



MARKETING INSIGHTS

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The Dos and Donts of Branding Part 3—Taglines and Fault Lines

It isn't easy to create great logos or taglines that are memorable, and even the best cannot make a business thrive that has little else going for it. On the other hand, dull brand names and uninspired taglines can be an obstacle for sound businesses.

Strong branding can make your company stand out in a crowded market, and differentiate it from its competitors. As in Real Estate, position is everything.

A tagline is to a logo what clothes are to a woman - they reveal more about her character and, in the same way, the tagline is a defining element of the brand.

The tagline is a permanent part of your logo while a slogan is linked to a specific product or campaign. Despite that key difference, most of the rules for designing good taglines also apply to slogans.

To be effective, taglines must follow these simple rules:

- The shorter they are, the better - no more than 6-8 words as a rule
- Simple, strong words of few syllables work best
- The tagline should engage the reader to fill in the blanks

1. The Basics

A good tagline should meet these three objectives:

- Convey a unique or key attribute of your business to the market
- Convey a key differentiator or benefit to potential customers
- Remind your employees of the company's mission

The best taglines are catchy, clever, quirky or funny ones that resonate with people. Taglines like that help people remember a brand better than advertising campaigns that cost a small fortune.

While branding and advertising are different disciplines, the best ads should stand on the brand like circus gymnasts on the shoulders of the strongman. In the same way, a tagline can give the brand broader shoulders.

A good tagline reaches out to the commercial market; it doesn't wax lyrical about the technical brilliance of the company. It speaks the customer's language, not the engineer's. Don't focus on your achievement, focus on your potential customers.

Having no tagline is an opportunity missed

In marketing, opportunities are there to be taken advantage of yet many companies don't seize this one. For example, most of the major banks don't bother with a tagline. Perhaps ANZ, NAB and Westpac see themselves as institutions these days and think they don't need a tagline.

Yes, we know who they are, but we don't know what makes them different from each other. It's an opportunity missed. The smaller banks know that. St. George does and Bendigo Bank does too - Cold mornings, a warm welcome at the Bendigo.

It's the same story with Internet Service Providers. Telstra and Optus don't use taglines on their websites, but their smaller competitors do. Internode is about *Broadband Choice* (telling us it's not a monopoly) and iiNET says: *Connect Better*. It's not great but it's better than no tagline at all.

2. Taglines that Work

The rules don't look complicated but it's tough to get a tagline right. After all, we're trying to say so much in a few words, aren't we? Trying to say too much is a common trap, and it's only one of many. Let's look at some examples:

Let your fingers do the walking – Yellow Pages. Perfect. It sells the sizzle, not the steak. It doesn't say this is a great phone book (but implies it). It says: we make finding what you want so much easier for you. And it says that in a compact line which rolls off the mind's tongue easily.

Think outside the box – Apple. Great positioning, and great wordplay with PCs being referred to as boxes. And it's a call to action designed to appeal to certain people.

Take the 'Lug' out of Luggage – Karry-Lite. Ingenious, so much so that many other companies have copied the line in recent years.

Nothing sucks like Electrolux. Bold. The word 'sucks' is a strong negative in most people's minds except when it comes to vacuum cleaners. It draws attention to the tagline because you're surprised to see it there. A play on words is the dollop of cream on the peach of a tagline, and it's the hardest thing to do.

The final Test

Creating a great tagline can be hard work, which may explain why a lot of companies either have weak taglines or give up on them altogether. Once it is in place, a strong tagline adds a defining dimension to your brand that works two ways: it helps position your company in the market and it helps your employees focus on the vital element of your success.

A tagline that states the obvious doesn't do the job. Your chosen tagline must support your brand's positioning. It must articulate what's different about your company or express its personality or reflect a unique attribute of your brand. The tagline is a great place to convey a key differentiator or attribute that captures the interest of your audience.

Just because a tagline meets all the known criteria and took a lot of effort to generate doesn't mean it works. A tagline can be too funny or too clever, with the result that it calls attention to itself rather than the message it's designed to convey.

It's best to treat taglines as you would treat prototypes of new products – you test them and go back to the drawing board when they don't work. The creative process may need a second round to produce the winning tagline, or fresh stimulation or input, or a trip back to basic principles.

3. Taglines that Fail

Too many words

There's a moving company called Grace, a great name to build a tagline on - *Move With Grace*. *Make your Move with Grace*. *Before your Move, call Grace* ... and so on. The real tagline is: *Across the Street, across the World – the best moves are made with Grace*.

'Across the Street, Across the World' is useful information but would work better as a separate heading. That would let the real tagline stand out.

Words that say nothing

Creating value through true convergence – Lucent. Classic Cliché. What does it tell us about the company, it's business and it's competitive edge?

