

PUMP UP BRAND EQUITY WITH MEMORABLE TAG LINES

BY COPYOPOLIS

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Tag lines like these are so distinctive, memorable and long-standing that you don't need to see the company or brand name. Of course, even if yours doesn't reach this kind of legendary status, you can still create valuable brand equity for your clients or your own company.

Understand the Brand

To develop a tag line that is consistent with company brand, positioning and culture, don't be tempted to skip this essential first step. Before you write a word, you need to have a clear picture of the company:

- What is the brand and its positioning in the industry?
 - What distinguishes your company? What's your unique selling proposition?
 - Who are your customers, and what are their drivers and expectations? What are they really buying?
 - What image do you want to project?

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TAG LINE TIPS

- 1 Keep your tag line short and catchy.
- 2 It's more important to communicate than to be clever.
- 3 Test informally to make sure customers and prospects will get it.
- 4 Conduct a legal search and trademark the chosen idea.
- 5 Use it on everything — and for a long time!

Set the Tone

It's not enough to come up with a clever tag line. You also have to arrive at something that's acceptable to the audience and doesn't over-promise. Decide how you want the tag line to function. Should it be inspirational, results-oriented, descriptive, comparative, provocative or a one-floor elevator speech? Analyze tag lines you love and use them for inspiration. Also study your competitors' tag lines to make sure yours will be unique.

Brainstorm ... and Repeat

A tag line is a short, one- or two-line slogan — the verbal equivalent of a logo — and should be developed with the same care and creativity. Don't try to force a list of viable ideas on your first attempt. Jot down as many spontaneous ideas, industry terms and other words/phrases as you can, with no mental editing.

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To capture the essence of a company or brand in just a few words, squeeze every word hard and look for connections. Here are a few guidelines to get you started:

- Use a keyword if possible to optimize for search engines.
- Convey a customer benefit.
- Don't repeat words from the company or product name.
- Experiment with phrases or a series of adjectives, verbs or adverbs.
- Play with synonyms, puns, rhymes, alliterations, twists on clichés.
- Avoid generic claims such as value and quality.
- Steer clear of wording that might become quickly outdated.

Go through the process several times and look for associations between words, phrases and ideas. If you get stuck, you may be over-thinking the solution. Sometimes you just have to wait for inspiration to move you in the right direction.

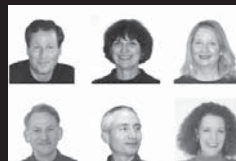
Cleverness vs. Communication?

Ideally, you want both. But if it comes down to a choice, go for communication every time. If you reach too hard to be clever, you may lose sight of your ultimate goal — to connect and communicate. Tread lightly if you're using humor. What's funny to one customer may seem silly, stupid or even insulting to another.

Get Ready to Launch

Test drive your best idea with colleagues, friends or customers. If they don't get it or it just doesn't resonate, your work isn't done. If it passes muster, advise the client to consult an attorney to ensure that the tag line is available, and then immediately apply for trademark protection. The cost of not doing so can be high if someone else claims prior use.

Finally, don't expect a tag line to do all the heavy lifting. A handful of words can only do so much for your brand equity. It can support, reflect, encapsulate, but it can't completely describe what your (or your client's) business is all about. ■



Copyopolis is a joint marketing venture of six Atlanta copywriters. Together, Peter Bowerman, Kathy Couch, Georgia Dzurica, Paul Glickstein, Steve Knapp and Barbara Wilkes have experience in every aspect of marketing communications for agencies, nonprofits, and Fortune 500 companies in industries from agriculture to utilities, writing everything from sales literature to scripts to sweepstakes promotions. Don't have a staff or the right in-house talent for a project? Take a trip to www.copyopolis.com.