



How to find the perfect business name
using design thinking

Hey entrepreneur!

Your great idea needs a great name. And we know that's a daunting task.

That's where this booklet comes in. We've got nine easy-to-follow exercises that you can use to zero-in on a name that fits your business and brand. As you complete each exercise, add your favorite words to the Word List page at the end of this booklet.

Start here

Get prepped

Are you leading the charge? You'll need to get this stuff together before you start:

- Your business or organization's mission and vision statements
- A short sentence or phrase describing what your company does
- A copy of this booklet for everyone

Grab some folks

Get a small group together. The more diverse, the better. They don't have to work for you, but most of them should have a basic idea of what you do. If you can, find one person who doesn't really know you so they can be your set of fresh eyes and ears.

Go, go, go

Work through the exercises in this workbook with your group.

- Read through the exercises and decide which would be best for your group, time limit and company.
- Select at least one exercise from each section. You don't have to do them all.
- Some exercises require computer access, but they can be modified or skipped.
- Complete each exercise individually unless otherwise stated.
- After each exercise, at least one person in the group should present their ideas. Everyone should then make note of interesting words that strike them on the word list on the last page.
- Consider running this brainstorm more than once with different groups of people.

1. Let's define

You can't get started until you know who you are. These exercises help you focus on what your company is really about and your mission and values.

If you were a _____

Imagination time. If your company were a car, animal, or kind of candy, which one would it be? Write down a bunch of fun and unique answers to help you spark a business name. Feel free to add your own categories, too! Add any words you like to your Word List.

1. Car



2. Animal



3. Candy



The bar napkin scribble

Cheers! You're at the bar and the guy next to you is dying to hear about what you do. He's a few drinks in, so try and keep it simple. Draw a doodle of what your company /product does. It's OK to add labels, but it shouldn't be all words. Add specific images, shapes and patterns to your Word List.

2. Let's discover

This exercise will add some research to the brainstorm process to set the context and get your creative juices flowing.

Who's in the ring?

Take a look what the other players in your field are up to.

- Make a list of your top 3 competitors.
- For each, ask: where do you think they got their name? Come up with your own story.
- Then ask: What are they saying to the public? Look at their website, watch their commercials and analyze their logo
- Write a list of words that appear multiple times and the feelings they evoke.
- Don't have a computer? Just answer based on what you remember or know about these brands.

