

# HOW TO USE YOUR BRAND NAME

.....

THE TRUTH IN NAMING SERIES  
*VOLUME 4*

.....

BY CAITLIN BARRETT

**DOUBLEIT?**

**CONGRATS!  
YOU'VE GOT A  
NAME.**

# Hopefully, you love it.

Or at least like it. But with the number of potential trademark and linguistic conflicts that stand in the way of securing a name, chances are good that your new name might just be one you settled for.

And that's ok.

Names are what you make of them. Some incredibly stupid names are now synonymous with the biggest and most successful brands of all time.

It's time to build something great out of the name you have.

**PLAN FOR  
WHERE IT GOES**

# Put your name on things.

Occasionally, a client will claim their product or service name “just isn’t working.” Sometimes, that’s true—usually because it’s a terrible match with the rest of the brand experience. But more often? It’s just...nowhere.

It’s not featured in the product or on communications, it’s not promoted in advertising or marketing, and there are no tools, anywhere, that would give people any idea for how to talk about it.

Start by mapping out for all the places your name will go...

# Places you can put your name:

## Physical

- ❑ Signage
- ❑ Business stationery
- ❑ Marketing templates
- ❑ Sales materials/collateral
- ❑ Packaging/on product
- ❑ Print advertising
- ❑ Banners
- ❑ Vehicles
- ❑ Nametags and uniforms (if you do that kind of thing...)

## Digital

- ❑ Social media accounts
  - ❑ Explore alternate handles if yours is taken
- ❑ Website
  - ❑ Explore alternate URLs if pure dot com is taken
- ❑ UI
- ❑ Email/newsletter templates
- ❑ Digital advertising

## Behind the scenes

- ❑ HR and recruiting materials
- ❑ Employee handbooks
- ❑ Internal tech

**DECIDE WHAT  
YOUR NAME  
MEANS**

# Have a name story.

Skip the part about hiring a naming agency. (We're always happy to remain a secret.)

Instead, tell a story about how the name connects to the promise of your brand.

Is it a metaphor for an aspect of the user experience? A reflection of the founder's values? A filthy inside joke? (You'd be surprised...)

You won't need to tell this story often. Maybe at launch, and maybe as part of occasional press inquiries. But it's still important to have one, and to have everyone that works for your brand understand the same story.

**SUPPORT IT  
WITH MORE  
LANGUAGE**

# **Do you need a tagline? Probably not.**

If you're dead set on having a tagline, sure. No problem. But keep in mind that the process of creating, screening, and securing a tagline is pretty much identical to the one for developing a name. So make sure you want to do that again.

If not, you can still round out what your name communicates with a few simple language tools...

# Consider a descriptor.

A descriptor is a clear and descriptive way to say what business you're in. Let's say your name is Clawfoot. And let's say you sell raw materials to Big Pharma. You might need a way to connect your (very!) abstract name to the category, so you might try out a descriptor.

**Clawfoot**



**Clawfoot Life Sciences**

# Explore competency lines.

Rather than a distinctive tagline, a competency line simply states your strengths or what you do. This can be locked up with the name, but isn't necessarily part of it. Using the Clawfoot example, it might look like this:

**Clawfoot**



**Clawfoot**  
***Research. Technology.***  
***Medicine Stuff.***

# Develop brand themes/messages.

These are the big, emotional and values-driven ideas your brand name should come to represent over time, and tied to things that are true about your brand today. These are typically big ideas, and should always be emphasized when you're talking about the brand.

**Clawfoot**



**Clawfoot**

**“Clawfoot is the industry’s most fearless pharmaceutical supplier, bringing courage and integrity to making medicine stuff.”**

# Define your features and benefits.

These are the more functional things about your business, product, or service, but they're just as important to make clear. Communicating these consistently, in close proximity to your name, helps link the two more closely over time.

**Clawfoot**



**Clawfoot  
facts:**

**Partnered with the top 10  
pharmaceutical research  
laboratories**

**100% client retention**

**Zero deaths caused by us**

# Decide how it works in a sentence.

Get comfortable with your new name. Sometimes names come from parts of speech that won't work in every sentence construct. Too bad—people will still use them in ways that don't quite work.

