



The Most Important Creative Elements of an Ad

Most ads in most advertising media contain common parts. This chapter explains the basic parts of an ad. As a marketing communicator, you must understand the role of each part in order to evaluate an ad properly. Ads that lack most of these parts are called *teaser ads*, because they use the missing information to tease your curiosity to find out more. Common parts of an ad include:

- Name
- Logo
- Headline
- Tagline
- Reasons to believe
- Call to action
- Visual

Name

The name of your company, product, service, technology, program, or flavor is the single most powerful piece of creative communication you will ever invest in. It appears in every marketing communication you do, from answering the phone to running an ad. It is the first thing prospects see in the Yellow Pages or on Google.



Teaser ad An ad that purposely withholds information to pique curiosity. It usually raises more questions than it answers because it is designed to provoke, not inform. A teaser ad is often done in two steps. The first step raises a question, “What is this?” The second step reveals the answer. This is called the *reveal*. This strategy can be the basis for a *teaser campaign*.

KEY TERM

up to 20 percent more—just because the prospective customers perceive that you offer more value.

Unfortunately, we've run out of words. An estimated 94 percent of the words in the *American Heritage Dictionary* are owned by someone. The words that are not owned are not words you want to own (Diarrhea Foods™, anyone?).

So, in order to have a name you can own and use without getting sued for copyright or trademark infringement, you must invent a word or phrase to use as your name. Unless you have millions of dollars to spend in media to make a meaningless word mean something (e.g., Xerox), you need to be clever about combining existing words to create the meaning you want. This is both an art and a science. And a surprising number of created words are already taken. In some categories, such as beverages and pharmaceutical products, it is not unusual that eight out of every 10 names a company creates are already legally owned. So don't just create one or two names for consideration. Create 10, 20, 100, or 500.

It is extremely difficult to create an unusual (new and not owned) word that actually means something good. Consequently, there are creative firms that specialize in nothing but naming. They name companies, categories, products, services, processes, and technology. Some have on-staff linguistic experts, foreign language divisions (to prevent your lovely sounding product name from meaning something awful in another language), online word searches (for creative inspiration and emotional power), and graphic design capabilities, so you can test the name and then the logo or look. Most advertising agencies also do naming as a subspecialty.



CHANGING A SIMPLE FLAVOR NAME MADE MILLIONS

An internationally famous beverage brand once asked my agency to change the name of the little flavor descriptor on the side of its bottle. Nothing else changed—not the product name, not the flavor, price, distribution, package, or promotion dollars.

(Confidentiality prevents sharing the actual name change, but it was the equivalent of changing “Watermelon Strawberry” to “Strawmelon Madness.”) The flavor went from being its worst seller to one of its best sellers. This one little change in two words made the company millions and millions of dollars. The name was so popular the company eventually created a special logo for it.

Both naming agencies and ad agencies also offer name testing. Research into finding the right names is almost always an excellent investment. No single communications decision is more important than choosing your name.

Shakespeare gave Juliet this famous line to say of Romeo, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Figure 9-2 shows four roses. Which would you like to smell? We form impressions of the smell of the rose according to the name. Shakespeare was wrong. Names matter.



Sweaty Gym Socks Rose



Road Kill on a Sunny Day Rose



La Parfum Heirloom Rose



Bus Station Restroom Rose

Figure 9-2. Which rose would you like to smell?

Time-Tested Characteristics of Great Names

A great name is easy to say and pronounce (Sprite), is short and sweet (Tide), and has concrete imagery (Apple). It answers one or more positioning questions. Who is it for? (*Playboy*) What does it do? (TurboTax) How is it different? (Southwest Airlines) It creates a strong, distinct feeling (Yahoo!). It has more positive than negative associations (Bud Lite, Golden Books). It is unusual (Amazon). It uses rhyme (Piggly-Wiggly) or opposition (Stop-N-Go).

No one really knows why, but these naming approaches resonate deeply with the way our human brains are wired. You'll find the same principles at work in great poetry, music, and speeches.

Classic Naming Mistakes

Don't imitate the conventions of your category (First Affiliated United Federal Bank & Trust of Wisconsin). Don't use initials (C.R.P.T.M. Corporation). Only your customers can shorten your name. IBM was International Business Machines for years before it gained its acronym. Don't use numbers by themselves (The 1000 Series). And don't use abstractions in the name (Solutions, Quality, Professional, Technology).

Names like these are leaky buckets into which you pour your marketing communication dollars. These names are easy to ignore and even easier to forget. Be smart and test your name for positive and negative cues before you use it.

NAME GENERATOR

Use these 24 proven approaches to generate your company or product name. (For more detail, see my book *Perfect Phrases for Sales and Marketing Copy*.)

1. Combination (Combine two words from your business area or consumer benefits.)
 - Taxpro Accounting
 - Foodbreak Restaurants
 - Weldrite Fabricators
2. Soundalike (Spell your name phonetically.)
 - Klipt Hair Salon
 - Soffwhere Programming
 - Art-kitecture
3. Phrase (State your name as a phrase your customer might say.)
 - Cute Shoes
 - I'm Ready for My Close-up Children's Photography
 - I Need to Rent a New Tool
4. Benefit (Build your chief customer benefit into your name.)
 - Compumatch Dating Service
 - Speedy Remodeling
 - Likemom's Restaurant
5. Visual image (Create a concrete visual picture using an object.)
 - Gavel Legal Services



