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Hello, My Name Is Awesome: How to Create Brand Names That Stick

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Too many new companies and products have names that look like the results of a drunken Scrabble(R) game (Xobni, Svbtile, Doostang). In this entertaining and engaging book, ace-naming consultant Alexandra Watkins explains how anyone--even noncreative types--can create memorable and effective brand names. No degree in linguistics required.

The heart of the book is Watkins's proven SMILE and SCRATCH Test. A great name makes you SMILE because it is Suggestive--evokes a positive brand experience; is Meaningful--your customers get it; uses Imagery--visually evocative to aid in memory; has Legs--lends itself to a theme for extended mileage; and is Emotional--moves people.

A bad name, on the other hand, makes you SCRATCH your head because it is Spelling challenged--looks like a typo; is a Copycat--similar to competitors' names; is Restrictive--limits future growth; is Annoying--frustrates customers; is Tame--flat, uninspired; suffers from the Curse of Knowledge--only insiders get it; and is Hard to pronounce.

Watkins also provides up-to-date advice, like making sure that Siri spells your name correctly. And you'll see dozens of examples--the good, the bad, and the "so bad she gave them an award." Alexandra Watkins is not afraid to name names.

Hello, My Name Is Awesome: How to Create Brand Names That Stick Details

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From Reader Review Hello, My Name Is Awesome: How to Create Brand Names That Stick for online ebook

Debbie Irwin says

What's in a name?

More than you might think!

This delightful, delectable, delicious book by former Ogilvy copywriter Alexandra Watkins is as fun as it is informative.

Written in an easygoing style, the tone is refreshingly conversational - not like a typical business book. And like she says, she is "not afraid to name names." She calls them as she sees them, and doesn't hold back giving examples of truly awful names like Xobni that fail her SMILE & SCRATCH test.

In the true spirit of wanting to help others, Alexandra shares her secrets for naming companies, products and services. She's come up with so many on her own -

Spoon Me frozen yogurt shop, Neato robotic vacuum, and Gringo Lingo language school were some of my favorites.

She also reveals a lot of brainstorming resources that you would never think of on your own (e.g. iTunes, Google images) and makes it look easy for anyone to come up with great names.

Alexandra Watkins has a gift for the fab, and her creative abilities will leave you awe-inspired.... because, in a word, she's awesome!

Robin says

The best investment you could make if you want to start a business, or launch a product, would be to invest \$13 and an hour of your time in this smart, breezy, incredibly useful guide to naming. The book's is entertaining -- but more importantly, it is incredibly valuable in a world where your company or product's name will help you cut through the clutter of noise, and build a brand.

Marichka Dzhala says

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- The true test to see if a name is spelling challenged is to see and hear how voice recognition software spells it.

- penisland.com (PenIsland) - ??? ?????? ????????? ? ?????? :D

Steve says

Fast, concise read that will bring you from zero to hear quickly for coming up with a solid brand name.

Barbara Silverman says

One of the most enlightening and easy to read business books I've read in a long time. Not only did Alexandra offer a very valuable process for creating "brand names that stick", but she did it in a light-hearted, entertaining and precise style. Missing was only the hundred pages of fluff that so often accompany business books. This one got to the point, proved the point, and demonstrated how I can do it too. I only wish I had read it years ago when some important naming decisions were in play. Thank you Alexandra!

Keith says

This book makes a lot of good points, and it's pretty clear to me that the overall process and exercises described are a much better approach to branding than pretty much anything I've ever seen or heard of before.

That said, I have to take some major points off because it also seems oddly opinionated in ways unsupported by data, and gets some things just plain wrong. For example, several of the listed "7 Deadly Sins" of naming have prominent counterexamples of brands that have done stunningly well while violating them, which rather implies that they're not quite so much deadly as not to the author's taste. And witness this gaffe:

"It's confusing and shortsighted to name your product and company the same thing. Although you may have only one product now, think about the future. What if Apple had named their first computer the Apple? What would they name the dozens of other products that have launched since then?" Apple's first product was the Apple Computer, followed by the Apple II, II Plus, and Apple III, before they introduced Lisa, Macintosh, etc. The whole iThing which the author admires so much didn't begin until Apple had been in business for over 20 years.

In the section "Punctuation is a crutch," I expected solid advice about, for example, the unnecessary exclamation mark in Yahoo! Instead, "if your name needs the visual crutch of punctuation (güd)...." Note to the author, copy editor Tanya Grove, and proofreader Nancy Evans: punctuation is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "The marks, such as period, comma, and parentheses, used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning." The diaeresis in ü is a diacritical mark, not a punctuation mark. Also, domain names are not "also known as URLs." The domain name forms the (arguably) most essential part of a URL, but is not, in itself, a URL. One minute of fact checking on each of these would have made it look more like you actually know what you're talking about.

