

FINIEN™

## 03. YOUR BRAND LAUNCH

---

HOW TO NAME YOUR NEW BRAND SUCCESSFULLY

*by Fabian Geyrhalter*

*Principal, FINIEN*

## WHY IT MATTERS

Quite possibly, your organization's greatest asset—the name of your new brand—will be with you for many years to come. It will become the launchpad from which all the other elements of your brand will spring, including potential sub-brands in the future. It sets the overall tone for your organization or product. Once a name has been selected and implemented, it is an expensive and disruptive undertaking to go through the process of changing that name. This is why it is so important to get it right the first time.



*Like naming a child, you don't want to have to redo it later.*

**- ADAM MEFFORD**

*Currency/Human Capital*

To find the perfect brand name for your product or company, you can either hire a professional or try the do-it-yourself method. With the right blend of talent, creativity, and perseverance, you may be able to come up with that clever name you've been seeking. However, what might seem like an easy task at the outset can quickly become incredibly challenging. Constraints such as finding a unique name with an available .com that can be trademarked will limit choices and force you to expand your imagination possibly beyond your time and creative capabilities. Hiring a professional can help to ensure that you end up with a great name and the peace of mind that it will be with you for the lifetime of your brand.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT NAME

When selecting the best name for your company or product, you should look for certain characteristics:

### 1. Short and easy to pronounce

Aim for a name with three syllables or less. Test the pronunciation of your name by pretending to answer the phone—how does it sound and feel? Is it easy to say, and does it sound established and trustworthy?

### 2. Available domain or trademark

Let's say you are launching a new educational product for kids and you've already decided that you want to name it "BrainWhiz." You go to register the domain name only to find that it's (1) on auction (2) a very pricey premium domain, or (3) not available. Tempting as it is to tack on "kids" to buy the domain "BrainWhizKids" or "BrainWhiz.biz," doing so dilutes your brand from the get-go and could lead to copyright battles with the owners of Brain Whiz. The world's top brands own their domain names outright, and, if it is at all achievable, you should set the same goal for your brand, even if you are a startup. Obviously, gaining green-light on trademark availability is crucial, even if you decide not to claim it at this point (more on trademark search on [pg 11.](#))

### 3. Passes the search engine test

Do a Google search on your desired name to make sure it doesn't appear in similar or related products. Reviewing results of the first two or three pages should be sufficient to help you catch any red flags; your new brand will quickly infiltrate the first pages on Google anyway.

### 4. Tells a story

When people ask you what your company or product name means (and they will), make sure it comes with a good story to back it up. With so much competition in the marketplace these days, consumers are seeking more than just a product: they're seeking to connect with your brand on an emotional level. The story behind your name can become a large part of that connection.

## **5. Stands out (but not too far) from your competitors' product or company names**

Selecting a name that allows you to stand out from other companies and products in your vertical will allow you to gain your consumers' attention. However, take care to not choose a name so distinctively different that it no longer feels associated with your industry. Otherwise, you run the risk that your target audience won't be able to quickly connect with it.

## **6. Expandable for potential brand extensions**

Think of Twitter and how they've made clever use of their name by creating a whole culture with their very own nomenclature—comments are dubbed "Tweets" and the world of Twitter is known as the "Twittersphere." This aspect of a name may not be applicable to your specific product or company launch, but it can be a nice bonus and may even evolve organically over time.

## **7. Avoid cliches or overused words**

Within your particular industry or vertical, there are likely a number of words that numerous companies have used in their names. For example, if you're launching a new line of cosmetics, you would be wise to avoid using the word (or any derivation of the word) "beauty" in your product line. This overused term has become passé over time. Using a cliché word can make your product feel dated before it even hits the shelves, also making it more difficult to be found via online searches.

## **8. Culturally friendly**

A key factor for brands that will reach a global audience (and most brands will through their various social media outlets), your name should resonate across cultures. So make sure you've researched the breadth of meanings and connotations your chosen name might carry.

## TYPES OF BRAND NAMES

Now that you are well versed on the ingredients involved in making a great company name, let's take a look at the various types of names available. In her book *Designing Brand Identity*, author Alina Wheeler identifies six major categories for types of brand names: Founder, Descriptive, Fabricated, Metaphor, Acronym, and Creative Spelling (Wheeler, 2012, p. 23). Adding to this list, we've included a category for Numeric names as well. Below, we will explore each of these categories further and weigh the pros and cons for each of these types of brand names:

### Founder

*Johnson & Johnson*

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*

Companies or products named for their founder tend to lean toward the more conservative side. Examples include Johnson & Johnson and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

- + Recognition or legacy associated with the name can allow your brand to have an instant following by those already familiar with the founder. It will likely be quite easy to obtain a trademark on a brand name based on its founder. The chances of another brand in your industry having the same name are slim—unless, of course, your name is very common, such as “John Smith.”
- As in the case of Martha Stewart and Lance Armstrong, when a product or company is linked to a well-known name, any press that follows that person will follow your brand. Be sure you are ready to weather any storm with a fearless PR agency in tow while having an exit strategy in place if the founder leaves the namesake company.

