

How To Find a Great Name

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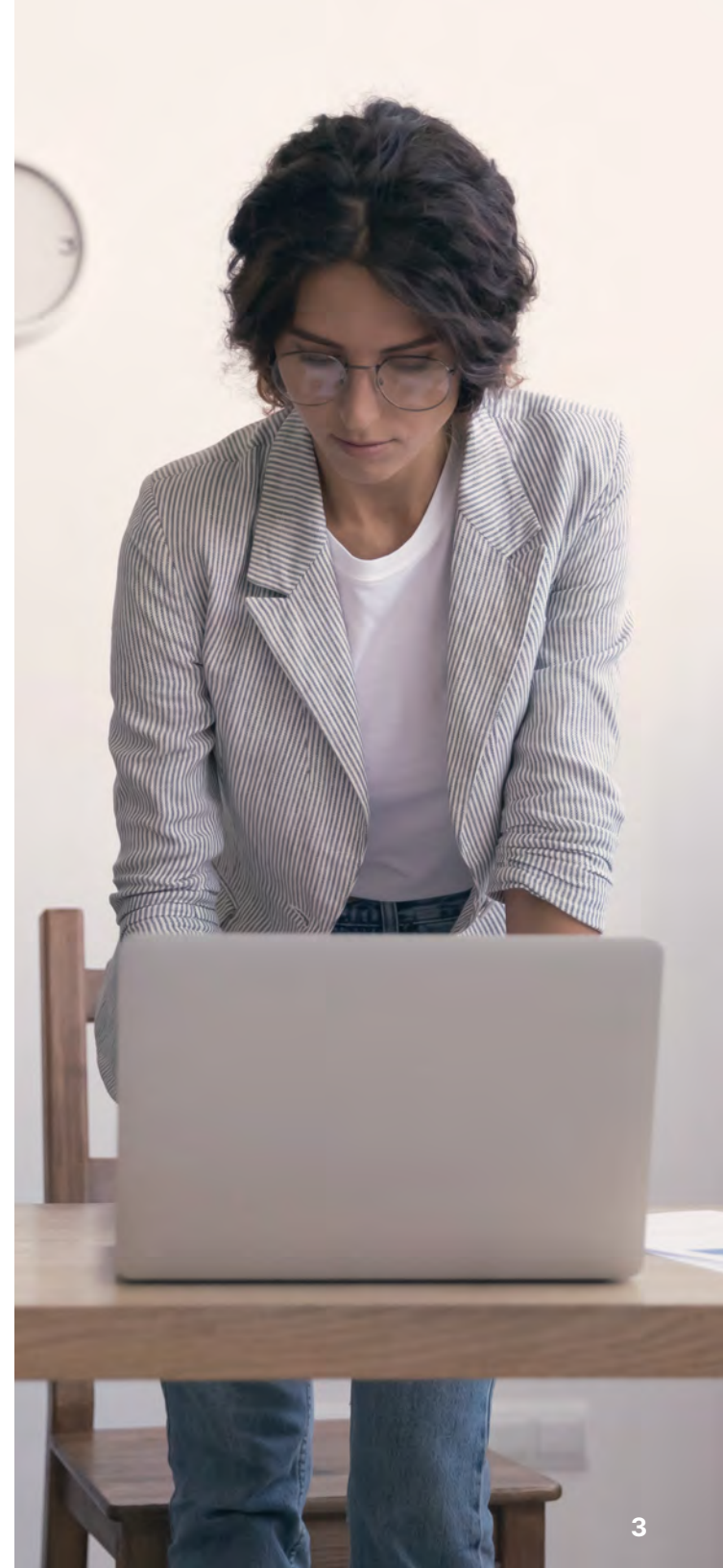
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How To Find a Great Name

We all know the value of making a good first impression, which is why the names of companies are so important. It's the first thing anyone sees, and it sets expectations for who you are and what you do. A playful name can communicate that your company doesn't take itself too seriously - great for a toy company, but maybe not for a medical device company. A descriptive name that inspires confidence might show strength and security - great for an investment company, but off-brand for a whimsical line of t-shirts. In essence, your name helps sets the tone for your company or brand.