TOOLS

- Paintbrush Graphic Design
 - Gardenia Gift Shop
6. Oxymoron (Combine opposites.)
- Stronglite Welding
 - Freshorn Blue Jeans
 - Richpour Molasses
7. Alliteration (Join two or more words that begin with the same letter or sound.)
- Capital Cabinets
 - Eddy's Eatery
 - Ready Rentals
8. Rhyme
- The Finer Diner
 - Sweet Treats Bakery
 - The Ancient Merchant Antiques
9. Foreign (Words from other cultures evoke sophistication or fun.)
- Parthenon Builders
 - Oui Café
 - Mañana Bed and Breakfast
10. Place (Pick a place that evokes appropriate associations.)
- Niagara Home Water Systems
 - Sahara Dehumidifiers
 - Prairie Software Design
11. Wordplay (Play on words to convey fun or friendliness.)
- Hair Studio 54
 - Nice Buns Bakery
 - Pros & Concrete
12. Mythology (Pick appropriate gods, mythical creatures, or fictional or historical characters.)
- Sherlock Diagnostics
 - Phoenix Remodeling
 - Zeus Electrical Contracting
13. Animals (Find animals, insects, or plants with the right characteristics.)
- Fox Modeling Agency
 - Rhino Industrial Equipment
 - Dragonfly Delivery Service
14. Colors
- Orange Optical Shop
 - Viridian Landscaping
 - Blue Sky Consulting

15. Personal names (Find a relevant person.)
 - Mbutu's Imports
 - Rembrandt Housepainting
 - Jones/O'Hallaron Investments
16. Letters
 - H.A.H.A. Comedy Club
 - I-8 Roadside Diner
 - W.G.P. (We Grow Profits)
17. Unrelated borrowing (Borrow a word from an unrelated area and combine with your business.)
 - Mr. Furniture
 - Snaptastic Photography
 - 101 Donations
18. Sound effect (Use sounds that show how people feel or what happens when your product is used.)
 - Flush Plumbing
 - Holy Cow! Ice Cream Shop
 - Whoosh Delivery Service
19. Verbs
 - Harden Concrete
 - Blossom Nursery
 - Zap Pest Control
20. Personification
 - Grandma Anna's Toy Shop
 - Two Roofers and a Ladder
 - Aunt Leah's Frozen Custard
21. Target market (Make your customers part of your name.)
 - Homeowners Interior Design
 - Visitors' Guide to Duluth
 - Moms Deserve Chocolates
22. Slang
 - Honest-to-Goodness Car Repair
 - Far-Out Computer Games
 - Stone-Cold Ice Delivery
23. Category label (Literally describe your product, service, or business category.)
 - The Plumber's Plumber
 - Corporate Improvisational Training
 - Kilnfire Ceramics

24. Odd punctuation or phrases for the Internet

- Beau.Ti.Ful.com (cosmetics)
- CleanUpYourMesses.com
- AEIOUandsometimesYou.org

NAME EVALUATOR

Use these proven naming criteria to evaluate the names you're considering. Add criteria specific to your product. For example, should it sound like it tastes good? Better yet, test the names with your customers.



TOOLS

NAME	A	B
Short		
Easy to say, conversational		
Easy to remember		
Relevant to category		
Relevant to benefit		
Creates strong feeling		
Likable		
Believable		
Rhyme		
Alliteration		
Oxymoron		
Consistent with brand		
Consistent with name family		
Concrete visual image		
Stands out, unusual, different		
Ownable		
TOTALS		

There's a word for people who choose great company names—rich.



KEY TERM

Ideogram A graphic symbol used in visual communication to represent a thing or an idea, but not a particular word or phrase for the thing or idea. Among the many examples would be Arabic numerals, emoticons, directional arrows, and universal signs such as are used in airports (to indicate rest rooms, elevators, gates, food, and baggage claim areas).

Logo

A logo is a consistent visual shape and color that helps people recognize your brand. Examples include Apple's apple with a bite out of it or Shell Oil's yellow seashell. But logos can also be abstract shapes (Figure 9-3). The logo can be made of a symbol, a

sign, an emblem, or an ideogram. Emoticons (the little symbols used online to convey emotions, such as a smiley face like this: ☺) are ideograms. So are universally recognized airport signs.

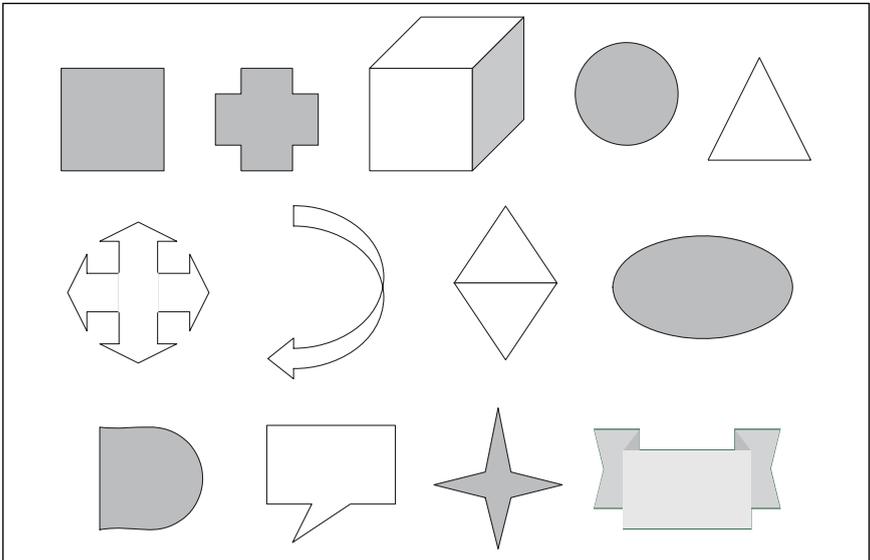


Figure 9-3. Abstract shapes

Logotypes use consistent typography (type styles) to spell out your name (Figure 9-4). Notice how different typography can give different feelings and messages about the exact same company. Typography is like the voice of a word.



