

Is Your Company Name Killing Your Online Business?

By John Buchanan

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Ahhh... your company name.

Your identity. What separates you from everyone else.

I would be willing to bet that you spent a good deal of time coming up with the perfect name for your company. Am I right?

Something catchy, easy to remember, and unique. How am I doing so far?

What if I were to tell you that your company name is possibly the single biggest hindrance to your business's success online.

Unfortunately, for many companies it is.

Choosing a name for your business online is much different than choosing a name for a brick and mortar business.

You see, in the real world, a business with a catchy, easy to remember name will get traffic simply from people driving by on the street or walking by in a shopping center even if they have never heard of you before.

Unfortunately, this is not how things work online. Online, there is no drive-by traffic, no people walking in to your business because they were next door shopping.

Online, you must be found among a pool of tens of thousands of other businesses.

Online, people don't casually browse with friends to pass the time.

Online, people search... and unless your name is Microsoft, Wal-Mart, or another extremely well known and well branded name, people are not going to search for your company name.

Studies show that approximately 80% of Internet users find what they are looking for by way of search engines (i.e., Yahoo, AltaVista, Excite, etc.), and I guarantee you, they are not going to be searching for your wonderful catchy name, they will be searching for the topic they want.

Let me give you an example. Let's say you own a gourmet coffee business called "The

Brewmaster" that you decide to take online. Of course you love your name and create your online identity around your offline name. You reserve the domain name "www.brewmaster.com," keep your company name, and title your site "The Brewmaster."

You've submitted your site to Yahoo as well as all the other directories and search engines. Ahhh... life is good. Orders should start rolling in any minute now...

Guess what? Unless you have a HUGE marketing budget for banner ads, etc., you've just doomed your business.

Let's look at why.

First, let's look at the...

Site Title

Whether you're dealing with a directory or a search engine, the site title is the single most important aspect of your listing. For search engines, the text found within the title tags of the page is given more weight than any other single factor on that page (i.e., keyword density, keyword frequency, heading tags, etc.). In a directory, your entire listing is comprised of two things, your title, and your description.

In both cases, if the keywords related to your business are not found in your title, your chances of coming up in a search are virtually non-existent. If your site is about "gourmet coffee" then those words, or at the very least, "coffee," should be somewhere within your title.

The Company Name

Just as your site title should have your most important keywords within them, so should your company name.

Why, you ask?! The answer... directories.

In directories, when a visitor uses the search function (which is what the vast majority use) you will only be found if the search term the visitor uses is found either in your site title or your description. Unfortunately, virtually all directories require your site title to be your actual company name. Remember that directories are powered by humans, not software. A human reviews the site, and assigns the title and description that he/she decides is correct. Yes, they all let you suggest a site title, but ultimately, regardless of what you submit, your title almost always ends up as your company name.

Looking again at the above example, this would mean that your title in almost all of the directories would be "The Brewmaster." This means the only place you would have left to put your keywords would be the description, and this again is up to the editor. This means that any site that has the search term "coffee" or "gourmet coffee" in both the title and description would come up far ahead of your site in the search results, costing you traffic and sales that could have been yours.

The URL

Here is another very much overlooked tool. Whenever possible, your URL should contain your most important keywords. Many engines and directories will give your site a boost if your keywords are found within your URL. Also, when you submit your site to the directories, if your URL, your company name, and your site title all match, that will virtually guarantee that you will get the title you

requested.

Let's tie the three previous areas together with an example of what you could have named your site instead of "The Brewmaster."

Here's one possible alternative: "Gourmet Coffee Brewmaster."

The above alternative would give you a company name that includes your most important keywords and the perfect title for your page.

You could then reserve the domain -- <http://www.gourmet-coffee-brewmaster.com> ...

giving you a perfect trifecta. The same company name, page title, and URL -- practically insuring that you get the directory listing you want.

Of course, this is only one possibility, but I think this should illustrate the point.

To Summarize

-Unless you have a huge advertising budget or are an extremely well branded business, DO NOT name your online business something like the above example.

-Use a business name that contains your most important keywords.

-Use this business name as your site title.

-Use a URL that contains your most important keywords and whenever possible, is the same as, or as close as possible to, your keyword-laden business name.

Follow these rules and you should have no trouble developing a very steady flow of large amounts of traffic from the directories, and you will be well on your way in the search engine arena as well.

John Buchanan is the author of the book "The Insider's Guide to Dominating The Search Engines," and publisher of a FREE monthly newsletter "The Search Engine Bulletin." Visit us at <http://www.se-secrets.com> for more information or to sign up for the newsletter.

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