But you should model the ways you want your name to be used. Will you allow them to “verb” it (like how you Google your ex, or Uber to your ex's house, or Snapchat yourself Dinty-Moore-ing their crocuses)?

A trademark attorney might advise that you don't do that. But with the rise of digital assistants and voice commands, you might need to be flexible.

A good exercise? Map out your most important audiences, and think through all the ways they're likely to use your name. For every instance, try out your name in a sentence and find the usages that feel most natural.

**BUILD OUT THE  
REST OF YOUR  
IDENTITY**

# Words don't have to do everything.

Your visual identity and brand experience should *complement* what your name and brand communications say. That can mean reinforcing some of the ideas your name suggests, creating tension with those ideas, or emphasizing other traits altogether.

**LOGO**

**TYPOGRAPHY**

**ILLUSTRATION**

**CUSTOMER JOURNEYS**

**COLOR PALETTE**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

**CAMPAIGNS**

**ICONOGRAPHY**

**EXPERIENCE DESIGN**

**ANIMATION**

**CONTENT**

**PROTECT IT**

# **This booklet is not a lawyer.**

But it still has some advice for how to protect the name you've already put a lot of work into securing.

By using your name, prominently, in association with goods or services, you've started to protect it. This matters, because to renew your mark with the USPTO (every five or 10 years), you'll need to show you've been using it.

You'll also want to show that your name is trademarked, either by displaying the circle R for federally registered marks (®), TM for common-law trademarks(<sup>TM</sup>), or SM for common-law servicemarks (<sup>SM</sup>).

You should probably also include a trademark line, along the lines of "Clawfoot is a registered trademark of Bathroom Jokes Global."

# **There will be infringements.**

Trademark conflicts are based on risk of confusion. The clearest infringement is typically when another company is using your exact name for the exact same type of goods or services. So a simple Google Alert can keep you aware of how your name is being used.

But you can also make a case for names that are confusingly similar being infringements. So if you're called Clawfoot, you might also want to set your alert to things like ClawsFoot, Footclaw, Clawbath...people can be surprisingly creative when they're copying you.

A trademark lawyer can provide monitoring for an annual fee. This is doubly nice, as they can save you the headache of wondering whether or not something might represent a real conflict, versus something that's not worth your attention.

# Cease? Desist?

If you do find someone using a confusingly similar name, you have some big decisions to make. Do you want to take action? It's easy to say, "Of course! I worked hard for this name and want to protect it!" But be aware that protection isn't always cheap.

A lawyer should be your first stop. They can help you decide whether it's worth your time and energy to pursue a case. The first step is usually a cease-and-desist letter (lovingly called a "cease to exist" letter). This letter doesn't always have to threaten further action, but it does ask the infringer to stop using the name in a way that represents a conflict.

This can mean they have to stop using it entirely, or it can be a step toward an agreement that they only use it in a certain area, or limits them to certain goods and services.

# **Don't be lazy.**

Your right to keep your mark has a lot to do with your willingness to protect it. If you let everyone use your name, or variations of your name, in ways that would likely be considered infringements of the mark, good luck trying to win it back under your control later.

**REMEMBER:  
HAVING A  
STRONG NAME IS  
PART OF HAVING  
A STRONG  
BRAND...**

**BUT THE BEST  
BRAND CAN'T  
MAKE UP FOR A  
BAD BUSINESS.**

**SO BE SURE TO  
HAVE A GOOD  
BUSINESS!  
THANK YOU!**

# **About the author**

# **Caitlin Barrett likes to do creative things. Strategically.**



Caitlin Barrett is a writer, namer, and brand strategist based in Brooklyn. As a partner in Doublebit Narrative, she spends all day bossing words around.

In her spare time, she lifts heavy things, restores antique axes, and tells jokes to herself on Twitter @badnewsbarrett.

**For more in Truth in Naming,  
go to [doublebitnarrative.com](http://doublebitnarrative.com)**

©2017 Doublebit Narrative

**DOUBLEBIT**