

Confidential to clients

# Web brand names

*A checklist of key points for marketers launching digital brands*

September 2001

***digital strategy consulting***  
smart thinking and effective strategies

1 Telford House  
2 Kirkstall Road  
London SW2 4HF  
020 8674 2504

## ***A guide for choosing web brand names***

### ***The Domain name***

1. Ideally go for a small number of letters: 5-9 letters makes for a snappy title which is particularly important in consumer markets. The land-grab for domain names may prevent this but always try to be as short and clear as possible.
2. Coined names rather than real words are easier to trademark
3. Check domain name availability early on. Aim to secure the key domains names that you need. Remember that it is practically impossible to secure all domains and that legal action can be taken against deliberate cyber-squatters. Consider .org, .edu and .info permutations.
4. Use capitals / lowercase and bold / light formats to emphasise the key parts of the domain name and to break up words to improve recognition at a glance.
5. Use sub-domains to direct people to key sections of the site. This pattern should become intuitive. For example:
  - **YourSite.com/Africa**
  - **YourSite.com/News**
  - **YourSite.com/Sitemap**
6. Avoid the following:
  - a. Acronyms and letters
  - b. Unusual top level domains which will not be intuitive in the long run (.ad .mu .it)
  - c. Punctuation within the domain name such as hyphens which will need to be explained when the domain name is passed on by word of mouth
  - d. Unusual spellings or misspellings – if the domain you want is not available then simply move on
7. Include the following:
  - a. Test the name with webusers not linked to the project
  - b. Search for similar names on the web and look for potential problems
  - c. Run trademark searches which may highlight potential conflicts in the UK

### ***The Brand***

8. Your name is your brand and must be synergistic with the values, identity, personality and meaning you are developing for the brand
9. Stand out in the marketplace. Develop a name which does not simply replicate others in the sector

10. If your service has international appeal to customers with English as a second language then consider both an appropriate language level for the strapline and website, and consider words for the strapline and name that have stems common to many languages
11. Different: ie ideally beyond the scope of what other players in the sector have
12. Include the top level suffix (.com) but not the www in the logo and name. Try writing the .com part in a light font as this should become subliminal over time.
13. Balance clarity with creativity. The domain name needs to relate to the product or service as well as communicating something about your tone and position.
14. The name needs to support brand essence

### ***Strapline***

15. Consider your strapline very carefully from the start. Relate it to the positioning statement and mission statement for the brand.
16. The URL and strapline are likely to be used in isolation so consider whether they will do the job of 'selling' the site. They'll appear on search engines, listings and links from other sites which will be a vital tool for both encouraging trial and establishing awareness.
17. Work on a range of creative executions of the web address and strapline together
18. Use the final visual device in every possible occasion: from voicemail to business cards

### ***The Future***

19. What's in store for the future? The name needs to have the potential to grow with your business and to fit brand extensions and long term strategic plans.

### ***Closing steps***

20. Once agreed complete trademark protection as necessary
21. Once protected complete corporate identity guidelines and issue to all related parties. Tightly police these guidelines to prevent identity drift in typefonts, colours, layout etc.