

# How to: Develop a tagline

Does your business have a tagline? If yes, does it accurately convey what you do? If not, why not?

Every business should have a tagline, no doubt. **A tagline is an additional bit of information that clarifies what you do to your potential customers.** Now, a tagline is not a motto. Webster's defines a motto as "a short expression of a guiding principle." A motto could be something generic, like "we always do our best," which can be seen as something your employees rally around but that does not communicate anything about what your business does.

**What is a slogan?** Webster's gives three definitions: 1) a war cry; 2) phrase used to express a characteristic position or goal; 3) attention-getting phrase used in promotion. Clearly definition number 1 is not what we are after. And the difference between two and three is really the difference between a slogan and a tagline. A slogan should be unchanging, something that is more universal (your goals or your purpose) and your tagline can change for a particular ad campaign. And yes, a slogan and a tagline can be one and the same.

For instance, if you are a hospital or clinic, your slogan might be your commitment to a healthy future for all. If you are running an ad campaign, you might focus on a certain aspect of your practice like cardiology and your tagline might focus on helping patients achieve heart health. All the while your motto could be something about maintaining the highest standard in hygienic practices.

So, how do you develop a tagline? First make sure you are not developing a motto. Be more specific about what you are trying to communicate about your product or service.

Steps:

1) **Understand your product or service and its USP.** This seems fairly obvious but you would be surprised at how very few people can communicate succinctly what they do. You might start with a short description of your product and service. Think about attributes, descriptors and differentiators

2) **Brainstorm.** Write out 10-20 short lines (5-10 words) about your product or service. Incorporate some descriptors and attributes from above.

3) **Evaluate.** Which is catchy? Which is comprehensive? Which is too generic? Eliminate anything that is cliché, generic, or just doesn't say enough.

4) **Narrow down your list** to 3-5 choices and show them to your principal stakeholders.

5) Have a **vote**. Generally, one tagline will emerge as the best one.

One more thing. People often confuse logo and slogan. A logo is a GRAPHIC representation of your slogan/motto. A logo is never a written piece. And logos are best left to design professionals. I would strongly counsel you to not try doing this at home!



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## What we can learn from spam

Nothing in the online universe is more annoying than spam. This past week, my email host was not working properly and a lot of spam got through. As I was busy deleting unwanted email, I got to thinking about what spammers do that works and what they do that doesn't.

What works:

- 1) Spammers know exactly what they are selling (online drugs, weight loss promises and other items).
- 2) Identifying the keywords associated with their product and focus on those words.
- 3) Trying again and again.
- 4) Using official-looking return addresses to look legitimate
- 5) Personalizing emails (which is scary but effective)

What does not work

- 1) Typos and spelling/grammar mistakes in the subject line
- 2) Using foul language
- 3) Not targeting

Most spam does a bit of both these lists, which is why, ultimately, many of us don't open this junk. You may wonder why they keep trying. Simple: it costs next to nothing to send these emails out. And there are always people looking for a fix, so someone must click on these emails.

Do you open spam? Do you report spam? Have you ever seen a great spam subject line? If you have, let me know in the comments.



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# Resisting change

## **Does change frighten you?**

If so, you are not alone. Many people are so frightened of change that they cling to outmoded things. For some people, it is that shoulder-padded 1980s look that keeps them grounded. In business, especially the marketing business, resistance to change may not look as jarring as a 1980s ensemble, but it still causes plenty of pain.

## **The only constant is change**

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, change is constant. Technology is especially fond of change and this kind of change is not only hard to deal with but expensive. Upgrade to Vista anyone? A few years ago, we would have never dreamed that we would be communicating with each other in warp speed via text messages or Twitter, but yet here we are.

I have noticed that many people in the marketing industry resist change. Some PR practitioners may still insist on sending out press releases via fax or regular mail. Some may keep their website static, never updating. Many scoff at Twitter or blogs or Facebook, thinking that they are flavor of the moment and quickly gone.

Whether Twitter will be here a year from now is debatable, but what is not debatable is that it changes the way people communicate and connect. If anything has derived from the new social media world, is how close connections can be to anyone anywhere. One can be in contact with an Australian designer or a French writer. And the other reality is that there is more information out there than ever before. It IS hard to keep up. But ignoring it because you don't like it will not make it go away. I have heard many people say they "don't have time for blogs or for Twitter." Do you also not have time for the news

and for email? My point is that the way people are communicating and learning is changing, and by resisting that change, especially if you are a marketing person, you are staying behind the times.