CorProv™ **CorProv™** **CorProv™**
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CorProv™ **CORPROV™**

Figure 9-4. Logotypes

The logo, the logotype, a tagline, and a set of visual rules about what colors and designs to use can be combined to create your *brand identity* (also known as your *brand ID* or *visual identity*). (See Figure 9-5.) These elements make up a core set of visual communications that are usually found in every communication you do. Their purpose is to provide consistent recognition and to communicate your brand identity and positioning.



CorPROV™

**Corporate Improvisational
Training**

Contact Barry Callen or Nell Weatherwax at 608.347.8396,
barry.callen@gmail.com, or corprov.com

Figure 9-5. Brand identity

By being consistent in your visual identity, you create a visual equity. The equity is similar to building equity in your home. With each additional exposure, people begin to recognize your images, shapes, colors, design, and typography instantly and at a distance. With designs as powerful and distinctive as a box of Tide, it is even possible for customers to recognize the brand name when the front of the box is cut into pieces and rearranged. Brands like UPS that own recognizable images and colors (e.g., brown) have built entire advertising campaigns around their visual identity.

Paradoxically, it is important to both maintain a consistent visual identity in all your communications and periodically update or refresh your identity. To do this, you need to know what your visual equity is. For example, if UPS changed its color to green, it would lose its visual equity. But Apple could change its apple color to green and still retain some visual equity, because the equity lies more in the image of an apple with a bite out of it than in the color of that apple. Research can reveal where your visual equity lies. There are firms that specialize in visual identity or corporate identity work.

Because times, tastes, and visual styles change, it is necessary periodically to update or refresh your visual identity. The trick is to maintain the core visual identity and make only incremental equity changes over time that don't cause unacceptable equity loss. So, for example, if you look at Betty Crocker 50 years ago, 25 years ago, and today, she still looks like Betty Crocker, even though she has a more modern hairstyle and makeup. These incremental makeovers keep a brand from appearing dated and help attract new generations of customers.

The hardest part about maintaining a visual identity is policing and enforcing consistency across many products, divisions, media, and people over time. Someone must be assigned the job of being "brand cop" and must have the power of approval and the support of top management. In addition to reducing the potential for customer confusion, maintaining a consistent brand identity can actually save you money in printing costs, sometimes even a significant amount of money.

The key to visual consistency is to have a short and simple set of guidelines or rules for all graphic designers to follow, with visual exam-



CREATE A SIMPLE BRAND STANDARDS MANUAL AND ENFORCE IT

Avoid confusing your customers with inconsistent logos, colors, and designs across your various media, divisions, products, designers, and vendors. Create a simple brand standards manual. The shorter the better. Show examples of what to do and what not to do. And make sure you have final approval over all designs and the power to enforce your approval. It's a dirty, frustrating political job, but someone must play brand cop. As an added bonus, consistent enforcement could save significant dollars in printing and supply costs.

ples of what to do and not to do. The rules should cover placement and size of the logo, relationship to other logos and visual images, page layout and design, color use, and trademark requirements. This document goes by many names: e.g., brand standards manual, brand identity guidebook, and visual identity guidelines.

Headline

Your headline is the single most important point you want to make. It is your hook, your grabber. It must work in under half a second to capture the attention of your audience. If it fails to attract attention, then the rest of your communication is wasted. The vast majority of readers will only read your headline and look at your main visual, so it better be good. Your headline is the 20 percent of the words in your communication that account for 80 percent of the results.

Even in nonprint media, you must have a headline or a most important point to make. On TV or radio, it might be your opening statement or the conclusion you build up to. On a Web site, it might be the slogan or category descriptor just under your name. In direct mail, it might be the sentence or phrase on the outer envelope.

Headline/Main Visual Combinations

Your headline must work in combination with the main visual. This affords you the opportunity to create unexpected and therefore attention-getting juxtapositions.

For example, I once wrote an ad with a large headline, “Why should I give money to some homeless guy I don’t know who’s just going to use it to buy a bottle?” The visual answered the question. It was a photo of a small baby drinking milk from a bottle.

I’ve seen TV commercials for luxurious beach vacations that used “news reporter speak” to talk about “oil spills in the Gulf” while showing a beautiful model squirting suntan oil on her bronzed bikini body.

Sometimes, the purpose of the headline is to provide literal relevant information and the purpose of the visual is to provide the unexpected juxtaposition. For example, picture an ad in a computer software magazine that shows a snarling Doberman Pinscher guard dog and a headline that says, “This is how fiercely our new security software will protect your data.”

So important are the headline and the main visual that when ad agency creative teams conceptualize ideas, they usually just draw up rough headlines and visuals without additional explanation. If the “marker rough” can communicate powerfully without additional explanation or details, then it is likely the ad will work when readers are flipping pages a half second at a time. Detailed writing explanations or design finesse cannot save a bad headline or concept.

SMART**MANAGING****CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES**

Since the headline makes or breaks your ad, use great care in writing it. Small changes in the wording of your headline can make a huge difference in results. In direct response ads, a one-word change in one headline has occasionally been shown to make more than a 1,000 percent difference in sales response. Therefore, when it comes to writing, editing, discussing, testing, and defending your advertising copy, it is worth it to spend more time and money on your headlines than to sweat every little word in your body copy. If you are facing an advertising approver who can't resist making his or her mark on an ad, let it be in the body copy, not the headline and main visual. Choose your battles—and headlines are worth the fight.

HEADLINE GENERATOR

Use these 18 proven approaches to writing a headline. (For more detail, see my book *Perfect Phrases for Sales and Marketing Copy*.)