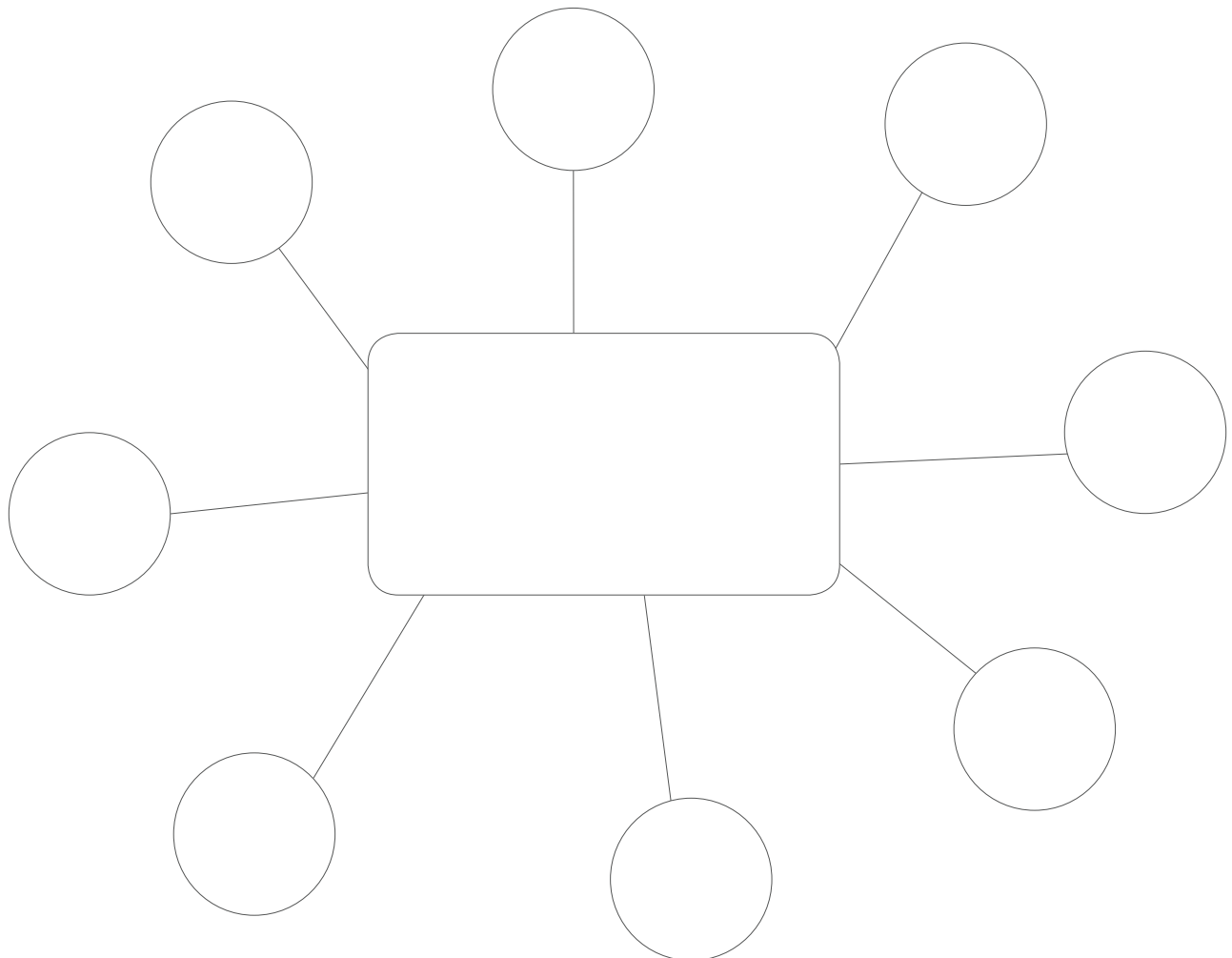
3. Let's develop

Now we're getting to the fun part: brainstorming! Work together on these exercises to dream up some awesome new ideas.

The mind map

Build a web of words and ideas that all connect back to the core of your business:

- Write a central attribute of your business in the center of the map.
- Brainstorm words around that idea and connect them.
- Don't be afraid of getting weird. If your core value is "fast," write: cars, zoom, rabbit, Roadrunner and so on.
- When you're done, add any words you like to your Word List.
- Feel free to do this exercise more than once. Pick a different core concept of your business, and brainstorm even possibilities.