“ ***Every successful company started right where you are today.*** ”

I recommend you pick a name that helps convey what makes your business unique. You can consider including your location or incorporate your own name to add a personal touch. It should be catchy without being nonsensical. It's also important to make sure your name doesn't have a negative meaning or association in another language or context. It should be relevant to your business, yet still adaptable, so that the name will work even if your startup grows and expands into new industries and product categories. Every successful company started right where you are today, and their name is a key part of that success.



The whole point of an easy, memorable name is to help your future customers find you. Make sure that the name isn't too close to another company, especially one that offers a similar product or service. Some important reasons to make sure your name isn't too close to another company's name include:

1. Your company may not be easily found by potential customers among a sea of similar names
2. Potential customers may end up at another company offering a similar product or service

I advise against giving your company the same name as an already existing company. Even if you operate in a different industry or have different offerings, avoiding customer confusion is a practice worth following. If a customer searches for your business online, chances are they will have to sift through numerous other sites referencing the other companies before they even see a mention of your company – even with optimized SEO.



Brainstorming & Validating

There are a lot of factors to consider when choosing a new company name. This list of requirements can serve as a starting point to help make the process easier.

Name Requirements

- **Relevant** - Does it suggest what you have to offer?
- **Sets expectations** - Does it tell the customer something about what the company does, or how it delivers its services?
- **Pronounceable/Easy to Spell** - Are your customers going to be able to find you?
- **Memorable** - Will customers remember your name?
- **Adaptable** - Is there room to grow?
- **No Hidden Context** - Does it have any double meanings?

- **Not Too Close** - Does another company have the same name, even if it operates in a different industry?

I recommend following a four-step process to generate and validate name ideas:

1. Brainstorm a list of potential names, both for your business and your online presence
2. Use your favorite search engine to look for companies with similar names
3. Register the domain name(s)
4. Validate your name with potential customers



Brainstorm a List of Potential Names for Your Business and Online Presence

You are welcome to sit down with a pen and paper, put on some music, and write down every name you can think of, but there is an easier way. Many companies have created name generators online that use AI to generate hundreds of names related to your product in a few seconds. These tools can offer a fast and easy way to create a list of brand name ideas you can choose from. My favorite name generator is NameStudio.com because it also helps me find a great .com domain name for my company or brand. Once you take the steps I described above to validate your favorite names, you should consider registering a .com domain name(s) that you have discovered as relevant (I'll discuss how to register a domain name later in this article).

For example, let's say someone named Anthony wants to start a real estate company. He may type the following keywords into a name search tool: Anthony, realty, real estate company, vacation homes, and beach houses. Or he could type in a brief description of the product, such as "Anthony's vacation home search app."



“ ***My favorite name generator is NameStudio.com because it also helps me find a great .com domain name for my company or brand.*** ”

Some things to think about when sorting through the results: Do you want your name to be simple and evocative? Or, are you looking for a more random compound word? There are short phrase names, highly descriptive names, names that reflect geographic or business focus, coined phrases, and more. Think about how you'd like your name to reflect your product or service. A professional vacation planner could register procation.com, for example, to communicate the ideas of “professional” and “vacation” to their customers using a coined phrase.

Using our example from earlier, let's say Anthony found that an exact match domain name for his search terms, “AnthonysRealty.com” was already registered. Using NameStudio, he can find plenty of options to help change it slightly to make sure that his online presence is aligned with his brand. NameStudio.com is not only a great site for generating business name options with AI, it also has a brainstorming feature (at NameStudio.com/explore) where you can change the prefix and suffix and look for synonyms for the main words in a name idea and it will tell you if the names are available as .com domain names. For Anthony, this could involve entering a few new search terms (like the kinds of homes he primarily focuses on – houses by the beach) and seeing that “AnthonysBeachHomes.com” is available to register.