1. State a tangible benefit involving time, money, or ease.
 - Our college graduates earn 20 percent more.
 - Reduce your chances of burglary and theft.
 - New tool requires less muscle effort.
2. State an emotional benefit that fulfills a desire or alleviates a fear.
 - Feel 10 years younger.
 - Never worry about sewage problems again.
 - Find the career of your dreams online.
3. State a problem and provide a solution.
 - Too many debts? Consolidate them and save.
 - If you are losing customers, our loyalty programs can help.
 - Dirty chimneys cleaned cheap.
4. Provide a demonstration.
 - Even at 120 below zero, this car battery starts right up.
 - Which one is the drawing and which one is the photograph?
 - This console is so simple to use, even a three-year-old can master it.

**TOOLS**

5. Announce news.
 - Expanded summer hours beginning June 1.
 - Announcing a breakthrough in business consulting software.
 - Weather forecast for tomorrow is ice and snow. Time for snow tires.
6. Flag the prospective customer.
 - Thinking about getting divorced? Call our lawyers first.
 - Introducing a health clinic for women, by women.
 - If you think an applet is a small apple, don't apply for a job at our company.
7. Ask a question.
 - Who says you can't take it with you?
 - Why do we triple-reinforce our truck shocks?
 - When is the right time to buy a house?
8. Offer savings. (Make sure your lawyer previews your promotional offers.)
 - Buy one, get one free.
 - Save up to 50% with this coupon.
 - The lowest price—or we'll refund the difference.
9. Offer freebies.
 - Get a free safety inspection with every oil change.
 - The first 50 callers also get a free T-shirt.
 - Sign up for our rewards program and get preferred customer benefits.
10. List helpful how-tos.
 - Ten ways to reduce your income taxes this year.
 - The year's 20 best gift ideas for teenagers.
 - What to do when your customer won't pay you.
11. Tell a story.
 - When Dr. Smith is not doing surgery here in town, he's volunteering to help the poor in Calcutta.
 - The plumber and the diamond ring.
 - How we turn the world's best beef into the world's tastiest sandwich.
12. Shock and surprise.
 - You may have cancer and not even know it!
 - The average kitchen cutting board wouldn't pass a restaurant food inspection.
 - Ten things your accountant will never tell you.
13. Use humor.
 - If you don't have a good accountant, may we suggest a good lawyer?
 - Our printing quality is a lot better than this newspaper ad.
 - Optometrists with vision.

14. Use drama. (Think of a situation where the stakes are higher than usual.)
 - It's 3:15 am. Your factory line has just shut down. You're losing \$1,589 per minute. How soon can you get a replacement part?
 - 15 minutes after the tornado flattened our house, our agent was there with food and water.
 - Without the carbon monoxide detector, the Smith family would have died on Christmas Eve.
15. Use an expert endorsement.
 - All our mechanics are ASE-certified as Master Auto Technicians.
 - As seen on television.
 - Named the city's number-one employment contractor by *In-Town Magazine*.
16. Use a customer testimonial.
 - "We drive over 100 miles just to get our hair cut there." —Willa and Bob Smith
 - Why Carl Virona has been coming to our restaurant every Friday night for 23 years, minus sick days.
 - "They have integrity." —Reverend Malcolm Washington, First Baptist Church
17. Work with a typical customer objection.
 - Not all mechanics are out to rip you off.
 - Most advertising doesn't work. Ours does—and we can prove it.
 - Introducing a radical idea: computer technicians who speak plain English.
18. Associate with a good cause or organization.
 - For every dollar you spend on purchases this December, we'll donate a portion to Orphans Without Toys.
 - PTA members can save 20% on book purchases at this event.
 - Show us your AARP membership card and get an instant 10% off all prescription drugs.

**KEY TERM**

Also known as a *slogan* or a *theme line*.

Tagline Short phrase that summarizes a brand, typically used in marketing materials and advertising.

Tagline

A tagline, slogan, or theme line is a short phrase that summarizes your brand and signs off your communica-

tion. It usually accompanies your brand name: before, after, or next to your name.

For example, in my print ad or on my Web site, you might see:

CorPROV™

Corporate Improvisational Training

But in my TV commercial, you might see and hear:

VIDEO	AUDIO
FADE UP TAGLINE: Corporate Improvisational Training	ANNOUNCER (voiceover): For corporate improvisational training
FADE UP LOGO: CORPROV™	Corprov.

In any communications medium that uses audio or video, your tagline may also be accompanied by a memory device called a *mnemonic* (pronounced “nee-mahn’-ik). The purpose of a mnemonic is to burn the name and tagline into your memory through repetition.

There are several types of mnemonic devices. One is a repetitive sound and motion, such as the Energizer Bunny pounding on a drum with the

tagline, “Energizer. Keeps going and going...” Another is a sound effect, such as the echoed double note that accompanies each major edit point in the TV show *Law and Order*. Another is an instrumental jingle under the spoken word, such as the music notes suggesting percolating coffee in Maxwell House commercials. Another is a jingle in which the words to the tagline are sung to a recognizable melody, such as the “Zoom Zoom Zoom” Mazda song or “Rattle rattle thunder clatter boom boom boom, Don’t worry call the Car-X man.” In some cases, the call to action may be incorporated into the tagline in the form of brand name and phone number sung to music. Music is an excellent memory device. If you can do it, it is an excellent idea to incorporate your brand name into your tagline; for example: “With a name like Smucker’s, it has to be good.®”

It’s like hitting a lottery jackpot when a tagline becomes a popular

Mnemonic Anything (especially a verbal device) used to help remember something. For example, SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



KEY TERM

THE STAYING POWER OF A GREAT TAGLINE

Fill in the blank on these famous and powerful taglines, some of which no longer run. (Answers upside down below.)



- A. _____ . Because a mind is a terrible thing to waste.
- B. The few, the proud, the _____.
- C. You're in good hands with _____.
- D. Got _____?
- E. I'm cuckoo for _____.

