from us and* ***SAVE 60%*** *on this book when you use code* ***MARKET2021*** *through* ***4/3/21****.*

A business name has done its job if it causes a person to pause for a second. And it's even more valuable if you can remember it long after that pause. Memorability matters.

So how do you create a memorable name? In a 2003 article from the *Journal of Advertising*, the authors cited the following features that enhance either the recall or recognition of

brand names:

- Rhyme
- Unusual spelling
- Onomatopoeia
- Initial hard consonant
- Wordplay
- Brand-name fit

Let’s look at a few in greater detail, along with some other factors that influence memorability.

Familiarity

This isn’t in the above list, but it’s worth acknowledging. The same *Journal of Advertising* article says that familiarity plays a larger role in brand-name memorability than the linguistic features of the name.

Repetition is one of the most effective ways to make a name familiar. That’s the idea behind advertising: repetition to create familiarity. So more familiar brand names are more memorable because we see them more often. For example, AT&T is one of the largest spenders on advertising, year after year. I certainly remember the name, although it isn’t inherently memorable. But it’s everywhere, from billboards to buses, on my telephone, and on TV. The brand achieves familiarity through ubiquity. So the more familiar a brand is, the less important linguistic devices are.

Rhyme

Poets know this, and now you do, too: Rhyme aids in memory. While rhyme is common in many formats, this technique is especially common with consumer-facing brands:

- Reese’s Pieces
- Lean Cuisine
- Slim Jim

Rhyming isn't restricted solely to food companies. Following is a range of companies using the device. They don't feel forced or gimmicky because the parts of the name are related to what they do.

- FireWire
- StubHub
- Crunch 'n Munch

Crunch 'n Munch gives you a hint at the texture and addictive nature of the treat. The rhyme of StubHub is almost a sentence. You get the idea that it's a place where you can buy tickets. And FireWire's rhyme is a metaphor: You get the sense that the wire transfers information fast. Rhyme can work for more grown-up businesses if the words give you valuable information about the business or product.

Unusual Spellings

Does *Kraft* stick with you more than the standard *Craft*? *Krispy Kreme* or *Crispy Cream*? Research says unusual spellings can make a name more memorable. Building on the previous point about rhyme, here are two names that do both:

- Laffy Taffy
- Mello Yello

The unusual spelling combined with the rhyme reinforces the youthful nature of the product and likely its memorability. The trend of unusual spellings was common in the middle of the 20th century and has become common again, especially online. A scarcity of URLs spurred this trend among startups. Some examples include:

- Digg
- Flickr
- Reddit

As more URLs became available, this trend has slowed. Is there

space for you to use an unusual spelling purposefully? When Twitter launched, it was called “twttr” (without the vowels) because Twitter.com was owned by someone else. That trend subsided, and it got large enough to buy the domain, so it changed its name to Twitter. But remember: There’s a fine line between memorable and cute. And your brand may not want to be cute.

Onomatopoeia

This is a big word for a simple idea. Some words sound like what they represent: snap, crackle, pop, twitter. Some brands use this tool, like the *zip* in Zipcar. Does that make it sound easier and quicker to use than its competitor, Car2go? What about Meow Mix? Would your cat like it better than Purina Cat Chow? It might be more memorable, especially with variations of the tag line: “Tastes so good, cats ask for it by name.”

Names that sound like what they represent tend to be more memorable. Ask yourself if this fits with what you’re trying to create.

Initial Hard Consonant

According to research in reading studies, words starting with hard consonants (*t*, *k*, *p*, *d*, *g*, *v*) are more memorable than words starting with vowels or softer consonants. They’re also considered stronger. In fact, recent studies indicate that the use of consonants and their placement can affect the perceived gender of a brand.

The sound of the consonant matters. Consider a spinoff company from Kraft Foods, Mondelez. Mondelez manages such brands as Cadbury, Chips Ahoy, Honey Maid, Toblerone, and Triscuit. The name Mondelez is a new word made from Latin parts like *mundus*, meaning world. It’s intended to invoke the idea that there’s a whole delicious world out there. However, compared to Kraft, “Mondelez” is decidedly forgettable. Of course, this is partly because it isn’t as familiar, but research suggests that could

be because of the weaker starting consonant, *m*.

Wordplay (Puns)

A wordplay (or pun) is a type of joke that plays on the fact that some words sound similar but have very different meanings. Some pun-inspired names are memorable for all the wrong reasons. In a quick search, I came across Bread Zeppelin, Wok This Way, and Nin Com Soup. I don't know if they're real, but you should tread carefully with puns unless you're going after a certain demographic.

Names that include puns certainly catch your attention. They might even be memorable. But is it for the right reason? Does it illuminate the depth of their brand, or is it just a cheap gimmick? Maybe it's both.

Brand Name Fit

Some names sound like they fit with the other names in an industry. These sorts of names tend to be more memorable. For example, in a 1998 *Journal of Marketing* article, "The Effects of Brand Name Suggestiveness on Advertising Recall," the authors claim the name "PicturePerfect Televisions" tests better for memorability than "Emporium Television." PicturePerfect sounds more like the name of a TV brand than Emporium does, so meeting consumer expectations can be positive.

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