

Developing Your Tagline

You've probably heard the phrase "unique selling proposition," also known simply as USP. It's been around since the 1950s, when advertising agencies started using the phrase to describe how their clients should present the benefits they offer to potential customers.

A good Tag Line or extended Tag Line will help you extend your company's message in a concise manner and establish brand association about your product or service.

A Tag Line is a concise phrase or motto that sums up what you do, why you are different, and how you provide a benefit -- in other words, it lets potential customers know why they should care about you.

Developing your Tag Line requires you take all the marketing and branding ideas, mix them in a blender, and compress them into a short, snappy statement of no more than a set of words.

Your Tag Line should be crafted to include not only a description of what you do, but also a benefit to your customers. M&M's classic "Melts in your mouth, not in your hands" (only eight words) is a great example. It sets the candy apart from other candies while pointing out a key benefit to parents looking for a way to avoid chocolate covered kids.

You can use your Tag Line in two ways - internal and external.

Internal - A good Tag Line keeps your company focused on its marketing message. Every time you send e-mail, write a press release, post to a discussion group, or update your Web site, refer to your Tag Line. Doing so ensures that your brand image is crystal clear.

For example, you wouldn't want your company tag line to convey humor if you do not wish to have humor in other company communications, such as advertisements, website, product packaging and others. By constantly keeping your Tag Line in mind, you make sure the messages you send out are focused on your core corporate identity.

External - You can also use your Tag Line as a slogan that appears on all of your communications. This serves to remind customers and potential customers of your core identity every time they are exposed to your company. Equally important, the use of a Tag Line can stimulate the positive associations you wish to have made with your company.

Remember, your goal is to make mental connections that merge your name with what you stand for. Having your Tag Line appear every time your name appears is one of the best ways to help people make that brand-identity connection.

By way of example, consider the following Tag Lines and consider what you learn about each company just by hearing a few words about them.

"Hard-hitting Design, Done Right the First Time." - Helios Design and Communications (Canada)

"A Mail Order Service for People Who Know Jazz." - H&B catalog of Jazz CDs

"Original Thinking" – Tudog Consulting

"Great Sounds. Cool People. Killer Studio." - Smart Studios (Chicago)

To make your branding endeavors easier, keep your Tag Line message simple. Most people feel they need to fully explain themselves; that potential customers won't understand them and what they offer unless it's laid out in great detail.

The reality is that people don't have time to absorb your whole story at first glance. Give them a simple message that quickly cuts through the clutter and leaves no doubt. This gives them something that can stay with them – meaning you stay with them.