Answers: A. United Negro College Fund, B. Marines, C. Allstate, D. Milk, E. Cocoa Puffs.

catchphrase used by entertainers and in everyday speech. For example, today, when people do something wild they want to keep a secret, they say, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." That tagline exceeded the expectations of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

A great tagline should stick to your memory like duct tape. But the vast majority of taglines are utterly generic and forgettable: e.g., "People

THE TAGLINE THAT INCREASED SALES 70 PERCENT IN ONE YEAR



I talked about this in Chapter 2, but it's appropriate here as well.

An accounting firm client approached our agency with a very specific request—make our firm stand out. The brochures and Web sites of the firm's competitors showed that they were all doing, saying, and showing the same thing: professional-looking computer montages of four-color photos of handshakes to connote partnership, baronial mahogany boardrooms to suggest stability, and multiethnic groups of people gathered around computer screens to suggest teamwork. The taglines were rife with industry generalities such as "responsive," "professional," "prudent," "quality," and "responsible." You could have switched the logos out on almost any brochure and no one would have been the wiser.

Our agency created a new tagline, "Think Black Ink," to emphasize the core strength of strategic thinking and the chief benefit of helping clients stay in the black and out of the red. I have never seen a client run with a tagline like that firm. The firm got rid of all its four-color printed materials (including its ink pens) and made everything black and white—everything from business cards to office walls. One year later the company president, in an interview in a business magazine, attributed a 70 percent sales increase to the "Think Black Ink" campaign.

helping people with technology” or “Excellence through total quality.” Most taglines are so bad that there is a board game called Adverteasing™ in which the object is to match the tagline with the brand name. The sign of a bad tagline is when you can easily switch company names and no one notices the difference.

Your tagline should appear with consistency everywhere your brand name appears. A good tagline should answer one or more of three questions:

1. What do you do?
2. For whom do you do it? Whom do you serve?
3. How are you different from your competitors? What do you do best?

Readers of your advertising are unlikely to go digging for answers to these three key questions. Put your answers into a short, sweet tagline, so readers can quickly determine if your ad is relevant.

This is particularly critical for your Web site. When visitors land, they want to know where they are and what they can do at your site. A good tagline is a time- and space-efficient way to communicate this.

Don't be afraid to be literal and descriptive with your tagline, especially if you are in a new, little-known, or little-understood business or technology category. This is imperative if your name does not indicate what you do, such as “Acme Corporation. Computer Recycling.”

All the rules that apply to selecting or creating a name also apply to a tagline. The more concrete, visual, emotional, unusual, specific, and easy to say, the better.

Finally, there is no rule that says your brand *must* have a tagline. But generally, you are better off having one.

Reasons to Believe

According to Barry Callen's Teeter-Totter Theory of Human Behavior™ (presented in Chapter 4), all behavior is the result of balance between fear and desire. In order to avoid fearful things, human beings have subconscious BS detectors operating at all times. We are constantly scanning for negative cues, reasons to *not* believe what someone is saying. While most of our behavior is driven emotionally, we also use our conscious rational minds to double-check our actions or to rationalize what we want.

TAGLINE GENERATOR

Use these 23 proven approaches to writing a tagline. (For more detail, see my book *Perfect Phrases for Sales and Marketing Copy*.)



TOOLS

1. Ask a question.
 - Why not do it right the first time?
 - What does your suit say about you?
 - Why not you? Why not now?
2. Use alliteration. (Repeat a letter or sound.)
 - Better bids for bigger bucks.
 - Concrete quality counts.
 - Intelligent. Informed. Insightful.
3. Use rhyme.
 - All of the caring. None of the swearing.
 - Unleash your inner winner.
 - Flexible textable messaging.
4. Use rhythm. (Repeat sounds using words with the same number of syllables: “frat rat,” “entrance inside,” and “merrily-verily” are one-, two-, and three-syllable examples.)
 - We’re movers, not shakers. (for a moving company)
 - We know when to leverage what you know.
 - Bridal. Floral. For all.
5. Use an oxymoron (opposites put together).
 - Cool fireplaces.
 - It’s stupid not to use the smartest technology.
 - Because the only constant is change.
6. Tie it to a name.
 - Czimaligentri Realty. Hard to pronounce. Easy to work with.
 - Bernard Kutz cuts hair.
 - Susan Golden Investments. When you’re with us, you’re golden.
7. Position with stereotypical associations.
 - Not your garden-variety nursery.
 - Our lawyers are no joke.
 - Just like mother used to make—but without all the guilt.
8. Position against competitors. (Show how you are different and better.)
 - The area’s only 24-hour emergency service.
 - Where the customer is queen.
 - They say it. We do it.
9. Keep it short and conversational.
 - We’ll take it from here.
 - Need some help?
 - Just around the corner.

10. Use an analogy, simile, metaphor, or symbol.
 - The top of the mountain.
 - Always have a safety net.
 - As loyal as an old friend.
11. Paint a picture. Tell a story.
 - Modaff's Used Cars. We take the high road to fair prices.
 - Veronshky's Deli. A cut above grocery store meat.
 - Anglon's Advertising. Target marketing for bull's-eye profits.
12. Dramatize it. (Exaggerate the problem, benefit, or feeling.)
 - Make sure you end with more money than retirement years.
 - If it was any more fun, it would be illegal.
 - Don't wait until your car breaks down.
13. Tie it to a physical attribute.
 - The purple wine in the spiral bottle.
 - The little speaker with the big sounds.
 - Look for the man in the sparkling white van.
14. Include your customers.
 - For parents who care about their children's education.
 - The IT department for businesses without IT departments.
 - Honk if you love antique cars.
15. Tie it to a time or place.
 - Weddings and only weddings.
 - It's time you took a family vacation.
 - Montana range-fed beef.
16. Express a feeling.
 - Yippee!
 - I've never done *that* before.
 - Check it off the list.
17. State a position. (Express something you or you customers think or believe.)
 - Where single moms get equal pay.
 - Anything worth doing is worth doing well.
 - There's a lot more to life than business meetings.
18. Call for action.
 - Eat it up.
 - Come back for more.
 - Send a friend a flower.
19. State a benefit.
 - Gifts that get noticed.
 - Get more done in less time.

