

# Brand Names: The Do's

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## What's in a Name? 5 Things to Consider Before Naming Your Company

OK, that's a trick question: Cadabra was [renamed Amazon](#) after a year, when a lawyer misheard the name as the not-so-appealing "cadaver." Even when customers heard the name correctly, they didn't always get that it was derived from "abracadabra." You can see why founder Jeff Bezos liked that original moniker for its magical connotations, but if he had kept a name that customers couldn't always understand or pronounce, who knows where we'd be making our late-night impulse purchases today.

So what's in a name? When it's your company's name... everything. Thankfully, in our work over the past eight years helping to launch and brand more than 500,000 startups and small businesses around the world, we at 99designs have learned a few tricks along the way to help you find the perfect name for your **brand**.

Your name should be as unique as you are. If you feel like all of your options are dried up, think about the words related to your industry, product or service.

While availability these days is a challenge, here are five things you should consider before naming—or renaming—your company.

### 1. Use the 4 Ss.

The first step is simple. Before you start brainstorming names, think about the Ss: Sticky, Short, Easy-to-Say and Straightforward.

## 2. Understand your brand, product and company.

Gather a team of valued friends, business colleagues, advisors and even family who have a good idea about your business plan or mission around a whiteboard. The goal is to create a list of words that tell your company's story. What's your mission? What's your identity? What do you want to tell customers about yourselves and your product? Finally, perhaps most importantly, what differentiates you from your competitors? The worst outcome is for your company to be confused with your competitor. Think about the ways that Uber (luxurious and sophisticated) and Lyft (friendly with the "y") separate themselves from each other.

## 3. Brainstorm keywords.

Curl Up and Dye is maybe the greatest punny hair salon name around—and that's why it's used across the country. Your name should be as unique as you are. If you feel like all of your options are dried up, think about the words related to your industry, product or service. Think of derivatives of synonyms; [Zappos](#) is based on zapatos (Spanish for shoes) and [Strava](#) is the Swedish word for "to strive." Experiment by combining or shortening words, similar to **WhatsApp**, **Airbnb**, **OpenTable**, by adding numbers (23andMe, the number of pairs of chromosomes in your body) or by adding or replacing letters of common words, as **Lyft** and **Imgur** did. Visuals such as animals and colors also make your name memorable; think of companies such as **MailChimp** or **Redbox**.

## 4. Stake your claim.

You've got a name that you like, but before you fall in love, you should **Google** it, check the availability of the domain, do an app check (if you're mobile) and scour **Twitter** and **Facebook** to ensure the social handles are available. Don't wait until you're 100 percent committed to claim the domain and the social handles or you risk them being taken by the time you're ready to take the virtual plunge.

## 5. Test, test, test.

By now, hopefully you've settled on a killer name with a combination of letters that tells your customers what you're about—that's eye- and ear-catching, too. Your final step: Take it to the people directly. Use **SurveyMonkey** or **UserTesting.com** to test the name with your target audience. This is how you'll find out whether people have any negative reactions or confusion around the name, and you can ask for specific feedback about whether your choice is as catchy, clear and strong as it can be.

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