



Xanthus Communications

Media Jockey

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What's in a Name?

Jellybeans are hell of a lot more memorable than Johns.

Dear Friends and Colleagues: Greetings! I remember once hearing an anecdote about Barbra Streisand, that she wanted to work with the guy who had a candy-sounding name. Turns out she was talking about Jellybean Benitez. His association with Streisand catapulted him from the realm of up-and-coming to being a star in his own right. Soon Jellybean Benitez joined the ranks of such notable producers as Phil Spector, Alan Parsons, Quincy Jones, and George Mart.



Your Name

Celebrities are acutely aware of the brand equity in their own names. They have the distinct advantage of being able to throw a lot of money and resources to create brand extensions--celebrity fragrance, celebrity jeans, celebrity golf tours and celebrity salad dressing. There is no limit to how far celebrity names can be expanded in the marketplace because the budgets can be spectacular.

Now Jellybean's real name is John. Jellybean or John, no matter what name he went by, the man had significant talent as a producer. The question is: Would Streisand have found him memorable if he had not branded himself as Jellybean?



John "Jellybean" Benitez

The defining moment in this man's career came when Streisand asked for a producer whose name sounded like candy, not a John. This doesn't mean that someone named John Benitez would not have gotten the opportunity to work with Streisand. It does mean that jellybeans are a hell of a lot more memorable than Johns.

Your name is deeply connected to your brand destiny. From the cradle to the grave, your name will stay with you. No matter what company you work with, or even if you change your job, your occupation, or start a new business, you will take your name and reputation with you. Your

The Right Name

Individuals may need to build brand equity in their own names more than a celebrity does. There is fierce competition vying for market share, to get revenue, to get a job, to get funded, to get a contract or to get a gig. If you are building your career or building a new business, your name needs to be memorable. So what do you do if you are named John? Do you change your name? No, but it does mean that you must embellish and expand your given (legal) name so it is a complete fit with your profession. To wit. There are no professional ballet dancers named Bubbles or Buck, lawyers named Tiny Tim or nurses named Sade.

Use your unusual middle name



Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Spotlight On:

name is more than just a name; your name is your complete dossier, your whole persona—a professional brand that will endure for all time. You need to consider building brand equity in your own name by building a professional brand that is, above all else, memorable.

Best Regards,

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SPOTLIGHT ON INITIALS

Your name is a critical component of your brand and it must clearly differentiate who you are and what you do from everyone else, and especially from your competitors. If your name is dreadfully dull and ordinary, and there are a million in any city phone directory and pages upon pages on Google, then my advice to you is to use your most interesting initial, e.g., **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, **John F. Kennedy**, and **Thomas A. Edison**.



You don't have to rely only on a middle initial. It could be your first initial, e.g., **J. Walter Thompson**, **J. Paul Getty**, **F. Scott Fitzgerald**.

It could even be two middle initials: the elder **George H.W. Bush** clearly wanted to be differentiated from his son the ***W***.

Changing Your Name



There is a time when changing your birth name may be the right thing to do. There can be a compelling personal or professional reason to reinvent you. I once worked with a woman who had been abandoned by her birth mother and did not want to carry her name, so she created her own name and it helped her to begin building a new brand.

Celebrities or creative professionals may want to change their name to transform to a new brand image from a girl-in-pigtails Norma Jean Baker to a sultry blonde starlet named Marilyn Monroe.

The Difficult Name

Barbra without an A



Having a memorable name that conveys your solid brand identity works to attract the right people, the right clients, the right business partners and the right media. Whatever your name is, you need to understand that it has value. And it is up to you to maximize its value by making it work for you and your core expertise. As a final note, remember Barbra Streisand? Like a true diva, she always reminded everyone that her name was spelled Barbra --without the third A.

Do not change your name because it is difficult to pronounce.

I had a client who was a superb oral surgeon who had a very long and complicated eastern European name. He wanted to change his name to Dr. J and I advised him against it. This medical doctor had three advanced degrees and was known for his exceptional surgical skill and the ability to undertake the most difficult and complex cases. He was clearly not Dr. J. the basketball player.

If your name is three syllables or longer, people will want to shorten it for two reasons: either they are lazy or they want to make you more diminutive and love you like a pet. Consider complex names that are highly memorable, e.g., **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, **Gwyneth Paltrow** and **Isaac Mizrahi**. Make people learn how to say your name. Give them a lesson in phonetics. They will remember you.

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For questions or comments, please reply to patricia@xanthuscom.com

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