- The non-jargon get-it-done-today-so-you-don't-have-to-worry-about-it computer repair service.
20. Use unusual words.
 - Ery-vay un-fay ids-kay oys-tay.
 - Doggamit! Dog training for difficult dogs.
 - Bonjour!
 21. Make it the voice of a character (a spokesperson, employee, or customer).
 - It's not just my job, it's my calling.
 - Everybody in the pool!
 - My, my, my, but that's tasty!
 22. Play with words. (Find a fun way to play with your name or category.)
 - Our massage therapy will rub you the right way.
 - Accounting that measures up.
 - Housecleaning with Kindness (proprietor: Arlene Kindness).
 23. Use your category descriptor.
 - Emergency furnace and air-conditioning repair.
 - Robotic manufacturing process software design.
 - Homemade pies for restaurants, delivered fresh daily.

So after you have gotten your prospects' attention and activated their desire, you must then convince them that what you are saying is true and that the risk of taking action is low. That is the purpose of providing reasons to believe.

Usually a reason to believe is a secondary issue. Reasons to believe are irrelevant until you have engaged the prospects' attention and stimulated their desire.

There is a relationship among three factors—the strength of the promise, the risk of the purchase, and the need for a reason to believe. In some cases, the cost and performance risk of buying a product is so low relative to the desire (chewing gum, for example) that we don't even need to supply a reason to believe. But in some cases, the risk of taking action is so great (airplane safety equipment, nuclear power reactor coolant systems, first-time home purchase) that the reason to believe is often placed in the headline or tagline. The reason to believe also becomes a main message in categories renowned for failure, deceit, and lack of performance, such as car repairs, politics, used car sales, and, yes, . . . advertising. (I'm an ad guy. You believe me, don't you? Don't you?) In general, the more

amazing the promise (“We cure cancer free instantly!”), the more powerful the reason to believe must be. The prospects’ reaction is “Oh, yeah. That sounds too good to be true. Prove it!” When it comes to advertising, most people are from Missouri, the “Show-Me State.”

Today it is almost impossible to underestimate the cynicism of the American public. We have ceased to trust our government, our religious leaders, our schools, our news media, our neighbors, and even our parents. Why should we trust a profit-obsessed corporation run by faceless, nameless, greedy executives who want to sell us something?

The most powerful reasons to believe are the reasons we need to believe in order to maintain our emotional sense of safety, control, self-esteem, reputation, and perception of reality. Parents need to believe they are doing the best they can for their children, even though this is not always true. Executives need to believe they are powerful and smart, even though this is not always true. The privileged need to believe they are entitled. The down-trodden need to believe they are proud. And so on. Ask yourself what your target prospects most need to believe in order to live with themselves, and start there.

A good general attitude for a marketing communicator is this: “Don’t brag about it. Prove it.” To the extent other people can draw positive conclusions about you, let them do it. Claims from third parties or conclusions drawn by the prospects from facts or demonstrations you supply are more effective than any conclusion you can draw. The more you can demonstrate a point instead of just describing it, the more believable your communications will be. One way to do this is to picture the most cynical person you know reading your ad. What would he or she tell you?

DOUBLE-CHECK FACTS AND LEGALITIES BEFORE YOU MAKE CLAIMS



Make sure you get the necessary legal permission to use names, testimonials, and certifications, or they will come back to haunt you. Double-check your facts to make sure they are true—or you run the risk of permanently ruining your reputation and inviting lawsuits for false advertising. Be particularly careful of superlative claims, like *always*, *never*, *guaranteed*, *promise*, *forever*, *permanently*, *unquestionably*, *absolutely*, *the best*, *better than*, *superior to*, *the only*, *exclusively*, etc.



GO LIGHT ON THE LEGALESE

On the flip side, don't let lawyers take over writing your ads. Research shows that the mere presence of legal disclaimer copy in an ad causes prospects to automatically assume the ad is BS. The greater the percentage of space devoted to legal disclaimers, the greater the instant cynicism of the prospects. If possible, put all your legal disclaimers into the body copy of your ad in simple language. Or separate them graphically. Or dial back your claims to require less legalese. The less people trust your category, the more the presence of legal copy damages the credibility of your message. It has become an automatic cue for distrust.

This principle is doubly true in the area of public relations. Perhaps the most cynical people on the planet are news editors. By personal inclination, training, and experience, they are trained to identify and attack lies and mendacity. They love to stick needles in pretentious corporate balloons. They are often the most cynical about whether or not your news announcement is really important news that their readers and viewers will value.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

Use these 16 proven approaches to convincing others that what you say is true. (For more detail, see my book *Perfect Phrases for Sales and Marketing Copy*.)



TOOLS

1. Prove customer satisfaction.
 - 99.3% of our customers plan to purchase a car from us again.
2. Prove leadership.
 - We've put more folks into their first home than any other savings and loan in Mount Carmel.
3. Provide a customer testimonial. (Be sure you get a signed talent release from the people whose names you mention in your commercial, authorizing you to use their names in any medium and any geographic location in perpetuity. For the talent release to be valid, you will need to pay them at least one dollar. Check with your media rep or your lawyer for a sample form.)
 - Four times a year, like clockwork, Harold and Monica M. drive their Chevy S-10 pickup truck to our garage to get it fixed. What's unusual about that is that they live over 100 miles away, in Macarthyburg. We asked them why they drive so far just to get their car fixed here. They said, "When you find a mechanic you can trust, you stick with them."

