The Igor Naming Guide

An Essential Framework for Creating the Most Powerful Name in Your Space

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

As you begin, it is essential to decide what you want your new name to do for you.

A name can:

- Achieve separation from your competitors
- Demonstrate to the world that you are different
- Reinforce a unique positioning platform
- Create positive and lasting engagement with your audience
- Be unforgettable
- Propel itself through the world on its own, becoming a no-cost, self-sustaining PR vehicle
- Provide a deep well of marketing and advertising images
- Be the genesis of a brand that rises above the goods and services you provide
- Completely dominate a category

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
Brand Scope	Name Works
Brand Sequence	Name Works
Brand Slinger	Namebase
Brand Solutions	Naming
Brand Vista	Naming Systems
Independent Branding	Naming Workshop
Not Just Any Branding	Namington
The Better Branding Company	Strategic Name Development
The Brand Company	The Naming Company
The Brand Consultancy	Wise Name

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:**
>
> - These names breeze through the trademark process because they are unique, eliminating the potential for trademark conflict.
> - 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:

- Because these types of names are built on Greek and Latin morphemes, you need the advertising budget of a gigantic global corporation to imbue them with meaning and get people to remember them.
- While they don't carry any direct negative messages, such names do 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, Kleenex.

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.
- Emotionally engaging.
- They are rich with potential marketing energy.

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. For instance, while Explorer, Navigator and Safari are web portal names, they are also the names of SUVs.
- 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.

Continuing with more examples of web portal company names:

    InfoSeek, LookSmart = functional
    Explorer, Navigator = experiential
    Yahoo / Bing / Google = positioning (Evocative)

    From the ride share sector:

    RideCharge= functional
    Lyft / Curb = experiential
    Uber = positioning (Evocative)

    From the airline sector:

    Trans World Airlines = functional
    United = experiential
    Virgin = positioning (Evocative)

    and finally, from the computer industry:

    Digital Equipment = functional
    Gateway = experiential
    Apple = positioning (Evocative)

The upside:

- A rare type of name, making it a powerful differentiator.
- Nonlinear and multidimensional, making it deeply engaging.
- Helps create a brand image that is bigger than the goods and services a company offers.
- Trademark process is better than average.
- 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? How can a name help you define or redefine your brand? 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. It keeps the process focused on the competitive aspect, allows 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 navigate the process

Women's Yoga Wear Competitive Taxonomy

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5			Navel	lululemon	**5**
4	Lucy		Sweaty Betty		**4**
3		Yoga Smoga	Tonic		**3**
2	Athleta	Teeki Onzie		Electric Yoga	**2**
1	Lorna Jane	Zella Alo	Beyond Yoga	Prana Mika Freya	**1**
0	WELOVE Threads for Thought	Lolë Solow Zobha			**0**
-1	Spilts59				**-1**

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**

Work Flow/Project Management

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5			Basecamp	Slack	5
4			5pm	Hive Davinci	4
3		Odoo Podio	Daylite Huddle	Merlin Redbooth Pulse	3
2	Goplan	Asana Avaza Bitrix24	Blazedesk Mingle	Harvest	2
1		Acunote	BeeCanvas		1

	24sevenoffice Hyperoffice	Attask	Feng Office OrangeScrum Mavenlink		
0	AceProject Easy Projects Liquidplanner Project Bubble Project Cloud Project Insight ProjectManager.com ProjectOpen Projectplace ProTasker TeamWork Live Teamwork Projects Teamwork.com ProWorkflow ProWorkflow Work by Planbox Workbook	Accelo Acheivelt Advanseez		Gemini	0

WORKetc WorkflowMax Workfront Workgroups DaVinci WorkOtter Workspace WorkZone Workzone MS project				
- 1	Access FocalPoint AchievePlanner Action Item Manager Active Collab Clientspot Deskaway	Aceicon EPM Acentrix Celoxis Clarizen Trello	Binfire Brightpod		- 1

SUV Competitive Taxonomy

This chart of SUV names reveals a singular positioning strategy that permeates most of the brand names in this industry, resulting in the bulk of these names being assigned low marks on this scale. It's not that the names themselves are poor. Rather, it's because the names don't help to differentiate one vehicle from another; many of them are variations on the same theme (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 the Experiential category.

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
5		Jeep			**5**
4			Suburban		**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 Bordeux Bronco Cherokee	**-1**

	FUNCTIONAL	INVENTED	EXPERIENTIAL	EVOCATIVE	
				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**	

NAMING TOOLS

Naming Process Filters – Evocative Names

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 olds' picture book: "lululemon and her best friends annabanana and sallystrawberry were climbing Gumdrop 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

Yahoo!

- Yahoo!! It's Mountain Dew!
- Yoohoo! It's a chocolate drink in a can!
- Nobody will take stock quotes and world news seriously from a bunch of "Yahoos"

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 is step one.

Having the naming committee evaluate 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 – How differentiated is a given name from its competition. 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. It's important, when judging distinctiveness, to always consider the name in the context of the product it will serve, and among the competition it will spar with for the consumer's attention.