### Descriptive

**KICKSTARTER**

 **YouTube**

As the name implies, some brand names evoke precisely what they do, as in the case of match.com, Kickstarter, YouTube, and Petco.

- + These types of names quickly convey your purpose to your consumer, which can translate to fewer marketing dollars spent on educating your target audience.

- With the quickly diminishing list of available .com domain names, finding a descriptive name for your company can be especially challenging. Additionally, there may be numerous other companies within your vertical that have the same, or a very similar name, which can make it very difficult to trademark.

### Fabricated



**A made-up word or a combination of words that create something new. Examples include Accenture, which was derived from “Accent on the Future” and Xobni which is “inbox” spelled backwards.**

- + Fabricated names can lead to some of the strongest branding for a product or company. Consider Kleenex and Xerox: both names have become synonymous with their products. These types of names can be the easiest type to trademark simply because they are usually quite unique.
- A fabricated name is unlikely to immediately communicate to the consumer what your company or product is about. It will require a significant marketing effort and budget to educate your target audience.

### Metaphor



**Describes the nature of a company through reference to people, places, things, or foreign words. Puma, a popular brand of athletic wear, uses the metaphor of a fast, agile animal to communicate its brand.**

- + Metaphorical names can serve as a creative way to convey your brand without being overly obvious. They help you avoid those clichés and overused terms discussed earlier in the “Characteristics of a Great Name” section.
- Misleading connotations can cause confusion and allow your brand to slip into oblivion without the correct marketing effort to educate your audience, while making it more difficult to find in online searches. Names that reference common words can be quite difficult to trademark because there may be many other products or companies within your industry that have already used that term in the naming of their brand.

## Acronym



Forming new words based on acronyms that carry a message relatable to the new brand. AOL is derived from “America On-Line,” and Asics is an acronym for “Anima Sana In Corpore Sano,” which, translated from Latin, means “healthy soul in a healthy body.”

- + With names that cannot be read as a word, such as AOL, shorter acronym names can allow your company to quickly sound like a well-established large brand. Similar to descriptive company names, if your acronym spells out a unique name, as in the example of Asics, obtaining a trademark shouldn't be problematic.
- Depending on the length of the acronym, it can be very difficult to obtain an available .com domain, particularly in the case of three- or four-letter names. In addition, you will need to expend additional marketing effort to ensure that your audience won't jumble or confuse the letters of your brand name.

## Creative Spelling



Altering the spelling of a relatively common word as exemplified in the names of brands such as Svpply, a product aggregation site, and Lyft, a ride-sharing service. Names such as Svpply and Lyft tend to appeal to a younger demographic.

- + Can be an easy way to obtain a domain on the name you want.
- Consumers will likely misspell your company name in a Web search if they've heard it only mentioned verbally. Or, they may be unsure as how to pronounce it if they've only seen it written, and therefore might be less inclined to repeat it to a friend. Even if other brands in your vertical spell their name somewhat differently, you might have a hard time obtaining a trademark on this type of name if the USPTO deems that it can cause confusion.

## Numeric



Names that consist only of a number or combine a word with a number to convey a unique story about their brand. For example, the household cleaner, Formula 409 (more commonly referred to as just “409”) got its name through perseverance. After creating and testing 408 different formula versions, two young scientists in Detroit developed the winning blend we use today.

- + Creating a story between a word and a number can make for a memorable name. Combining a common word with a number that tells a distinct story about your company or product can also make it easier to secure a domain and trademark.
- Might be difficult to secure a domain if the name only has 3–4 numbers. Longer numeric names can be difficult for your audience to remember.

## SELECTING THE FINAL NAME

After numerous brainstorming sessions, you will likely have a list of about 5–15 name options for your new brand. In an ideal situation, your options would be so great that it would be difficult to narrow them down to just one selection. Here are some rules of thumb to help guide your final decision-making process:

### **Make sure it meets your initial criteria.**

Refer back to the list “Characteristics of a Great Name.” Which of those items stood out to you as being most important for your new brand? Now take a look at your list of potential names and decide which of these names fulfills most of the criteria you were seeking from the start.

### **Say it out loud.**

Literally. Pretend you’re answering the phone at the company of your new product or brand and see how it feels to say the name.

### **Run it by a few trusted people (with caution).**

Whether those people are trusted associates within your organization or your significant other at home, getting a second opinion or even just using the name in conversation can help you get a better feel for it. However, take care when deciding who to let in on the decision-making process and keep in mind that you’ve already gone through the Brand Platform stage and will have the best instinct when it comes to choosing the final name.