The one that really got me hot though was this: "As with book titles, song titles (as well as album titles *and band names*) can't be trademarked and are up for grabs when it comes to brand names." (my emphasis) No.

Nonononononono. This person claims to be a branding professional? Has lawyers on staff? This is just. Plain. Wrong. I mean, aside from the bad will likely to be generated by stealing a band name for your own product line, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office makes it pretty clear and simple: "You can register a trademark for a **band name**." And there are lawsuits about just that all the time.

So yes, if you have a branding project, by all means, check out this book. Then, consult your lawyer (which admittedly the book repeatedly advises).

Andrew Erickson says

Loved it! It's a quick read. It is only 2.5 hours on Audible so I finished it in an evening. I love the insight the author has to terrible names.

Here are my notes I took while reading:

SMILE (good names) and SCRATCH (bad names) test

SMILE

Suggestive- Evokes something about your brand

Meaningful- resonates with your customers

Imagery - visual component

Legs - lends to a theme

Emotional - moves people

SCRATCH

Spelling challenge

Copy Cat - looks like a competitor

Restrictive - limits growth

Annoying - forced

Tame - flat descriptive and uninspired

Cursive of knowledge - only makes sense to insiders

Hard to pronounce

Tips

Don't use trust or honest in the name

Don't name your business after yourself

Never start with X

Don't use creative spelling

never use e_____

never use i_____

No fruits

dont use "cloud"

no [color] + [noun]

Don't add vowels to the end of words

no grammatical issues

no initials

No acremyns

Don't use something that has multiple pronunciations

Needs to be able to appear in black and white without cases

Add a verb to get s call to action

Go buy drink drive eat enjoy get go my the try shop we are your

App global group online store tech

Use a Creative phrase like enjoycoke.com or getMeToRehab.com

Don't spell creatively!

Don't use creative domain extensions

Don't use .org if you're a for profit

Domain doesn't protect against trademark

Sluralism. Make sure it doesn't spell something else weird.

Do a creative brief. Write down what you want to be.

Client Name:

Project:

Goal of assignment:

In a nutshell, sum up your company in 140 char:

Brand positioning (how do you want to be positioned?)

Consumer insights (behaviors):

Target audience:

Competition (avoid confusion):

Desired brand experience (emotion people feel when using):

Personality (5-12 adjectives that describe your brand, think of it as a person):

Words to explore:

Ideas/Words to avoids:

domain name modifiers:

5 likes and why:

5 dislikes and why:

Anything else to think about?

Best way to brainstorm: by yourself in front of a computer

Tips:

Open your mind,

Write it down: divide into three categories of good

Keep your brief handy

Do image search of the description words

Use cliché websites and keywords.

Review:

Add a sentence of description to each name for others

Put it in a sentence to see how it sounds

Have each person review independently (no yes man syndrome)

Don't ask "do I like it". Ask on does it work?

Don't be negative

Don't expect the name to say everything

print out the name on paper

Don't ask others with survey monkey

Trademark ia .com for trademark searches

Tersera for trademark screening

Jessica Fuller says

After reading this great book, I have a new appreciation for the process of creating a brand name! It's thought provoking and to the point! Great book!

Marija Vaicaitiene says

Step by step guide how to brainstorm, get new ideas, check their relevance and create a really good brand name. The book is very practical and full of good/bad examples.

John E. Smith says

“Awesome” is not a word to be used lightly, especially as part of a book title ... Fortunately, in this case, it fits quite nicely, as does “Interesting”, “Honest”, “Focused” and “Helpful”.

INTERESTING: If you are a marketing wonk, you will love this book. If you are a branding “guru”, you may feel a little uncomfortable, because Alexandra pulls no punches as she skewers some very popular current naming practices. Even if you have absolutely no interest in any business applications, you will still find the information in this book interesting, because it speak to communication ... and we all communicate every single day, even when we do not say a word.

HONEST: Early in the book, Alexandra warns us she is “not afraid to name names.” (p. 2) She goes on to prove this point time and again, by using numerous examples of current names for companies and products, fearlessly highlighting the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. I found myself tremendously entertained by her banter, except for the times she skewered some products I use. (i.e. Grammerly) Fortunately, she also lauds some companies I enjoy patronizing (i.e. Amazon)

FOCUSED: This book is about one thing: What we name our business. Alexandra has an immense amount of practical experience doing that for organizations and products and she obviously loves what she does. Focus always requires passion and such is well in evidence here.

HELPFUL: The Resources section at the end is a veritable bonanza of advice and websites connected to the topic. Like the content in each of the sections mentioned above, every page of this book seems to have some relevant, clear, and useful information.