Every Day is a New Day - Commonwealth Bank. Does a line like that make us rush to the CBA? Infinitely better is *Good with People*. *Good with Money* - St George Bank. The line addresses the two key questions on the minds of people thinking about changing banks, and it reminds employees what the bank stands for.

Taglines that say 'Simply The Best ...' or 'Beyond ...' are a cop-out, and telling people 'We're No 1' isn't going to make us sit up and take notice either. Unless there's a twist on it like the Sydney sewage company who's tagline is 'We're number 1 in the number 2 business.' We remember taglines that bring a grin to our faces, even when they're on the back of sewage truck.

Words that don't ring true

Oh What a Feeling – Toyota. A new Ferrari is more likely to make us want to jump up for joy.

Our Passion, Your Potential – Microsoft. For most of us, the words that define Microsoft are Power and Wealth. They don't make for a positive tagline but 'Potential' and 'Passion' don't either – in the world of marketing, they're among the most worn-out words you can find.

Lines that miss the mark

We're Different from Other Funds – HCF. It's good to be different but a hint at how or why would make a real difference.

Lucky you're with AAMI succeeds by implying that you're in better hands in case of an accident. It doesn't say so, and that's the secret of a good tagline: it lets our minds fill in the blanks.

Lines with an unintended twist

Timeless Luxury Watches – Rolex. 'Timeless' is a risky word to use when selling expensive time-pieces.

Sony Style gives us a hint of what Sony is about but raises a reflex question about *Substance*. The mind fills in the blanks, not always with the expected words.

Risky Lines

Australia's Favourite Air - Fujitsu. Some people will think it's presumptuous for a Japanese company to make such a claim.

It worked for Fosters, on the other hand – *Australian for Beer*.

Vorsprung durch Technik – AUDI. Taglines in a foreign language are not a good idea unless you're sure that your audience speaks your language.

Long Lines and Big Words

A World Leader in Air Conditioning Technology. Dull, clunky. It shows why simple words are better than big ones, and *World Leader* is up there with *The Very Best ...*' We see taglines like these more often than any other kind.

There are exceptions to the rule of short words: *When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight* - Federal Express. Why does this work? Because the tagline makes a feature of the big words to stress the supreme urgency.

Short lines and Few Words

Invent – HP. Short and sweet but it doesn't say much about anything.

Advanced Simplicity – Canon. It's only two words and it's a clever conjunction, but simplicity is not a simple word.

Life's Good – LG. Very effective but perhaps not the best line for an appliance maker in the age of global warming (the subtext being that lots of power-consuming gadgets make life better).

4. Getting your Story Straight

That's where it begins. What does your company do? What do you do best? What difference do your product, service or people make? If everyone in your company and everyone of your customers knows the answers to these questions, please stop reading now.

Knowing what your company stands for makes even the biggest decisions easier. For a long time, Daimler Benz knew exactly what it stood for. Then it forgot and bought Chrysler. A few years later it remembered and sold Chrysler at a big loss.

Some companies are still trying to figure out who they are after decades in business. Pepsi is one of those. It's a nice, snappy name for a soft drink, yet Pepsi turned itself upside down and inside out trying to come up with a lasting, memorable tagline for its product.

In the sixties, it was *Now It's Pepsi, For Those Who Think Young*, followed by *Come Alive! You're In the Pepsi Generation*.

In the eighties it became *Pepsi, the Choice of a New Generation*

In the nineties, Pepsi came up with a new line: *Gotta Have It*. It soon ditched that one and re-focused on its main market with *Be Young, Have Fun, Drink Pepsi*. Then it had second thoughts and took a punt on *Nothing else is a Pepsi*.

For the new millennium, the defining line for the drink became *The Joy of Cola*.

Virtually every tagline Pepsi came up with over four decades failed. And they failed on basic principles that should've been obvious to anyone in the marketing business.

5. Stand and Deliver

It's a good thing to aspire but it's a mistake to pretend. Whatever you promote you must deliver on, and do so consistently. If you don't, you'll end up like the major banks and Telcos - despised by their customers. That's okay if you have a monopoly, but most of us don't enjoy that luxury.

If there is a visible gap between promise and customer experience, the brand is in trouble no matter how good the tagline or the advertising campaigns. Keeping that gap closed and acting in a way that is that is consistent with what you stand for are the keys to building a strong brand.

Consistency means that your employees act in accordance with your stated principles. Consistency of your company's communications is just as important – they need to reflect what you stand for and say the same things in different forms and media. Consistency makes it possible for all of these factors to work together and build your brand in the marketplace.

In Part 1—[A Minefield of Names](#), we examine brand names from successes and disasters.

In Part 2—[Logo Logic](#) we examine why some logos stand out and others don't.

In Part 4—[Art vs Process](#) we explore the importance of branding to SMBs and look at cost-effective ways to achieve results.