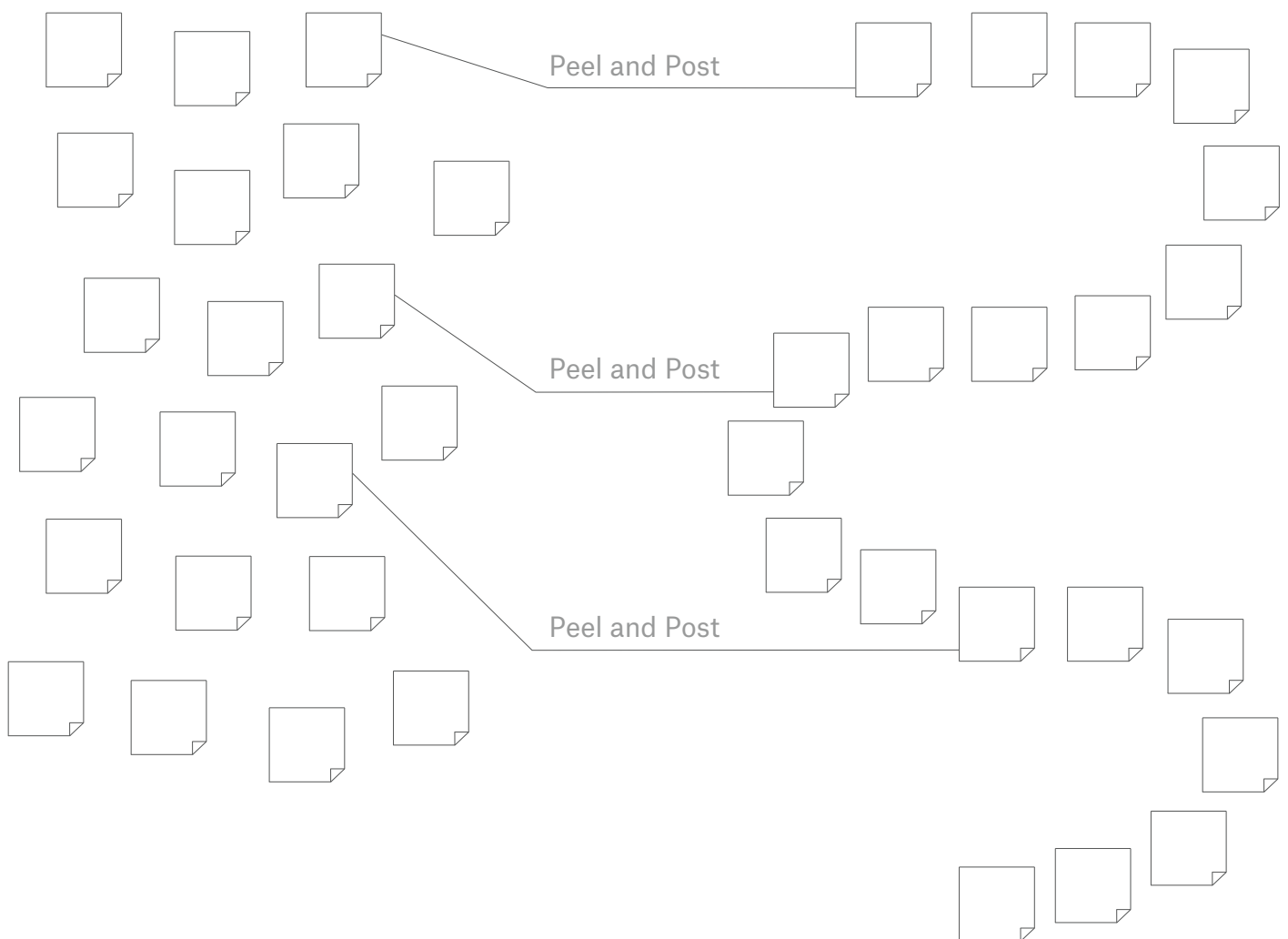
A string of stories

Recall the mission, vision and values of your business through storytelling:

- Divide a whiteboard into two large columns: The Wall of Words and The Story Thread.
- As a group, spend ten minutes brainstorming any words that relate to your business's mission, goals and culture. Keep all of your the ideas positive or neutral. Write each word on a sticky note and paste them on The Wall of Words.
- Invite a group member to select a sticky note and recall a story associated with the word. Then, move that sticky note to The Story Thread.
- Continue by asking another member to pick a word and add their story to the thread.
- Once all of the words are moved over, ask the group which words resonate the most about your business and why.

The Wall of Words

The Story Thread



Capture the mood

Create a visual collage of images that represents your business:

- Trade booklets with someone in your group, and read through their Word List.
- Select a few words that intrigue you, and do a Google image search to find pictures that capture the spirit of those words.
- Trade back and add words based on those images to your Word List.

4. Let's deliver

You probably came up with hundreds of names during your brainstorm session. Now it's time to gather all your scraps of paper, sticky notes and doodles and narrow it down.

Circle up

Get ready to select the best of the best.

- Pass the Word Lists around the room.
- Circle one word on each person's list. You can't circle a word that's already been circled, and you can't circle a word you already circled in another booklet.
- Have a discussion after this. What stood out? What patterns were you seeing? Does it seem like they're going one way?

The name game

Use your Word List and pitch three business names to your team.

- Look at your Word List and see what resonated with others
- Come up with three names—no more, no less.
- Present your three names, and explain why you chose them.

The final three

Narrow down your ideas to a final trio of favorites.

- As a group, vote on all of your final business name ideas.
- If your group has major stakeholders, have them make the final decision.
- Test the three names to select the best option.

My Word List

My Final 3 Names

Time to test

Alright. You've narrowed it down to three final options. So, how do you go about that seemingly impossible task of picking one? Here are a few final exercises to help you out. Don't forget, you'll also want to check the name availability online.

Quick surveys

Show your name options to a potential customer (either in person or online). Ask that them to share their thoughts about them.

Consider questions like:

- Do these names make sense?
- How do they make you feel?
- What do you think this name means?
- Do the names remind you of something else?

Word association

Give people your name options, and ask them to describe each with the first two or three words that come to mind. Ask them to guess the name of your business based on those words. See how well their reactions match your business values and principles.

Image association

Show your name options to a potential customer along with a stack of images. Ask them to select the images that they associate with the name. See how well their reactions match your business values and principles.

This naming guide was created by the team at 99designs to help your business grow.



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