This reminds me of a friend who refuses to be on Facebook. She and I were catching up and she relayed information about a mutual friend, whom I haven't spoken to in a while. I told her I already knew. She wondered how I knew. I told her I saw it on Facebook. The point is people communicate with each other via social media, and it is necessary for marketing people to understand where people find out things.

Let me know what things you are resisting, and why. I really want to know!

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## **Marketing is personal**

### **How do you respond when someone asks you for a favor?**

Ideally, when someone asks you for a favor (some information, a quote, some advice) you respond nicely. Sometimes you may not be able or willing to grant the favor, and in this case, you still should be nice. Why? because people do business with people they like. And being not nice makes people not like you.

### **Sample negative conversation**

Me: Hi, I am looking for a web designer for my client, and I am wondering if I could get a quote from you.

Graphic designer (sounding grouchy): (Big sigh) well, I don't know. What kind of website?

Me: Mostly static, about 10 pages or so, and with some room to make changes, like on the staffing page.

GD (mumbling and sounding pissed): Hmm, well, we work with CMS, and it's hard to just give you a quote, but you know websites start around \$20,000.

Me: Well, it sounds like we aren't a good fit for each other. Thanks.

GD (sounds relieved to not have to deal with me): OK.

This graphic designer, whom I had found listed through the AIGA (contact me if you want her name), was downright nasty. I have made many of these calls, and for the most part, the designers I have spoken to have been helpful. They ask questions, and they say they will get back to me with an estimate. Even if the estimate is not in my ballpark, I now have a graphic designer contact. You never know what can come up.

### **What would have made this conversation go better.**

If she had said something like: "Thanks for your call. I am happy to do an estimate for you, but you should know our website designs start at \$20,000. Is that within your budget?"

Marketing is personal because it is people who make decisions, and personal biases affect decisions. Like I said before, we'd rather do business with people we like (or at least respect). Sometimes it is not your credentials, or your abilities, or your writing skill or your design skill, it is your likeability. Being polite and being nice can go a long way to getting you business, and conversely, being rude and being nasty can almost assure you of losing business.



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# On doing things piecemeal

**Are you a small business with a tight marketing budget?**

If you are, you probably have fallen prey to the idea that you should do (marketing) things as you can afford them. You know, an ad here, a brochure there. Budget-wise, this may make sense. After all, you can't afford a large campaign, or an ad agency. Branding-wise, not so much. It's tough to build up an image on unconnected pieces of the puzzle. The missing link is the connection, or the reason, behind each piece.

**Think strategically**

In business, there is strategy and there are tactics. Often companies fall into tactics without thinking about the strategy. Many people can't tell the difference. Here's a quick example: sending a press release is a tactic, achieving positive publicity is a strategy. Ideally, tactics should follow your strategy.

**You must know what you want to accomplish so that you can figure the steps to make it happen.**

Often, small business owners are overwhelmed with trying to do everything: managing staff, invoicing, doing the books, buying inventory, negotiating. Marketing may be a distant thought, something to do when there is down time. This is unfortunate because marketing will bring business in. Neglecting your marketing will result in a business downturn, for sure.

**Develop a basic marketing plan**

The easiest thing to do is to devote some time to thinking about what you want to accomplish. Perhaps you want more

female customers, or larger organizations. Write these goals down. Figure out who your current customers are. Figure out how much budget you can afford to devote to marketing. See what you already have and what you need.

Here are some elements of a marketing plan:

- Current situation/Situation analysis
- Goals
- Target audience
- Budget
- Tactics for reaching target audience (and this is where your ads, brochures, press releases fit in)

Remember, doing marketing piecemeal will only result in getting small chunks of your target audience.



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## Time to sharpen your online skills

The bad news for print continues to pour in. New research from Pew indicates that many Americans do not consider having a local newspaper important. It is as if management knows this. McClatchy, the owner of the *Miami Herald* and other newspapers, just announced personnel cuts this week. The bottom line is that newspapers are hurting and many people don't care. Why? Because many people get their news online or from TV.

