



## The Golden Rules of Naming

If “Brand” is what’s known about you on the basis of your name alone, then your name is a pretty important consideration in branding. It is you, in a nutshell. And while a rose by any other name would smell so sweet, the word is an excellent reminder of the experience. Because Juliet so famously asked, “What’s in a name?” her’s has become an instant reference point for the tragedy of forbidden love – just check with anyone named Juliet. But naming isn’t all roses and Shakespeare.

Here is what I think of as the 3 Golden Rules

### **1. Look back from the future.**

Names develop resonance with experience. Think of a baby. On the day the kid enters the world, no baby brings more than a generic “babyness” to his or her given name. There is a new Bobby or Sue in the world, but the story is more about the parents’ achievement than anything else. But flash-forward 17 years and you can bet you’ll have a whole lot of context for understanding who that baby has become.

Businesses shouldn’t fall into the trap of naming their babies. They should name their future teenagers and adults. This is a difficult challenge for most people, but if you can mentally transport yourself into a future that includes years of experience, what might seem like a great name now can lose its lustre. Similarly, a name that seems foreign or outside of your expectations now, may actually have the potential to feel perfect later, and even to change the way you think about your own company.

### **2. Allow for context.**

If an international gold mining company, for instance, was called “International Gold Miners,” the name would convey very little about their managerial expertise or corporate approach. It would describe their function, but what else? Is it a good name? That would depend on what they wanted to communicate through its use.

Business owners should remember that the sign on the lawn will always have a building behind it. The business card is handed personally or enclosed with a letter. The name will be typeset, designed into a logo and printed on carefully chosen materials that include images and messages that tell a story. Because corporate names are rarely seen outside of a greater context, the name itself will always have help. It is important to remember that the name of a company does not have to convey everything.

### **3. You are not the target.**

Naming is subjective. But the most important thing to remember is that the people who choose the name are already on board. The name doesn’t have to sell them anything. Outside of their culture, at the other end of their marketing efforts, there’s a whole category of people whose opinions will matter more

“I don’t like it” is never a good enough reason to shoot down a suggestion. The real question should be: What will others think?

### **4. Have fun. Seriously.**

The 4th of the 3 Golden rules is a matter of process and context. You simply cannot be creative or explore the fullest range of potential from a negative point of view. To get at the best results, you have to have fun. Good naming processes always include laughter.