

How to Choose a Naming Agency

There are many factors to consider when evaluating naming agencies, including clients and experience, portfolio of naming work, range of services, personality fit, testimonials, and ironically, an agency's own name. Read on to learn more about how to choose a naming agency for your product or service.

1. Consider the agency's own name

Nothing is more revealing than a naming firm's own name, which is suggestive of its creative inclinations and the kinds of names you can expect to see for your project. Be sure to choose an agency with a name that is:

Distinctive: Naturally, you want your naming partner to help distinguish your brand in the marketplace. If they haven't distinguished themselves, consider it a warning sign. Be wary of bland usage of terms like "Name" or "Brand."

Flexible: Especially in the case of company naming, it's important that a name be flexible enough to accommodate shifts in business focus. A naming agency that too narrowly defines its own business may not have the foresight to name yours.

Pronounceable: If a naming agency has overlooked potential mispronunciations of its own name, it may indicate that they don't place enough importance on this key name quality.

For a more complete list of qualities to look for in a name, **download Catchword's 10 Qualities of Great Brand Names**.

2. Consider the agency's full portfolio of naming work

If you're considering hiring a naming agency, you'll want to know what they've named. While their recognizable brands may seem most exciting, **be critical in your analysis of the agency's portfolio**. Often it's the lesser-known brands that provide the greatest insight into the firm's creative capabilities.

Larger naming agencies that service a wide variety of clients, including the Fortune 500, will usually have a diverse portfolio, including closer-in names like Starbucks Refreshers and more "creative" names like Mochidoki (both of these were created by Catchword). This is because larger clients present a much greater set of naming hurdles: worldwide trademark, domain, and linguistic clearance; target audiences reflecting diverse cultures

and languages; multiple decision-makers; etc. A naming firm that only works with small or local clients may come across as highly “creative” simply because they are facing far fewer obstacles.

When evaluating a naming agency’s portfolio, consider the following:

- Have they completed sufficient work in our particular business space? How much B2B versus B2C experience do they have?
- How much company versus product naming work have they done?
- Is the style of their work sufficiently varied? Can you expect to see a good range of name styles, constructions, and ideas, or does the agency’s portfolio indicate a very narrow philosophy on names and approach to name development?
- If you represent a sizable or international company: does the agency have sufficient experience managing large, [multinational naming projects](#)?

3. Consider the agency’s repeat business and industry accolades

If a naming agency has been in business for many years, they’ll likely have a long list of impressive clients. Client lists are great for gaining insight into the industries served by an agency and the sort and size of clients they work with, but perhaps even more telling is how much repeat business they’re doing.

So ask the agency about their repeat clients and retainer relationships. These are strong indicators of client satisfaction, and a good sign that the agency is highly service-oriented and a valued creative naming resource.

While you’re at it, check out their client testimonials, as well as their ranking on trusted review sites, such as [Clutch](#), an online agency evaluation platform featuring vetted testimonials. Also look to see if they’ve won any industry awards, which reflect respect and validation from their peers.

4. Consider the agency’s range of services

Naming agencies are not one-size-fits-all. Some are one or two-person shops better suited to smaller clients with narrow naming needs. Others, like Catchword, are able to provide a wide range of naming services, including naming strategy and naming architecture; linguistic, cultural, and consumer name evaluations; international trademark screening; tagline and slogan development; and domain-name negotiations.

If you’re working with a limited budget or are just in need of a couple hundred name

ideas, a smaller, less-resourced agency might be a perfectly good fit for you. On the other hand, if you need a name for a multinational spinoff, requiring naming strategy, multiple rounds of naming work, linguistic screening in 25 different languages, trademark clearance in 17 different jurisdictions, and a matching domain name, you'll need to work with a full-service naming agency.

5. Consider the agency's personality and fit with your organization

Before hiring a naming agency, you should feel very comfortable with the people you'll be working with, their communication style, and their process for developing names. Some questions to ask about fit are:

- How quickly did the agency respond to your initial inquiry? Particularly if your project is on a tight timeline, you'll need a highly responsive partner.
- What is their communication style? Do they seem open and friendly, or are they more of a black box?
- Can they articulate a comprehensive and strategic process, including trademark screening and clearance, and recommended countries for linguistic checks?
- Will you be working with experienced naming experts, who can guide your team through a subjective and surprisingly complex process?
- Do they have a staff of namers, or do they hire freelance writers and other professionals on an as-needed basis? Namers who work together daily will be more cohesive and effective than a network of independent creatives. You may have to ask the agency directly about this, as team pages can be misleading.
- Lastly, do they strike you as truly passionate about naming? At Catchword, we could talk for days about the value of a great name, and how much we love our work. You should only partner with an inspired team of naming professionals!