4. Provide an expert testimonial. (The same legalities apply to this as apply to a regular testimonial. See above.)
 - Nine out of ten dentists recommend using our toothpaste. Ten out of ten of our employees recommend you buy it from us, because you'll save 10%.
5. List credible endorsements. (Many endorsing organizations and certifiers have very specific rules about what you can and can't say in your advertising about their certification. You could lose your certification permanently and risk a potential lawsuit if you violate even minor terms of the agreement. Check with the organization or your lawyer first.)
 - Former five-time convicted burglar and felon "Rambo" Ronson says, quote, "Eventually I learned to walk away from any house with a 'Protected by Booth Security' sign. I knew it would dramatically increase my chances of getting caught. In fact, four of the five times I was caught, it was a Booth Security silent alarm that was the problem."
6. List certificates and memberships.
 - Rama Forrest is a fully certified Reiki Master and one of only three Americans certified in Japan.
7. Offer a guarantee or make-good. (Guarantees have legal ramifications. Make sure you can follow through on your promise, and make sure a lawyer reviews your guarantee. You will also need to calculate the break-even point for your offer and estimate the chances you will at least cover your costs.)
 - If you're not absolutely satisfied with your Garden Grubber, return it within 30 days for a full refund, no questions asked.
8. Prove quality.
 - Our "Death by Chocolate" truffles contain the highest percentage of cacao possible: 90% dark chocolate. Compare that with the 15% cacao in the average candy bar and you'll see what we mean by world-class quality.
9. Offer a compelling or unusual statistic. The more precise, the better.
 - Most lawn mower engines are machined to within 1/100th of an inch. But our lawn mowers are machined to within 1/1000th of an inch. That's hundreds of times smaller than the width of your eyelash.
10. Invite skeptics to see for themselves.
 - Our new Rhinohide Truck Bed Liner is so tough you can beat it with a baseball bat and it will not crack or dent. The liner, that is. You may break the bat. If you try this test, we also suggest you remove the liner from your truck first. We have a supply of bats down at the dealership, so come on down and try it for yourself.

11. State a growth fact.
 - If you put \$1,000 in a Local Bank money market CD today, and you leave it in for seven years at an average compound rate, your money will double. That's right: the magic of compound interest can turn \$1,000 into \$2,000—and you don't have to report to work or lift a finger.
12. List years of experience.
 - Since 1812.
 - Mariposa Realty is now under the third generation of family management.
13. Prove authentic motivation or compassion.
 - When Susan was four, she made a mud pie. Then another. Then 40. The first thing she made in her Easy-Bake Oven was ... an apple pie. By the time she was 12, she could use a real oven and bake a real good peach pie with peaches fresh picked from her family's orchard. At 16, she won the county fair FFA blue ribbon prize for—you guessed it—the best pie, a rhubarb-blueberry compote with graham cracker crust. So it was only a matter of time before she started her own business, the appropriately named “Susan's Pies.” You can go there today and have your choice of homemade—or rather, “Susan-made”—pies.
14. Use positive and negative cues in your communication.
 - Bad example using negative cues:
 - *Our fried chicken tastes definitively rural, as any person who grew up in the southern region of the United States can verify.*
 - Details undermine the authenticity of the message to a Southerner. “Definitively rural” sounds like a British anthropologist. “Person,” “region of the United States,” and “verify” sound too formal, urban, intellectual, and upscale. These negative cues make this communication feel wrong to a true Southerner.
 - Good example using positive cues:
 - Our fried chicken tastes as real down-home country Southern as sweet tea on a front porch swing after church.
 - “Real down-home country Southern” is informal language that American Southerners use to describe themselves. The shared insider details of “sweet tea,” “front porch swing,” and “after church” signal that this sentence was written by someone who grew up in the South and shares those happy memories with other Southerners. Authentic insider-to-insider communication is more believable. To communicate an authentic Southern feel, you must use authentic Southern language and imagery—positive cues and no negative cues.

- Some target markets, like traditional Southerners, retain their authenticity cues for a long time. Others, like American teenagers, change their cues every six months. If you run an ad with dated language, clothing, hairstyles, or music, they will automatically reject or mock your communication. Cues are powerful reasons to believe. Communications can be tested for authenticity cues.
15. Name-drop. (*Attention, lawyers and readers: The following example is not true. It is provided for demonstration and learning purposes only. Please retain your sense of reality and sense of humor.*)
- Oprah, Madonna, Liza, and Cher raved about Corprov™ in this week's *People Magazine*.
16. Provide a demonstration or dramatization. (From a free sample to a dramatic demonstration, seeing is believing.)
- We froze this car in a block of ice in Antarctica for one week at sub-zero temperatures. It has the same car battery you can buy. Watch what happens when we start it up. (Engine turns over, lights come on, engine runs.) This winter, consider buying our battery.

Call to Action

Ask the readers and viewers of your ad to take action now. This action could be a change in attitude, a change in behavior, or a search for additional information. You could ask them to call, stop by, order now, request information, contact you, or take advantage of a promotional offer.

It is not always necessary to ask customers to buy your product. Sometimes that request is implied automatically. On the other hand, in direct response marketing, ads that “ask for the order” generally have higher response rates than ads that don't.

It pays to devote some creative thought to asking for the order. As mentioned earlier, asking boat magazine editors to take a baseball bat and beat the living daylights out of a new hull material and then write about what happened was a far more effective call to action than asking them to run an article on the new technology.

In choosing your call to action, your goal is to choose the action with the lowest perceived risk and the highest perceived reward. Asking for a small, low-risk step like finding out more information may be more effective than just asking for the order right away, especially if you are dealing with a big-ticket, high-risk purchase like a house or a retirement investment.

CALL TO ACTION

Use these 19 proven approaches to call your prospects to action. (For more detail, see my book *Perfect Phrases for Sales and Marketing Copy*.)