Recently, I read how a PR guy was lamenting the downfall of trade publications. I read this on his BLOG. He, like many PR folk, schooled in the "old" days, learned that to do media relations you reached out to print journalists. A nice, print



piece in a trade magazine was truly a prize for the client. I also learned to do PR this way. And nothing was more exciting than seeing your client's name in the newspaper, especially on the front page. But the reality has shifted. More and more, the news is being reported on and broken online. Many people do not read the newspaper, and during the day, certainly do not watch TV. What these people do however, is access the Internet. Many offices allow unlimited Internet access, and certain folk, do their work ON the Internet. In any case, it is time for PR people, and advertising people, and in fact, all communications people, to accept this reality.

Instead of lamenting that blogs now are main sources of information, and that no one is reading trade publications, you must ADAPT to the new realities. Of course, newspapers are not quite dead yet, but teach yourself how to use the online world. Here are a few suggestions:

1) Are there **influential blogs** in your area of expertise? Find out and follow. Not every blog is created equal. The PR guy I mentioned before made the blanket statement that blogs are unreliable. How wrong he is. Very few people would call The Huffington Post or Politico or the Daily Beast unreliable. Yes, they contain opinion, but it is LEADING opinion.

2) **Learn where your potential clients/customers/target audience goes to get their news AND entertainment.** After all, the Web is not just about information. Lots of people play games on the Internet, listen to music and find out about their hobbies.

3) Enhance your **web writing skills**. Writing for the web is not the same as writing for print. You have to be more concise. You have to be more choppy. People read differently online than in print.

4) **Explore multimedia.** People are more visual on the web. And the web allows for video/audio in addition to text.

In sum, stay ahead of the game. Nothing is to be gained from wringing our hands and lamenting the end of print. Instead, find new opportunities. I am sure in the late 1940s, PR people everywhere were concerned about the box in everyone's livingroom. By now, most PR agencies are experts at B-roll and media training. Right?



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## How to not attract attention

If you are active in marketing communications, you most certainly do want to attract attention for your organization or your clients, right? Well, here is how NOT to do it:

- 1) Have a lousy website: The uglier the better, extra points if it looks like it was self-designed, designed in 1995, or has a distinctly 80s look and it is 2009.
- 2) Never put out news about your organization. And make sure any news you do have on your website or other place is from two-three years ago.
- 3) Ignore social media, after all, it's something the kids are doing, nobody serious. Who needs Twitter, LinkedIn, and all that stuff. Hard to keep up with all that stuff.
- 4) Never network. On the rare occasion that you do wander out, be sure to forget your business cards and dress sloppily.
- 5) Don't sweat the small stuff. Sure, it's a great name for a book, it should be a great thing to do. Don't spell check, or keep your phone numbers updated on your website, or let your memberships lapse, don't pay bills...

5) Be rude. After all, if someone contacts you, they shouldn't expect a response, right?

How many marketers do you know that are dead-set on not getting any attention?

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## Personal marketing and communications

Although we think of marketing communications as mostly printed and electronic promotional pieces, there is one part of the communication process that is completely personal—you. Most of us represent our companies or even ourselves, if we are looking for a job or a project. We may have nice business cards but what else are we doing to market ourselves? Yesterday, I attended a networking/educational event where I saw Kate Perrin, a fabulous networker and business person. We discussed (among other things like the Daschle debacle) how people present themselves. This area, which I consider personal marketing, is rarely addressed but it is crucial nonetheless.

Why is your personal presentation a part of marketing? Simply, because *all marketing is about perception*, and how we look (how we are dressed, our body language, our demeanor in general) determines the perception others have of us. If I show up to an interview in sloppy clothes, doesn't it seem that I didn't put any effort in and that I really don't care what people think? Similarly, if I go to a business event where everyone is wearing "business attire" and I am wearing flip-flops and shorts, don't I look out of place? Creative people generally dress creatively and corporate people also

tend to dress in corporate attire. There is a reason for this—they are branding themselves. This extends to business cards as well. A lawyer probably will hand you a linen embossed card and a designer might give you a colorful one.

A few months ago, I attended a networking event. The woman in charge was a business owner, and had a direct marketing firm. She talked about email campaigns and such. However, I was distracted from her message because she was dressed in a suit circa 1985, and had unstyled long hair. She was clearly stuck in an earlier era, so my impression of her was that in no way could she conduct a 21st Century direct marketing campaign.

