

# SO YOU DECIDED TO NAME IT

.....  
THE TRUTH IN NAMING SERIES  
*VOLUME 1*  
.....

BY CAITLIN BARRETT

**DOUBLEB!T?**

**WHEN YOU  
START NAMING,  
THE OPTIONS  
CAN SEEM  
LIMITLESS...**

**Watermellies**

**Hold 'Ems**

**MasVazo**

**ProStack**

**Mugshotz**

**Odd Cupples**

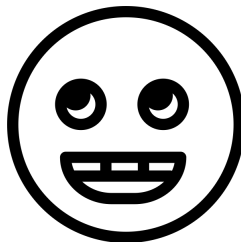
**Drinkle, Drinkle**

**Standard Cups**

**The Sip & Slip**

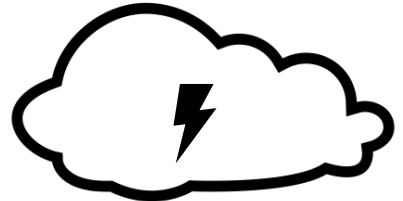
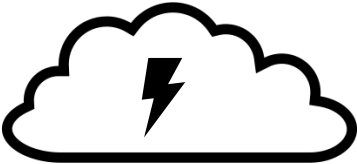
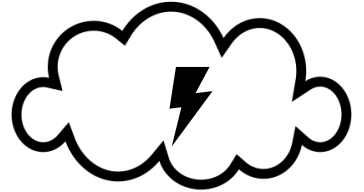
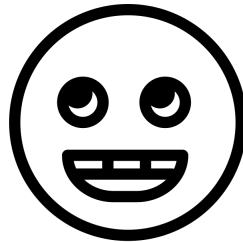
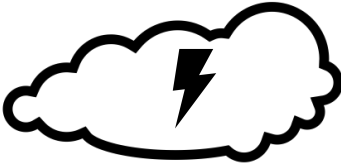
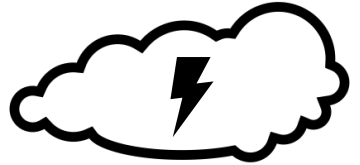
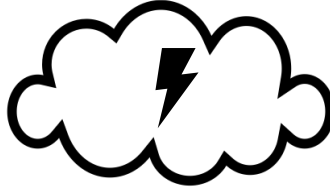
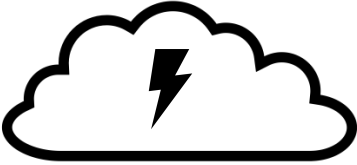
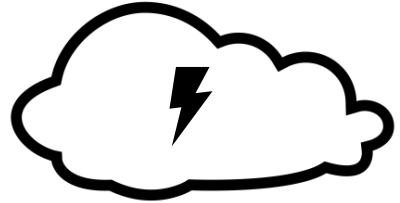
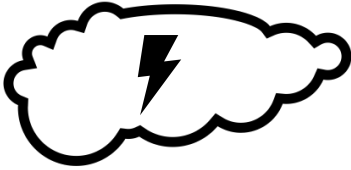
**CupSupper**

**Cylindrical  
Synergistics**



**Runneth Over**

**THEY'RE NOT.**



**THINGS WANT TO  
BE NAMED IN A  
CERTAIN WAY.**

**To find the right name, let's get to know *your* thing a little better.**



**QUESTION 1:**

**DO YOU KNOW  
WHAT YOU'RE  
NAMING?**



I know, I know. You're laughing. *Of course* you know what you're naming. But can you explain it simply?

- Is it a thing—a real, easily understood thing—like a cup?
- Is it just one cup for now, but you're planning an all-vessel empire that you'd like to market under the same name?
- Is it a thing that's wrapped up in some kind of service, like a cup-of-the-month club?
- Is it a technology that allows cup-of-the-month businesses to manage their subscriptions and customer insights?
- Is it actually just the handle of the cup?
- Or maybe the process by which the handle is attached?

Knowing what you're naming is pretty important—it will make the rest of this process (sort of) painless.



**QUESTION 2:**

**WHO IS THIS  
THING FOR?**

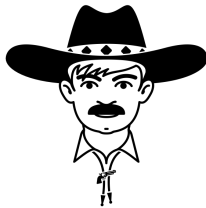
It's not "for everyone," right? Because nothing, other than air and *maybe* sunlight, is actually for everyone (hey, it's a cruel world). So let's get specific.

Make names with an audience in mind. You don't want to make names out of words that they won't understand, out of ideas that they might find disturbing, or out of letter combinations they can't pronounce.

So. Who is this thing for? Get specific.



