

Tagline, You're It

By Wendy J. Cook

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Have you ever noticed that it can be easier to write a 6,000-word treatise than to come up with six perfect words, like, say, "You're in good hands with Allstate®"? Sometimes less is more — more frustrating, that is. How do you say a lot with a little in corporate taglines?



Remember the constants

Begin with these communication constants:

Know your audience — Define your niches as precisely as possible and be fluent in their language. Are you speaking to corporate executives (formal elegance), energetic entrepreneurs (hip and snappy) or the recently widowed (warm and direct)?

Know yourself — Do you offer comprehensive wealth management (knowledgeable oversight), specialized services (targeted expertise) or the investment basics (friendly ease)?

Maintain a consistent message — If you're trying to reach multiple audiences, you may need distinct marketing campaigns for each. But within each audience, try to maintain a unified voice and message.

For a great example, visit these two websites: [Wine by Joe](#) and [Jovino](#). Each site presents a very different message, with taglines such as "Really Good Wine" at Wine By Joe, versus "Fine Oregon Wines" at Jovino. Yet, both Joe and Jovino are the brainchild of one parent, Joe Dobbles of Dobbles Family Estate. (For the record, Wine By Joe really is really good!)

Storm up your brain

Jot down words and play with them, preferably in a group setting. Write down any crazy idea that comes to mind, no matter how much it may make you want to hold your nose. Sometimes the real stinkers serve as fertilizer for beautiful offshoots. Use these categories:



Words for your niche — If your firm serves optometrists and ophthalmologists, you might jot down words like vision, eye, foresight, focus, etc.

Words for your location — If your practice is in a desirable neighborhood, consider incorporating that name. If you're on the shores of a lake ... well, you get the idea.

Words for your services — Collect words that describe what you're offering, such as wealth, financial, investing, retirement planning, executive compensation, etc.

Words for your values — Caring, reliable, exclusive, friendly, educated, expert, etc.

Keep writing until you're drained of possibilities. Then write a few more. With all the building blocks in front of you, try stringing them together in various combinations. A handful of winning combinations will typically emerge. Narrow your ideas down to several finalists, not just one.

Reality checks

Even when you hit the "Eureka!" of taglines, practical considerations may knock it out of the contest.

Trademarks and Regulations — Your heart's desire may already be trademarked. Check the free U.S. Patent and Trademark Office [TESS database](#) for federally registered trademarks. If the phrase *is* a federally registered live trademark, especially if it's being used in similar markets, it's likely unavailable. If it's *not* there, it may still be unavailable for other reasons. TESS may not be up-to-the-minute current, and it omits information on state, foreign or common law trademarks. If you're planning to create a robust, long-term tagline, seek legal advice on intellectual property rights and regulatory compliance to minimize future disappointments.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) — As you consider taglines, firm names and titles, Google your picks to see how much competition you're going to have. How much is "too much" depends on your business goals. Is it critical, desirable or hardly important that your global on-line presence is at least differentiated if not unique? To further enhance your on-line presence, your sweet spot is the phrase that is easy for your particular audience to remember and still relatively distinct on the Internet.

Go the distance

Once you've established your tagline, your journey isn't over. It's now time to set things in motion. Share the tagline with your staff. Add it to your website, your letterhead, your brochures, conference giveaways (pens, notepads, etc.), e-mail signature blocks, lobby signage. If you're into tattoos ... Well, you may want to stop short of that, at least anywhere visible, but you get the idea.



Whether you update your materials immediately or gradually is a budgetary decision, but the more you incorporate your tagline into every fiber of your business, the stronger it will represent you. Go on. Just do it.

Wendy J. Cook is owner of Wendy J. Cook Communications, LLC, offering writing, editing, presentation and related services expressly for the fee-only, passive/DFA, Registered Investment Advisor community. Wendy helps such firms communicate their distinct messaging to clients, prospects, media and the general public using traditional and leading edge communication resources ranging from print to social media/Web and e-newsletter forums. Visit www.wendyjcook.com or www.linkedin.com/in/wendyjcook.

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