WHY FOCUS ON THE .COM?

There are many Top-Level Domains (TLD, the part after the dot) to choose from, but I recommend you make sure you start with registering the .com domain name. That's because .com domain names are trusted, recognized, and used worldwide. When you register a .com domain name, you're choosing a path that millions of like-minded businesses have used to start and grow their business's online presence.





“ ***Pairing a ccTLD with a matching .com domain name can help you expand your business reach.*** ”

You may have noticed that some domain names end in two-letter extensions like .dk. These are called country code top-level domain (ccTLD) names, and they can help establish that your company is local to a particular region or country. If you have a local business, or the country in which you operate is a key part of your brand identity, you could also consider registering a complementary ccTLD domain name and .com domain names together. Pairing a ccTLD with a matching .com domain name can help you expand your business reach. For example, I'm originally from Denmark where the ccTLD is .dk and people are accustomed to using it. If I was opening a hair salon in Aarhus, Denmark and named it Henrik's Haircuts, I would consider registering HenriksHaircuts.dk. However, I'd also register HenriksHaircuts.com, because .com is universally recognized and trusted. Having both domain names can help reduce the chance that customers may go to another website with a similar name. Plus, if you're local today and aspire to be international, .com can work with your ccTLD to support your business in its journey.

Use Your Favorite Search Engine To Look for Companies With Similar Names

Once you identify a name you like, and you know that there is a .com domain name that you can register, the next step is to see if there are any other companies in your industry using anything close to that name. You may find that while there's not a company with the same name, there may be a company who ranks highly on search engine results pages with a very similar name. Is it too close? It's hard to say, but it might be a good idea to pivot to a different name so you don't risk confusing your future customers.