Of course not everyone should be cookie-cutter, dressed in navy blue suit and showing no hint of personal style. But there are some generalities about personal marketing:

- Clothing style reflects your brand—what do you want your brand to be?
- Sloppiness never looks professional
- Business cards are part of your personal marketing package
- Your handshake speaks volumes about you
- A smile goes a long way

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## **Why getting feedback is important**

If something is wrong with your product, don't you want to know about it? I think you do (and if not, you should!). Well, many marketers sometimes “forget” to include an essential piece of information: an address and/or telephone and/or email address that can be used for feedback. Some marketers don't

want to be deluged with calls or emails so they either exclude this information or make it very hard to find. This is not a good tactic. It can backfire—you could lose a customer or many, especially if the issue is one that is repeatable. Let me give you two examples.

I had bought anti-virus software at a big-box store. I installed it, and it worked great. Of course, after a year, it told me I needed to update. The update was more expensive (of course) and could only be received via online download. Long story short, the update did not work. It screwed up my computer, and worse, I couldn't get it completely off my computer. I had to have a computer guy come remove the hard drive and delete all files relating to the software. Well, I tried to contact this software company. Was there a customer service number or an email? No. For tech support yes (the aforementioned Raj in India was not very helpful getting resolution to the problem). In any case, I had no recourse and the company was not going to find out that their software has a bug in it. I will NEVER buy from this company again. Ever. Again.

Second case is maddening. For years, since I started my business, I advertised on a marketing site. I got a good number of hits from there, and so I paid for premium positions. Well, with very little fan fare, the site changed, and the writer category was transferred to a new domain. Apparently, the company did not advertise the new domain as well as the old one, and I got not ONE hit from the new domain. Meanwhile, every two months or so, I get an email from the site asking me to upgrade to a premium (read paid) subscription. I wanted to email that I would not because the site was not sending any hits. There was absolutely no email address to write to. And so when I see the emails coming from the company, I delete them. Is the owner of the site wondering why a former advertiser is no longer advertising? Is he concerned? If he is, he certainly doesn't want MY feedback. He

only wants my credit card number. He can't even begin to address my concerns if he doesn't have them.

Bottom line, feedback is essential. Without it, you could have a defective or malfunctioning product on the market and no way of knowing about it. I am sure getting a ton of email can be a problem, but a bigger problem can happen if you start getting bad word of mouth and your sales start tanking. It's like putting a coin in the meter—it's annoying but not as annoying as getting a ticket!

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## **USP: English that you can understand!**

You've got to hand it to Dell. It has figured out what its customers want—customer service that is understandable, and responsive. This customer service is not what its currently offers, since most likely if you call Dell you will end up talking to Raj in Bangalore or Juan in the Philippines (and by talk, I mean trying to make yourself understood to someone who has some understanding of computers and less regarding English). In response to this desire to talk to people who might understand what you are asking, and give you instructions you might be able to use, Dell has instituted a program called Your Tech Service Team, in which you will talk to support people right here in the U.S. The kicker is that it will CHARGE you a premium (\$12.95 a month, which ends up being \$155.50 a year). So let's recap: for a mere \$155 a year, you will get customer service in understandable English from an American company. Sounds like a hell of a marketing program. If you think I am making this up, please read the article in the *Washington Post*.

On the other hand, the same article points out that Jitterbug, a cell phone company, has decided to 1) keep call centers in the U.S. because its customers prefer it and 2) it uses this as a point of differentiation. Sadly, I think this is a good USP. If I was given a choice of computers, and told where customer service was located for each company, I would most certainly choose the one with U.S. based service. Having had a Dell myself, and having had to call Raj, I can tell you that Raj was NOT helpful. Raj did not understand me and I didn't understand him. This served to frustrate me and ultimately made me decide not to buy a Dell again. Unfortunately, most other computer and software manufacturers have also decided to cut costs and install their customer service centers in various South Asian locations. See the movie Slumdog Millionaire to see how this has impacted India, for instance.

What is frustrating about Dell marketing this service at a premium is that it stems from an understanding that its customers are unhappy with receiving tech support from another continent. Instead of correcting the situation, they have opted to squeeze their customers some more. It is just like the airlines. The airlines know that you don't want a middle seat, and that you want some sort of meal or beverage when you are shut up in the flying tube, so they will charge for the privilege. **All because companies actually know what customers want.**

So much for the idea that companies aren't responsive to customer complaints.