

Branding: It's Not Just For The Big Guys

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When it comes to building your brand, take advantage of every possible shortcut to help your target market know you—and remember you. Taglines provide that path through the woods. A tagline consists of a few short words that communicate to your target market what your company does and how you're different from competitors. A good tagline positions your brand in your audience's mind and sum up its essence or benefit in a way that your audience can relate to. A great tagline uses memorable phrasing and creates a personality. They normally accompany company logos and are written to stand the test of time. Taglines can also help change the perception of a company.

Should you develop a tagline?

The answer is yes. All companies should consider using a tagline in their marketing materials and company advertising because taglines deliver the following benefits:

1. Clearly states what your company stands for.
2. Simplifies buying decisions because customers know who you are and what you offer.

3. Differentiates you from competition.
4. Raises brand awareness because taglines are relevant, remembered and often repeated.
5. Provides a shorthand version of your brand promise.

Five steps to a new tagline

1. Begin by thinking about what you want to communicate with your tagline. Write down your positioning statement or unique selling proposition. Your tagline should reinforce them. Ask these questions:

Who are your customers?

What benefits do you offer your customers?

What feelings do you want to evoke in your customers? What action are you trying to generate from your customers? How are you different from your competition? Try to get one or more of these ideas across in the tagline.

2. Next, prepare to brainstorm. Gather taglines from other companies and brands. Don't forget to look at your competitors' taglines—and strive to be better and different. Write taglines on index cards or individual slips of paper. You will be mixing and matching them and pairing them with unrelated items as you brainstorm.

Pay attention to the words used, how they are put together, and which of the above questions they address. By doing this, you are more likely to come up with a unique angle for your own tag line. You are looking at others' tag lines only to spark ideas. Do not plagiarize. Your objective is to come up with your own, original tag line.

3. Brainstorm taglines. Get a small group together if possible. You'd be amazed how much help you can get if you serve lunch. But the job can also be done solo. Gather props that might stimulate your thinking. Rearrange your various props so you can look at them in different ways. Write down everything that comes to mind and all the new ideas each phrase sparks. Your ideas do not have to make sense. You want as many as possible.

4. Consolidate your list. After brainstorming, go through all of your ideas. Pull out those few you think have the best potential. Try to reduce longer ones to fewer words.

5. Choose the one best tag line. To pick the single best tag line, poll others. If you have some funds budgeted, work with a market research firm to test the tag lines with your customers.

You can also conduct informal research. Yourfocusgroup.com offers a free trial. If you have contact with customers, ask them what they think. Give them an incentive to help, such as a discount or small freebie. Some marketers find making the final selection the most difficult step. Listen to your gut, along with outside opinions you trust, then—Evaluate your tagline against these 8 criteria

Before you unveil your new tagline, make sure it's as effective as possible by asking:

1. Is your tagline consistent with your brand name and brand positioning?
2. Will your target audience understand the language you've used?
3. Are you communicating one simple idea?
4. Will your tagline stand out in advertising and corporate communications?
5. Have you tried out the tagline with clients and prospects?
6. Does your tagline differentiate your firm from the competition?
7. Have you removed all acronyms and jargon?
8. Are you using specifics rather than vague words or generalizations?

Lastly, check if your tagline communicates your brand promise to your prospects and customers. And does it help them choose YOU in a cluttered marketplace.

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