

7 Principles of Decision-Making

A name can only be as great as the decision that brought it to life. That's why we never stop at a list of candidates, but instead guide our clients through the process of selecting the best one. Over and over, we'll echo these directives, as some of them defy the strongest instincts.

1) Don't take it lightly.

This is likely to be your brand's most important decision. It can't be based in personal preference, gut decision, or worst of all: fear. Now is the time to invest energy in a name with a bold vision. It will live longer than any logo, tagline, or ad campaign as the brand's first, defining impression.

2) If you weren't engaged in naming strategy, you can't make an educated decision.

We start with planning for a reason. And that's to define specific objectives that the best name must meet: the message, the tone, the distinctiveness, the boldness that align with the brand vision. Without understanding these objectives and the overarching namespace guidelines decisions will be made on the wrong basis.

3) Lightning won't strike.

Don't expect a name to jump off the page and drag your brand to greatness. Great names must be chosen for their fit to strategy (aligned during Namespace Strategy Development and Planning phase of this project) and then carefully positioned, marketed, and woven into the fabric of great brands. At such an early stage of a brand lifecycle, it's essential to ask not what a name can do for us, but what we can do for a name.

4) Marinate.

Spend quality time with names following the name recommendations presentation. Use them in sentences, write them in emails, launch them at imaginary trade shows. Think about them from every important angle (our Decisioning Tool will help with this.) And give yourself the time (min 24 hours) – free of external influence and free of discussion with other decision-makers (reductive effects of groupthink) – to formulate your own stance on which three names have the most potential.

5) Ignore negatives.

Sounds crazy, but it's actually the most crucial principal to follow during the Decisioning phase. There is no perfect name. In fact, every name (especially if you're a pessimist) can evoke some kind of negative association, the world's largest brands notwithstanding. Negative associations are easiest to ID during these fetal naming stages but remember that consumers don't approach with such negativity when they experience names (see #6). We're hired to present names free of negatives that can't be overcome – so you can focus only on the positive potential of each name, and choose the one that serves the most benefit.

6) Believe in Positivity.

Consumers are inclined to assume that brand names and messages are well intentioned. Why wouldn't they be? The result is a tendency toward the desired brand takeaway: something naming expert Anthony Shore calls the [Positivity Principle](#). The iPad is one of many brands to show that consumers ultimately embrace positive over less-relevant negative associations, not to mention the power of marketing to further minimize the negative and enhance the positive (positioning).

7) See the future.

Your first impression of a name, positive or negative, is not rooted in the same context where your customer will view it. Our biggest challenge as brand visionaries is to see names not as they are in the deck we present, but as they can be, with the energy of a brand behind them in the marketplace, the media, on the lips of your consumer. The best name is the one that best completes the vision for its ultimate usage.