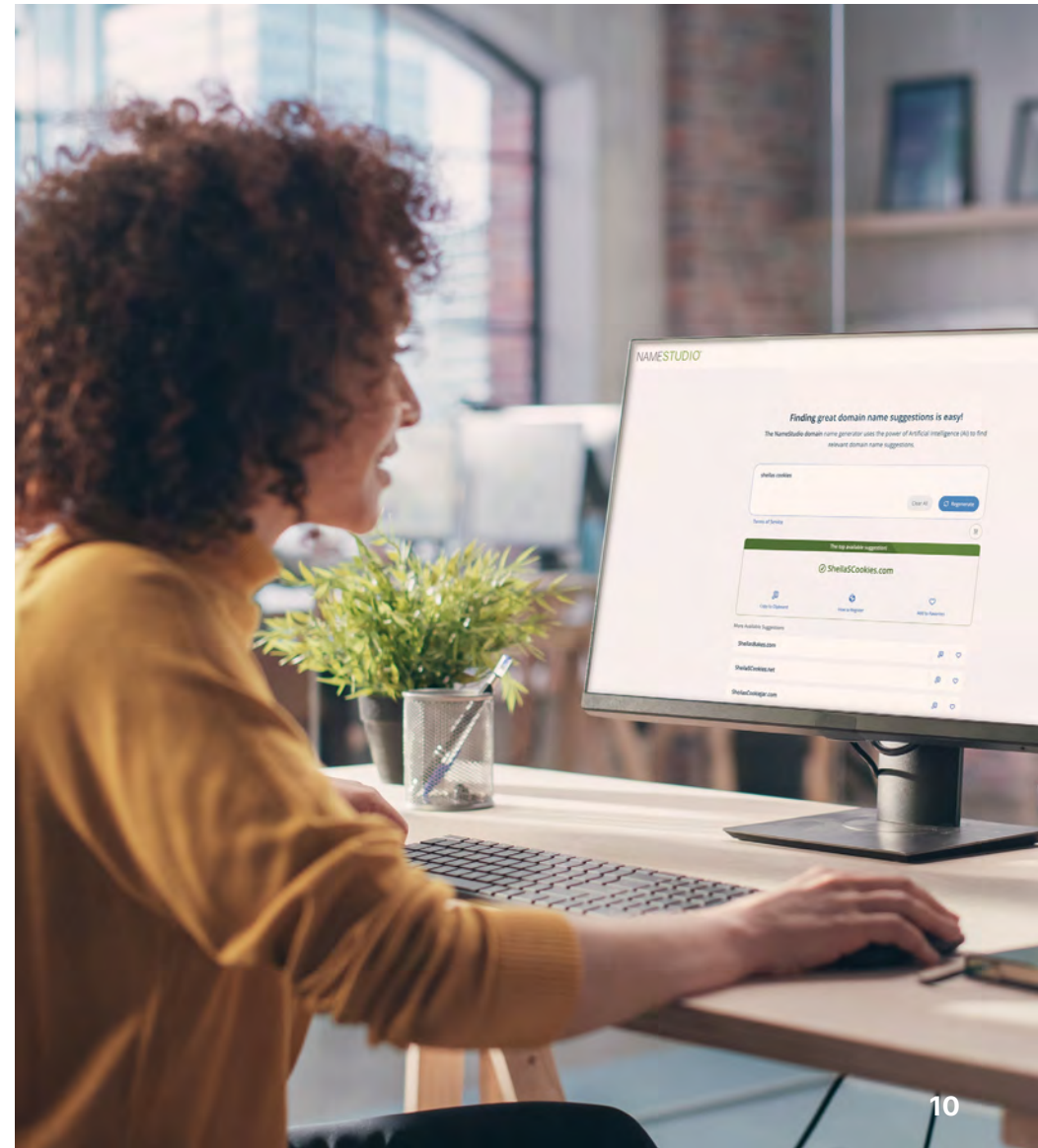


You've Found Some Great Names, Now How Do You Register the Domain Name?

You've picked a name and vetted it online. If you haven't already, now is the time to register your .com domain name. Registering your domain name is easy. Simply go to your registrar of choice (registrars are companies that enable you to search for and register domain names), type in your desired .com domain name and follow the steps on the screen, and in the matter of a few minutes you can start setting up your company website and email.

Registering your domain name is easy.

There are a lot of registrars, and they have different offers for different services, so make sure to do a bit of research before you make a choice. Registrars offer a variety of services, like web hosting and email, so finding the right combination of services to match your business needs is important. It's easy enough to do a quick online search to find registrars and pick one that offers what you need, or you can ask your friends and family, or other business owners for their recommendations.



Validate Your Name With Potential Customers

Once you have a domain name(s) registered for your company, this is a great time to interact with your future customers. Friends and family are a good start, but other people who know nothing about you are even better.

- Tell them the name of your company and ask what they think you make or do based on the name.
- Feel free to share the level of time and effort you plan on placing into this brand, and that their feedback will go a long way in helping you make sure you've got the right name for your company.
- Ask if they can think of any negative connotations that you may have missed.

While these steps are a great starting point, you can check out [Finding and Testing Your Startup Idea](#) for even more detail on customer interviewing.

This process may seem intimidating, but if done efficiently, it can be accomplished in the same amount of time it takes to stand in line to order coffee. As long as you're respectful of people's time and space, they may be inclined to help you out.



Bonus: Your Unique Value Proposition - Is It in Your Name?

When I talk about starting a new company, one of the most important things that needs to be determined is the unique value proposition, or the one thing that the new company will do better than everyone or anything else. It's even better if, when you figure that out, you can work it into your name.

Sure, there are companies with unusual names that meant nothing related to their product until they became wildly successful, and customers fell in love with them. Some of those names became so successful that they are used synonymously with the generic term of the product they provide. For example, do you use "cotton swabs" to clean your ears, or do you call them something else?



You can definitely go that route - a great product matters a million times more than the name, but there's something to be said for working your unique value proposition into your name so you won't need any more marketing than your name to tell your potential customers what your brand is all about and what you have to offer.

“ *Whatever name you choose, good luck with the process!* ”

Whatever name you choose, good luck with the process! And don't forget to check out the next book on **Building a Professional Web Presence**.