This is not your everyday business marketing book... and I like it.

Alexandra Watkins is all about naming things, but “Hello, My Name is Awesome” is not a long or heavy book. It’s deceptively short, light, and about an airplane flight’s worth of reading ... the first time. You might grab this book, thinking “Great ... something quick and easy to kill some time” ... but you would be so wrong.

We have become somewhat insulated as we are repeatedly confronted with names that are not helpful in understanding what a company or product is about, or even how to spell or pronounce the name. She is laying bare one of the larger mysteries of our current business environment: Why we put up with naming protocols that do not make sense.

The book itself has several well-organized main sections, each of which brings distinct value to our table. First, Alexandra lays out her “Do’s and Do Not’s” in three well-written and enjoyable sections, even as she hits uncomfortably close to home for many of us:

SMILE: Five qualities of a “Super-sticky” name

SCRATCH: Seven deadly sins of naming things.

DOMAINS: Should be required reading for anyone who has a business identity or may ever have one.

Watkins starts with full energy and candor and does not slow down. Her words are forceful, intentional, and loaded with practical wisdom about business today. She then proceeds to tell us exactly how to follow her system for creating memorable and useful names in three more well-crafted and engaging chapters:

CREATIVE BRIEF: The single most useful part of this very useful book. I like strategic thinking and you have to engage in that when you complete one of these very valuable forms. Designed to help you think it out before you act it out, this section is worth doing, even if you love your current company name and do not ever plan on changing it. Just stick it in your briefcase or keep it handy to remind you of what you want to be about.

The thinking and discernment that is required to complete the creative brief will force you to think more clearly and deeply about who you are, your customers, and what you are about. Alexandra calls this an “ingredients list” and if you follow the directions, you will be cooking up a real treat for yourself.

BRAINSTORMING: Again using the creative brief outline, Alexandra gives us some useful tools to spark our creativity in very original and engaging ways. She makes brainstorming sound like fun again.

NAME REVIEW: Twelve rules for tackling the real-world issues around getting everyone to agree on a name. Again, she is honest and pulls no punches. One quick example: “Do not use focus groups.” – naming your company or product is something you should own, because you know what you are trying to do better than your customers.

NAME CHANGES – PROS AND CONS: Finally, a candid discussion around some necessary considerations before we launch into creative renaming.

If you care about your business, your products and services, and want to thoughtfully and strategically plan into a better future, you will find much of value in this book. I am willing to bet you will refer to “Awesome” often, both for the business advice and because Alexandra is so darn entertaining as she teaches you how to think clearly and usefully about who you are and what words you use.

Loving this “Awesome” book and looking forward to a long shelf-life with it in the Heartland
John

DISCLAIMER: I received a copy of this book for review prior to publication. No apologies ... one of the best gifts ever in terms of business usefulness and enjoyable writing.

Kelsey Jones says

Really helpful, with actionable tips and resources. Was exactly what I was expecting and would recommend.

Brian Yahn says

This book is helpful in understanding how important a brand name is and how to identify good ones versus bad ones.

The best part is: it's super short. At only about 100 pages, I tore through it in less than 2 hours.

That being said, the book isn't as magical as the title implies. Sure I might be better equipped to come up with a good brand name after reading this book. But I still don't think I'll come up with a good one on my own, not any time soon.

If anything, this book has convinced me to hire an expert! But honestly, it did teach me a lot, and it is a fun read.

Becky Robinson says

I had an advance copy of this book and devoured it on a flight back from the west coast. Then my daughter read it on the drive home from the airport.

This is a really fun and entertaining book. More than that, it has really smart insights and ideas about how to choose great names for your company, product, or service.

An absolute delight!

Mark Higbee says

I received this copy as a Goodreads First Reads. I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It is fast and furious. It has such simple concepts, that in the excitement of starting up a business, one is likely to forget. It helps bring the naming process back down to a long-term perspective, and to focus on the future of your company. There are numerous examples of good, as well as bad names and the author articulately explains the pros and cons of each.

I highly recommend this book to anyone thinking about branding a company and/or product.

Ahmad Abugosh says

Good book that gives you some principles to think about when coming up with a brand name. The main philosophy in the book (shortened to SCRATCH) is to avoid:

- 1) Spelling Changes (using non-conventional spelling that makes it hard for people to find you)
 - 2) Copycat: Using a similar style or naming convention of another brand
 - 3) Restrictive: Naming something that could limit your future growth (focusing just on a certain niche)
 - 4) Annoying: Nothing that is too annoying
 - 5) Tame
 - 6) Curse of Knowledge: Having a name that people have to be in the "know" or be insiders to get
 - 7) Hard to Pronounce: Names that people have difficulty saying.
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