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 from decades 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. The "33" angle is different for each name.

Trademark – As in the ugly, meat hook reality of trademark availability. Scoring is easy here, as there are only three options, and nothing is subjective: 10 = likely available for trademark; 5 = may be available for trademark; and 0 = not likely available for trademark. All of the names on this list have been prescreened and have been deemed "likely" for trademark registration.

Here is a blank chart you can use as an exercise to evaluate names you are considering for your own project and see how well they support the positioning of your brand. Be sure to add some of your most successful competitors to this list, so you can accurately gauge how well your names can compete in the marketplace. Assign up to 10 points in each of the nine categories; the more points, the better (90 maximum total points):

NAME	APPEARANCE	DISTINCTIVE	DEPTH	ENERGY	HUMANITY	POSITIONING [1]	SOUND	"33"	TRADEMARK [2]	TOTAL

Studies in Naming

How to Create Compound Names Like Instagram, Snapchat & Airport

Instagram and Snapchat are identical constructions. Each simply substitutes new words from an accepted utility name: Instant Message. Insta & Snap are synonyms for Instant, and Gram & Chat are substitutes for Message.

Since Instant Message is already a universally adopted name, you know that Instagram and Snapchat will be accepted as well. If what you're naming doesn't map to a two-word generic, break it down into one first.

You can do this by re-purposing an unrelated, well-known compound word, as in Apple's Wi-Fi base station being called "Airport" – a port accessed through the air. It's easy to remember and readily embraced because everyone knows the word Airport already.

Proposing a name like Airport to a committee will be met with immediate pushback such as, "Everyone hates the experience of an airport" or, "Last time I was there they cancelled my flight, I had to sleep on the floor and I missed my child's birthday" or "The first thing I think of is stress, long lines and bad service"- as if any of this will make the name less successful, which of course it doesn't.

As soon as the name Airport is applied to a Wi-Fi device the primary definition disappears, your audience puts the clever double meaning together in their heads in an "aha!" moment, and they smile at the warmth & humanity you've brought to the game. Airport contains all of the ingredients of an unforgettable, best of breed name.

Because this simple concept is inherently difficult for corporations, names like Airport are rare indeed

What makes "Hotwire" & "Pandora" Powerful Names?

To understand why they work so well, you have to get literal for a moment:

Hotwire = "to steal a car"

Pandora = "unleashed plagues, diseases & all the evils of mankind"

These types of meanings will get a name dismissed ASAP by a naming committee – a committee that would have been wrong to dismiss these names, obviously.

Consumers don't attribute these literal, negative qualities to the companies who use Hotwire & Pandora as their company names (you don't, do you?). But naming committees will almost always believe they will. It's essential to understand that your target audience does not interpret names literally – if they did names like Slack, Virgin, lululemon, Pandora, Hotwire, Yahoo, Google & Gap would be D.O.A.

In each case the name is a metaphor for something about the company. Hotwiring a car is a "hack", Hotwire positions the site as a travel hack – a way around high prices. Pandora Radio is a marketplace, positioned metaphorically as a "box full of intrigue".

When juxtaposed in line with the company's positioning, the names simply become interesting – they have personality. They demonstrate confidence and uniqueness. Metaphorically re-purposing the negative is what makes them so positive.

The names are provocative, differentiating and memorable.

Don't fear the Negative – well executed, it's a Positive.

Lost at sea

The most common mistake in naming is choosing a name that gets lost in the sea of competitive sound-alikes. We've cobbled together a list of clothing brand names that contain the word "Bay", with a few "Harbor" names thrown in for spice.

"Harbor Bay" wins the coveted Gold Ridicule for including both words.

This mistake is easily avoided by creating a Competitive Taxonomy prior to naming:

Aqua Bay	Jamaica Bay
Back Bay	Kahuna Bay
Baja Bay	Kips Bay
Banana Bay	Kylani Bay
Bantry Bay	Latigo Bay
Bay City	Lawton Harbor
Bay Reef	Lunada Bay
Bay Trading	Madison Bay
Beach Bay	Mango Bay
Bermuda Bay	Marino Bay
Bikini Bay	Mission Bay
Billion Bay	Misty Harbor
Bimini Bay	Monterey Bay
Blackwater Bay	Moonlight Bay
Blubay	Orca Bay
Brittany Bay	Paradise Bay
Buckley Bay	Parrot Bay
Buffalo Bay	Peppermint Bay
Burk's Bay	Peregrine Bay
Capstan Bay	Sag Harbor
Chileno Bay	Solar Bay
Coral Bay	South Bay
Eastbay	St. John's Bay
Eccobay	Sterling Bay
Emerald Bay	SunBay
English Bay	Thornton Bay
Falcon Bay	Thunder Bay
Ginger Bay	Union Bay
Hampton Bay	Victoria Bay
Harbor Bay	Willow Bay
Highland Bay	Yucatan Bay
Inner Harbor	

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