Undercaffeinated mall  
Santas



20-something  
Cormac McCarthy fans



Suburban dads who are  
obviously still really,  
really cool



Justices of the Supreme  
Court and their families



Dweebs who aspire to be  
geeks

**QUESTION 3:**

**WHY IS THIS  
THING GOOD?**

Why is the thing you're naming going to be seen as a good thing to the people you want to sell it to?

A name can signal anything. The "rule" here is to be simple. Your name is only going to be able to say one thing well, so don't try to come up with a reason that's secretly ten reasons.



**Good reasons your thing is good:**

- Designs inspired by popular dog breeds
- Doubles as a leash handle
- Proceeds go to support rescue dogs awaiting their forever homes



**Bad reasons your thing is good:**

- Ergonomic retractable leash handle attaches to an oversized mug featuring designs inspired by dogs desperately awaiting rescue
- Designed by a dog walker, a Wharton MBA, and the inventor of the Silicon Valley Garage Door to create limitless caffeine consumption experiences

# **QUESTION 4:**

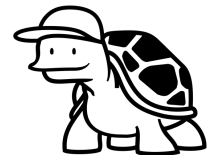
**DO YOU KNOW  
WHAT YOU'RE  
GETTING  
YOURSELF INTO?**

At the risk of sounding like a parent whose kid wants a baby turtle, names are a LOT of responsibility. Consider:

- Coming up with a name takes a lot of time.
- Finding a name that's not riddled with trademark conflicts and linguistic issues takes even more time.
- If you want to protect your name, registering it can take months (and it's expensive, since you should probably use a lawyer—otherwise, plan to watch a LOT of YouTube videos produced by the United States Patent Trademark Office).
- And then you need to think about whether your name needs some explanation to launch it: Do you need a logo? A story about your name?
- Once your name is registered, you're done spending money on it—OH, JUST KIDDING. You'll want to put some effort into making sure no one else is using it in a confusingly similar way.

This is your final chance: Are you sure you want to name it?

You don't want to  
just call it...cup?



**NOW, WE CAN  
FIGURE OUT  
HOW TO NAME IT**



In reality, you'll need to consider a few more things before you pick the right:

- Tone
- Construct
- Style
- Approach
- Language
- Length
- Point of view

The good news? There are three easy places to start: your budget, your markets, and your certainty (or lack thereof) that your thing is truly different and exciting.



**\$? OR \$\$\$?**

Do you have a lot of money to spend? We might be talking in the millions here, so double check your budget. Fancy, fanciful names like Xfinity don't get launched on the same budgets as names like The Container Store.

So if your budget is limited, choose a name that will tell audiences something about why your thing is good.



\$?

Describe something about your thing. It doesn't have to be boring (but it can be!).



\$\$\$?

Sure, get weird. As long as the name doesn't have any trademark or linguistic issues, you can spend your way into making a name feel natural: through advertising, messaging, and experiences.

**LOCAL? OR  
GLOBAL?**

Launching locally? You can tap into the tone and mindset of your audience (whom you know *tons* about!). But, if your thing needs to be heard 'round the world, you'll want to favor more globally friendly sound structures.

This is a good time to revisit the money question, because there's no universal language: Your name is gonna look funny in most of the world. So you'll have some explaining to do.



#### Local

You can get away with massive consonant combinations (like “-tchb-” in “Switchblade”) and word play if you can be sure your audience will know the words and get the joke.



#### Global

A pattern of consonants and vowels keeps things friendlier for global speakers, and a more straightforward tagline explains what might otherwise be an abstract name.

**BASIC? OR  
BREAKTHROUGH?**

A sexy name on a boring thing is a waste. And a boring name on a sexy product can miss its audience.

This thing you're naming: Is it going to leave people breathless? Or, is it just as normal as breathing?

Name accordingly—and save wild names for when you can answer, “They’ll do a spit take when they get a load of this.”



**Basic**

There is so much beauty in saying what something is. It builds trust, it sets the right expectations, and it's the great start of a new relationship.



**Breakthrough**

I'm not sure what this cup does, but it better do something freaking unbelievable.

**NOW THAT  
WE'VE ELIMINATED  
MOST OF YOUR  
CREATIVE  
OPTIONS...**



**YOU'RE READY  
TO NAME IT.**

# **About the author**

# Caitlin Barrett likes to do creative things. Strategically.



Caitlin Barrett is a writer, namer, and brand strategist based in Brooklyn. As a partner in Doublebit Narrative, she spends all day bossing words around.

In her spare time, she lifts heavy things, restores antique axes, and tells jokes to herself on Twitter @badnewsbarrett.

**For more in Truth in Naming,  
go to [doublebitnarrative.com](http://doublebitnarrative.com)**

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