

EXPLORING BRAND

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

HELLO
my festival name is?

TOP SECRET TIPS TO NAMING YOUR NEW EVENT, FESTIVAL OR PROGRAM

In the last *Turnstiles* article we explored *BRAND* and the impact it has on your event or festival. We included a few action steps for you to wrap your arms in the effort of building your brand.

In retrospect, we may have frightened a few folks away as they realize that their job responsibilities are to simply execute the events, and only oversee such items as marketing, promotion and advertising. *BRAND* is simply a concept they don't have time or the training to explore.

It's exactly those individuals we hope to provide easy steps and simple information to ask questions of fellow staff members, consultants or volunteers to ensure all are working towards the same goal.

In this edition, we'd like to take you through the first steps of building a brand, which typically involves the process of naming an event or festival, or at the very least, a new programming initiative. Recently, our team has been a part of planning to bring a new community festival to life, and what follows are a few tips and hints we have used during the naming process.

In order to keep the content of this article relatively manageable, we will not venture into the politics behind the decision-making process within organizations or bureaucracy. This pathway can be a prolonged series of meetings and conversations that make even the strongest of us question our commitment. What we hope to empower readers with is a few tools to use when creating a new undertaking. Whether it's meant to inspire attendance of dozens or thousands, the same basic principles should apply.

Before You Begin

When staring at a blank sheet of paper, there are always some basic parameters to at least start the process. Ask yourself the following few questions and then take the next step.

1. *Who is the audience?*
2. *What are the facts of the event (date, time, place)?*
3. *What is the theme of the event (holiday, seasonal, art, genre)?*
4. *Who has to approve the final decision?*
5. *Who are the stakeholders?*

With these five basic questions answered, you can creatively begin brainstorming and exploring pathways for naming options and ideas. Here are a few directions you may want to use to get the conversation started.

Simple and Conservative – The majority of naming opportunities are executed with a simple principle: "Do no harm." A basic concept of marketing is to keep it simple. With a simple, basic approach City – Noun – Festival, you have all you need to get started. Add an adjective and your own way. You won't ruffle any feathers, but you certainly won't light any fires.

Don't Be Too Cute – There's a fine line between quirky and confusing; fun and forgettable. While I am a huge advocate for being witty, thoughtful and not boring, you can find yourself at some point being too cute. These options tend to weed themselves out during the initial ideation sessions, so don't become too invested, especially if it's your own idea.

There are no rules to brainstorming, but one rule of managing the art of brain-

storming is to never have all the answers. The best part of thinking outside the box is pushing the boundaries of what is possible and being able to set an example for the rest of your team.

Create a Word or Phrase – This exercise is not for the faint of heart, rather it is the example of having maximum creativity and a significant amount of latitude and political clout.

Usually a mash-up of two words of phrases that people can identify with and when creatively combined, can create impact on your audience. Where would we be without the many "Paloozas" born in the '90s and '00s?

If you want exciting and memorable, this is definitely the path to travel. However, as in building any brand, you need to have a real winner to make this strategy work.

How do you pick a winner? A few quick indicators will let you know:

- *Does everyone smile when they say it?*
- *Does it translate well into a graphic icon or symbol?*
- *Can you not wait to get out there and promote it?*

There's something intangible about creating a name or brand that you know will work. As they say, "you'll know when you see it."

Keep Your Target Audience in Mind

– The intended audience of your event is usually one of the best places to start. Are you creating a family event or one for millennials? Is it a music festival or 5K? What does your audience do when they're not at your event? Those are the types of questions you will need to answer but may just provide you with some insight to spark a new line of thinking.

Another tip is that it's always good to take leads from other cities and organizations to gain inspiration for just the right solution to your event-naming project.

Work With your Sponsors – Sponsors are the lifeblood of most events and as event promoters, we want to show the most amount of love we can to our trusted partners.

While some sponsors have rules or brand strategies that do not allow for naming rights, many others jump at the opportunity to gain maximum impact from their investment. Of course, the amount of exposure should be commensurate with the total on the check, but if you're creative and have a willing dance partner, you can tap into the resources of their brand and marketing team to make your event even larger.

Be forewarned, one of the reasons we do not see this type of arrangement more often, is that having a naming-rights partner is a double-edged sword. While the money is usually great, it does come with strings attached. Furthermore, if there is a

change in strategy, you may be right back to the drawing board if the sponsorship disappears.

Don't Forget All Uses – From hashtags to website addresses, you need to keep in mind how the festival or event will be marketed. By throwing these ideas into the mix, you may be able to access a different gateway to new ideas.

Many a great idea on paper never worked when it was sent to the graphic designers to develop a logo or collateral materials.

Say it. Write it. Draw it. Whatever the name you come up with needs to communicate the vision for the event, but also needs to be functional in all communication formats.

What is Your Organization or City Known For? Capitalizing on physical traits or brand identifiers of your city or organization is where a great solution for naming an event or festival can be generated. Exploring the history, tradition and special idiosyncrasies throughout your city, community or region gives an untapped reservoir from which to draw creative inspiration.

Promoting an overlooked asset in your community could be just the impetus you need to create excitement but also bring the residents and guests together for a truly remarkable event.

SUMMARY

The process of building a brand has many, many layers that most festival organizers do not have the time and in some cases, the resources to explore. Brand building obviously begins with the initial step of naming your event and there may not be a more important step toward a wildly successful event.

We encourage you to take the extra steps at the very earliest stages to push the boundaries of the expected. Your community has resources deeper and wider than you can ever imagine to inspire and excite your team and beyond. Tap into that energy and let the magic happen.

One final tip: Keep it simple, but make it memorable.

Sean King has been consulting with small businesses and non-profits organizations for over 20 years. Currently, Sean is the Director of Marketing & Communications for Youth Education in the Arts (YEA!), a non-profit organization based in Allentown, PA which teaches life lessons through music. He also blogs regularly at www.artsmarketingblog.org. You can follow Sean on Twitter @skingaspire or contact him at: sking@yea.org