TOOLS

1. Act now to avoid losing something.
 - Hurry! Offer ends June 23rd.
2. Act now to gain something.
 - The sooner you order, the sooner you can enjoy your new swimming pool.
3. Take small, low-risk steps.
 - To receive your free booklet on how improv training games can improve your next corporate retreat, contact Barry Callen or Nell Weatherwax at 608.347.8396, at barry.callen@gmail.com, or at corpov.com.
4. Remember your name.
 - So remember our name: Blaine Hardware. Blaine. It rhymes with insane, as in our insanely low prices.
5. Remember your phone number.
 - Call 1-800-BUYAPIE. That's one, eight hundred, buy a—B, U, Y, A—pie—P, I, E.
6. Remember your Web site.
 - For more information, visit our Web site at www.christmastreesdelivered.com.
7. Remember your name and number the next time a need arises.
 - So the next time your car windshield cracks or breaks, remember to call Glassmasters at 555-GLASS.
8. Call now for information.
 - Operators are standing by. Call us toll-free at 1-800-UCALLUS.
9. Order now.
 - Call now to order your own personalized mug and get a free packet of hot chocolate.
 - Get your new Sleeperific king-sized bed right now and enjoy it tonight.
10. Use the product and judge for yourself.
 - We're so confident you will like the quality of our used cars that we're making this special offer. For only \$100, you can test-drive one of our used cars for seven days. If you don't like it, you don't have to buy it.
11. Ask a friend or expert about you.
 - Chances are, you already know people who reads our newspaper every day. Ask them what they like about the *Sentinel-News*.

12. Don't miss a limited offer.
 - Hurry. Sale ends this Tuesday at 9:00 p.m.
13. Send for free no-obligation information.
 - Order your free drawing information kit within the next 10 minutes and get a free Conté crayon to keep. No salesman will call.
14. Try a test.
 - Visit our Web site and do a free insurance evaluation for yourself. The test takes only 10 minutes.
15. Enter to win a promotional offer.
 - Stop by this week and enter to win a free Cancun vacation for two worth \$10,000!
16. Stop by your store.
 - Drop in anytime and check out our showroom in the new North-town Mall.
17. Attend a special event.
 - Don't miss the grand opening of our Children's Gourmet Workshop.
18. Support a good cause.
 - This month, Huey's Canoe Outfitters will donate a portion of every purchase to The Rainbow Project for the treatment of child abuse.
19. Know how convenient your location and hours are.
 - The Best Little Restaurant in Texas is only a 15-minute drive from downtown Houston.

Visual

The first or second thing that people are likely to notice in your ad is the visual. It may be a photograph, an illustration, or a design. It may be a color or a typestyle or a material, such as a special paper stock made of ground-up dollar bills.

Together with the main headline, the visual's job is to capture attention in under a half second and generate enough interest to get people to read the ad. The purpose of the visual can be to attract attention (picture the image of a gorilla in a jockstrap), provide relevance (a shot of the product in use), or combine with the headline for an unusual juxtaposition. Long before people read your ad or your Web site, they see the visual all at once and right away. Billboards, which usually have less than four to seven seconds to work, are almost entirely visual. Television ads are better than print and radio at appealing to our nostalgia and taste buds, thanks to moving pictures.

Even radio ads have visuals. The visuals take place in your imagination. In fact, radio enables marketers to create amazing visuals that could never be filmed or photographed affordably, if at all. For example, in radio, a blue monkey the size of the Empire State Building can eat a banana the size of a tractor-trailer truck, slip on the peel, and land in a tub of whipped cream flown in by hundreds of U.S. Army helicopters. Try re-creating that visual in real life.

Visuals have the advantage of being holistic, instantaneous, emotional, and memorable. Visuals transcend language barriers, which is very helpful when you have global product distribution. The best visuals tell a story: something either just happened or is about to happen. Smaller inset visuals are also reader hotspots. The captions you pair with the visuals get above-average readership. Visuals can be used to flag your prospect, demonstrate your benefit, capture attention, or reveal inner technical workings. The new broadband Internet connections now allow the visuals to move and have sounds.

Visuals can easily become dated due to clothing, hairstyles, automobiles, and technology. There are immediately recognizable differences among a black-and-white TV image from 1950, a color image from 1970, and a high-definition image from 2005.

Visuals are usually loaded with positive and negative cues. Visuals can also be used to communicate indirectly what might seem inappropriate to say out loud: "Won't you look rich and successful in this shiny new expensive car?"

Manager's Checklist for Chapter 9

- ✓ The most common parts of an ad are the name, logo, headline, visual, reason to believe, and call to action. Teaser ads omit many of these parts to pique curiosity.
- ✓ A great name can increase what customers are willing to pay up to 20 percent. About 94 percent of all words are now legally owned by someone.
- ✓ A tagline, slogan, or theme line is a short phrase that summarizes your brand and signs off your communication. It usually accompanies your brand name.

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- ✓ Your logo, logotype, tagline, and visual rules can be combined to create your visual identity, a core set of visual communications used inside almost every other communication, from invoices to signage.
 - ✓ By being consistent in your visual identity, you create a recognizable visual equity. A brand standards manual and consistent enforcement are essential to maintain your brand. Visual identities need periodic updating.
 - ✓ Every ad has a main point or headline. The headline and the main visual are the two most important attention-getting features of your ad. This requires them to be both relevant and unexpected, which is hard to do.
 - ✓ In general, the more amazing the promise, the more powerful the reason to believe must be. It is almost impossible to underestimate the cynicism of today's consumer.
 - ✓ A call to action is a request for the reader or viewer to do something, buy something, or feel something. In choosing a call to action, try to find the smallest possible risk and the greatest possible reward. Be realistic.