

GET THE HOOK

Creative Ways To Find Your Product Hook

If you want to sell consumers, **you need a hook**. You can have the most ingenious or helpful new product or service, but if you don't have an engaging way to talk about it, you won't be able to differentiate yourself from the other products in that category. You won't get noticed.

I know... I know. It doesn't seem right that you'd invest so much time and money creating your product to have its success hang on some pun or cutesy name.

But consumers are fickle and, yes, shallow. They're also over-booked, under-rested and on *information overload*. You've got to make it easy for people to notice you. Make it easy for them to like you. You've got to find those few words that tell them what it is or who you are, and what you or it does. AND, it's got to have some extra spin that says just a bit more about who you are or what it is. Give it a personality.

NOTE: It's not going to help you understand how to come up with a hook if I talk theory. I have to demonstrate. So, I'll use examples of how the process works and give you a list of result-names or descriptors. Remember, the name of the product doesn't have to be the hook... it can be the descriptor. As in...

Nike... just do it.

1. PHYSICAL, CONSUMER GOODS PRODUCTS

So let's start with it. What is it? Say it in two words: a ____ _____. Forget about all the features for right now. Simplify and give the broadest description you can. The "One Touch" Can Opener, The bagless vacuum cleaner. Or the Pet Rock.

A. As an example of the process, I'm going to use a garden device that was shopped around to various DR marketers several years ago. I think a couple of companies took it on and did a 2-minute spot. I don't know what happened to it. The problem was probably in the manufacturing end, because the problem certainly wasn't with the price (around \$15 as I remember) or with the name: **The Noodle Head** sprinkler.

You already have a visual in your head, don't you? And you probably are already coming up with the usefulness of such a sprinkler. If your imagination is sleepy today, I'll tell you what it looked like and what it was supposed to do.

It was a round, plastic, stationary sprinkler head/base with a bunch of bendable tubes coming out of it. You could manipulate the tubes whichever way you wanted, thus watering a sidewalk edging, skipping the picnic table and on over to the potted plant next to it, then the row of Petunias planted next to the house, skipping over the sleeping dog and so on. It had about 6 tubes for six different areas.

Now, I suppose he could have named it The Medusa Mound, Snake Pit, Water Works, Control Freak, Point and Spray. If I gave it a couple of hours I could come up with probably 30 more names... some good, some bad. But Noodle Head sprinkler is pretty darned good.

B. Example: **Spanx**... Body Shapers. What does the name say to you? When I first heard it, a myriad of images and symbols sprang to mind: panties, spanky pants, spank that bottom. I'm pretty sure they replaced the "k" with an "x" so it didn't completely fall into images of a spanking fetish.

Unlike Body Shimmers (Glimmers) by Gilda Marx, Spanx is youthful, fun, irreverent not elegant. It says "a bottom held so firm and high" a *cheeky* person would want to smack it. There was a scene from **Scrubs** with Heather Locklear that I'll never forget. She was walking away from one of the doctors and she knew he was staring at her shapely bottom. She reached behind her and smack/grabbed each cheek with both hands and jiggled her butt. I loved it. (Sorry, I have base humor at times.)

But do you see that an ideation session probably took place and out of the brainstorming of associated images, cliché names and expressions, came this delightful brand name. It has a personality. It's fun. Although it suggests a younger market, when it comes to rear ends, women of every age think young.

2. Intellectual Products or Industry Services

A. I think about all the great new names in computers and technology. Firewall, Google, Ask.com, FaceBook, YouTube, iTUNES, Pandora. In fact, let's use **Pandora** as an example.

Here's how Pandora works. You go online and type in your favorite singer or composer... your favorite band or style of music. It goes through voluminous music files and compiles a selection for you.

When I went on and typed in Diana Krall, they suggested a whole bunch of singers (male and female) for me to listen to. Some of them I'd heard about, others I never heard of. What it opened up for me was a **Pandora's Box of Music**. Pandora is a fabulous name. It doesn't say music, which would help, but Pandora is so distinctive that you're almost curious to know what it's about.

B. For Service Companies, I like to use the example of an office cleaning service. I don't know why, just bear with me.

When I think of office cleaning, I think of after-hours, nighttime workers, brightly lit-up offices in the dead of night, bonded employees, grey uniforms, lots of products, buckets, mops, yellow rubber gloves, white glove inspections, Mr. Clean, Spic 'n Span, Vampires, Cinderella.

So if this office cleaning service is doing their marketing homework, they're finding a niche or claim they can make that will differentiate them from the other services (besides just coming up with a fun, interesting name). Are they going to be cheaper, faster, more thorough, specialize in events or emergencies.

How's this? Specialize in emergencies or disaster clean up, and piggyback onto AAA's road service. **CC Cleaning is the AAA of emergency cleaning situations**. The CC stands for Curt's Commandos, but the important thing is to affiliate yourself with something that people already understand: emergency road service.

3. When You Are The Product

Are you a financial planner, a physical fitness trainer, insurance broker, a lawyer? If you are any of these, what do you specialize in? At least say that you specialize in some aspect of these enormous professions, and come up with a unique promise or way of doing business. Now hold that thought.

As far as coming up with a name, in just about every situation I advise people to build on their own name. That's what should go on the website, your business cards, the phone book. It's you you're promoting and you already have a name.

This is where a logo and descriptor line comes in. You can do all sorts of interesting things with type, font size, mixing words and pictures. You can give yourself a title or tag line, or make your specialty your descriptor.

A. I like to use the example of a fitness instructor. His name is Todd Reynolds. He could just fool around with the name. For the "o" in Todd, he could show a huge balance ball.

TOdd

He could throw a pair of tennis shoes – tied at the laces – over the T. Or he could have a little guy doing chin-ups on the T-bar.

Or he could come up with an interesting way of describing his services. Maybe he's new and can offer a discount if people sign up for a series. Or he could discount his fee if they pay in advance. Or he could have a special, introductory price. Then, he could do something like:

Todd Reynolds Stretches you... and your dollar.

B. This is a real life example. A small, graphic design company came to me with a name, and a logo: On Focus Design. They chose "on" rather than "in" because, probably, "In Focus" was already taken. The logo was pretty cool: clean, slight overlapping of the On and the F, and without the word "design."

In a way, they already had their hook: On Focus. But it needed something; it was too general. So I suggested they extend it to include their descriptors, or slogan:

OnFocus Design...

**On Target
On Time
On Budget**

This sunk the hook in deeper. So, even if you already have a name and you've invested time and money in establishing it, you can freshen it, or clarify your brand identity with the descriptor or theme line.

SUMMARY

I emphasize this thought throughout my reports when it comes to creating a brand identity:

**A successful brand identity is
one that creates an emotional connection.**

Give whatever you're doing and saying a personality. And your hook is the fastest way to say who you are and what you do. Give it pizzazz. Reflect your personality, or your corporate personality. And, although many of the examples I give rely on humor, your hook can be deadly serious. It doesn't have to rely on a pun or play on words. As in:

Habitat for Humanity: The experience lasts a lifetime.

I hope you got some direction from this report. I'm available if you've made some headway, but want to bounce it off someone.

All the best,

Pam Walters
831-625-1560

Get The Hook