

Name Changes

One of my consulting clients recently asked me what I thought about changing the name of his company. Over the last few years, he has grown into something in that gray area between quick printer and small commercial shop. His current name—the one he started with more than ten years ago—contains one of the many variations of the quick/speedy theme, and he wonders if the name might be discouraging customers with “larger” printing needs from doing business with him.

My answer to that particular part of the question is a very definite “maybe.” It wouldn’t surprise me at all to learn that some of his potential customers aren’t buying from him just because they don’t think a “quick printer” can handle their type of work or level of quality. That attitude isn’t as prevalent as it was even four or five years ago, but there’s some of it still out there.

Identification

The ultimate purpose of a company name is to identify the company to its current and potential customers. The best names, especially for smaller businesses like most printing companies, tell the buying public exactly what it is that a company does. With that in mind, it’s my opinion that every printing company on earth should have the word *printing* in its name.

(I can live with *litho*, *lithography*, or *lithographers*, or even *offset*, or *press*. I’m not really sure about *graphics*, though. I’d be concerned that a potential customer might look at a name like *City Graphics* and say something like, “No, we’ve already done the graphics on our own computer, what we need is a printing company.”)

Perception

If your company has one of those variations of the quick/speedy theme in its name, the chances are pretty good that you’ll be perceived as a quick printer. And if that’s not the image you want to project into the marketplace, a name change might be a very good idea.

That’s what I recommended to my client. We put together a list of possible new names that included references to his name, the city and county he operated in, the first letters of the three words in his company’s old name, and a few miscellaneous things—some that we just liked the sound of—all followed by the phrase *Printing & Graphics*. The name he chose was one of those miscellaneous ones that just sounded good.

Communicating A Name Change

A name change creates a necessity to communicate your new name to your old customers. You obviously don’t want to confuse *them*, that could cost you business! You also want to make the most of this *action* that you’ve taken, especially if your purpose was to make your company sound more attractive to a group of people who weren’t buying from you before.

A name change is a great opportunity for advertising and promotion. There are many, many things you can do to “get the word out” and gain full promotional value. Send out a general mailing, telling people *what* you did and *why*. Hold an open house. Distribute ad specialty items with your new name and logo on them. (That’s something else...if you’re going to change your name, give some thought to creating a striking, attention-getting logo to go with it!) Don’t forget the “free” advertising you can get by sending press releases to all the appropriate media.

A Good Idea For You?

Quite a number of companies—large and small—have changed their names over the last few years, sometimes for no other reason than to *create* a promotional opportunity. But is it a good idea for you?

I say a name change is an idea worth considering if you meet one or more of the following criteria: (1) Your name says something about your company that you really don’t want to project to the marketplace; (2) Your name no longer reflects the focus or capabilities of your company; (3) You bought a company from somebody else, and now you want *your* name over the door; or (4) You *need* a promotional opportunity...something to build some excitement around.

What’s in a name? In some cases, quite a bit about the way your company is perceived and regarded.