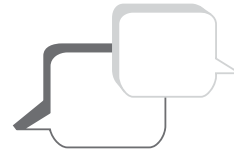
Refer to the below graphic where we break down why we chose our consultancy's name:

# FINIEN™



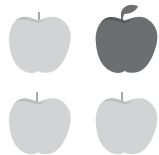
**01 SIGNIFICANCE**

Latin: 'finiens' = compass  
Polynesian: 'finien' = seed  
French: 'finir' = completed



**02 LINGUISTIC CLARITY**

pronunciation: fin-ee-en  
simplicity: 6 letters  
tonality: energetic, bold



**03 DISTINCTION**

uniqueness: stands out  
memorability: repetition in sound  
visual recognition: angular letters



**04 MARKETABILITY**

web availability: finien.com  
trademarkable: brand protection

## TRADEMARKS

Once you've chosen the name for your new brand, it's time to check the IP rights so that you can make it official. Trademarking the name ensures that you own it and won't encounter any issues down the road from another company claiming to have the same or a similar name. It also protects you from those who might try to copy or illegally acquire your name.

If you haven't already done so, begin your trademark search by running the name through a search engine such as Google, as recommended earlier under "Characteristics of a Great Name: Passes the search engine test." Once your name passes the search engine test with flying colors, visit the United States Patent and Trademark Office website (<http://www.uspto.gov/>). Using their search tool "TESS," run a basic search to see if any other trademarks under your desired company name appear. If a similar name within the same industry appears in your search results, your trademark approval will likely get denied. If no similar results appear, it's time to move on to the next step of filing for a trademark. If you're seeking a swift trademark process, launch your website before filing for a trademark. Understand that you are taking on the risk of not obtaining the mark in the end, but launching your website will mean less required paperwork and possibly less time to obtain an approval, especially if you have a product already on the market under your brand's name. If time is not of the essence and you wish to lower your risk factor, file for the trademark before moving on to the process of creating the brand identity and designing the website. The two most popular options for filing are contracting with a trademark attorney and choosing a service such as Legal Zoom (US) to help guide you through the process.

## MEGATRENDS, TRENDS, AND FADS

When launching a brand, it is important to be aware of the latest megatrends, trends, and fads. For clarification purposes, let's define the difference between these three terms, starting with "trend." A trend is an element or general practice that has been widely adapted into product or design. It is often something clever or stylish enough to warrant repeated usage. A megatrend is a trend that is more functional than stylish. It usually serves a purpose, will stand the test of time, and will evolve as technology or styles evolve. A fad is a trend that has been overdone to the point of becoming passé.



### **Disemvoweling**

Refers to the recent trend of removing vowels from common words to create a brand name. This trend can be a great way to obtain that .com domain you've been dreaming of, but be forewarned that this spelling trick can make it difficult for consumers to remember how to spell your name or to even find you online if they've only heard your name pronounced.

**Examples:** Tumblr, Flickr, Unbxtd

**Category:** Fad



### **Compound words**

Combining two common words to create something new. This can be a great way to create a descriptive company name and to obtain a unique .com domain.

**Examples:** Evernote, Facebook, Dropbox

**Category:** Megatrend



### **Nonsensical names**


There has been a trend toward names that have no obvious meaning. These types of names allow you to create a unique brand story and stand out among your competitors. This can also be the easiest way to secure both a .com domain and trademark.

**Examples:** Squidoo, Joomla

**Category:** Megatrend

Keep this document on-hand when you plan your (next) brand launch and share it with your project team when planning your brand's vision and purpose.

Please share your opinion or own findings with me via [fgeyrhalter@finien.com](mailto:fgeyrhalter@finien.com) or engage with us to take you there safe and sound. I look forward to hearing from you!



Fabian Geyrhalter  
Principal, FINIEN

## BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Gain continuous branding insights and actionable advice: [finien.com/insights](https://finien.com/insights)

Listen to conversations with founders about the intersection of brand clarity and startup success: [Hittingthemarkpodcast.com](https://Hittingthemarkpodcast.com)

Need swift, personalized brand advice? Schedule a brief call with me using Clarity. I would love to connect: [Clarity.fm/FabianGeyrhalter](https://Clarity.fm/FabianGeyrhalter)

Establish your brand platform through my online course: [eresonaid.com](https://eresonaid.com)

To work with me and/or my consultancy, FINIEN, on your brand strategy, name, or brand identity design or to book me for a workshop, panel, or speaking engagement, please email me directly at [fgeyrhalter@finien.com](mailto:fgeyrhalter@finien.com)

## SCAN

Scan for the latest brand insights and opportunities to learn from or engage with me.

## FOLLOW