

Brand Naming — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a finished, defensible brand name you can launch. Each section mirrors one course module with hands-on exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists you run against real candidates. Pick one real naming project, a company, a product, or a feature, and carry it through every section. You will finish with a signed naming brief, a bank of 100-plus candidates across the seven Igor categories, a knockout-screening log, a weighted scorecard, and a one-page naming rationale.

What Makes a Name Work

Fix the criteria a great name must meet and learn the seven Igor categories so you generate on purpose instead of by luck.

Worksheet: Score the Five Jobs of Your Working Name

Take the name you (or a competitor) use today and grade it honestly against the five jobs from Lesson 1. Use a 1 to 5 scale. The lowest score shows where your naming attention is most needed.

Distinctive and ownable: legally clearable, domain and handle available (1-5, with note)

Pronounceable and spellable: typed correctly after one hearing (1-5, with note)

Supports the strategy: fits positioning, audience, and category (1-5, with note)

Memorable: sticks after one or two exposures (1-5, with note)

Room to grow: will not box in new products, segments, or regions (1-5, with note)

Lowest-scoring job and why it matters most for this brand

Exercise: Apply Neumeier's Seven Criteria to Three Names You Admire

Pick three brand names you admire (in or near your category) and judge each against Neumeier's seven tests. The goal is to train your eye for what good looks like before you create your own.

- Name 1: rate distinctiveness, brevity, appropriateness, spelling/pronunciation, likability, extendability, and protectability.

- Name 2: rate the same seven and note which two criteria the name is strongest on.

- Name 3: rate the same seven and note which one criterion it sacrifices, and why that trade made sense.

- Pattern: what do all three names have in common that you want to borrow?

Exercise: Sort Ten Familiar Brands Into the Seven Igor Categories

Place ten brand names you know into the seven categories (founder, descriptive, suggestive, invented, metaphor, acronym, real-word/recombination). This builds the mental map you will use to generate.

- List two founder/eponymous and two descriptive names you know.

- List two suggestive/evocative and two metaphor/borrowed names you know.

- List two invented/coined and two real-word/recombination names you know.

- Which category do most of the strongest names you admire fall into, and why might that be the sweet spot?

Checklist: Naming Mindset Gut Check

- I treat the name as a permanent, load-bearing asset, not a decoration.
- I accept that ownability (trademark plus domain) is a gate, not a preference.
- I have translated 'memorable' into testable criteria I can score.
- I am aiming for roughly 1 to 3 syllables unless I have a deliberate reason not to.
- I will generate across all seven Igor categories, not just descriptive names.
- I am naming the company I intend to become, not only the one I am today.

The Naming Brief and Idea Generation

Write and sign a naming brief, then run structured ideation to produce 100-plus candidates across every category.

Worksheet: Write Your One-Page Naming Brief

Complete every field in plain language and get decision-makers to sign it before you brainstorm. This becomes the strategy every candidate is judged against.

Strategic context: what the brand/product is, its positioning, and the role the name must play

Target audience: who must connect with the name, in their words

Competitive set: the names you are up against and want to avoid sounding like

Personality and tone: three to five adjectives the name should feel like

Must-haves: required associations or qualities the name should carry

Must-avoids: words, sounds, meanings, or trends to rule out

Practical constraints: rough length, domain/trademark expectations, languages/markets

Name architecture: standalone, branded house, or house of brands

Exercise: Run a Structured Ideation Sprint to 100-Plus Names

Time-box several 20 to 30 minute rounds. Generate freely with no criticism, and hit a quota in every category. Capture everything in one place; judgement comes later.

- Word lists and mind maps: branch out from benefit, feeling, customer, origin, and metaphor (aim for 20+).
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- Roots and recombination: combine Latin/Greek roots and suffixes like -ify, -ly, -io, -ist (aim for 20+).
- Metaphor and foreign languages: mine animals, myth, nature, and evocative words from other languages (aim for 20+).
- Sound play and invented: build coined names from pleasing syllables and onomatopoeia (aim for 20+).
- Quota check: do I have at least ten candidates in each of the seven Igor categories?

Worksheet: Define Your Name Architecture and Family Pattern

If you are naming inside a system (products, features, tiers), decide the pattern now so each name fits the family. Map where this name sits.

Architecture model: branded house, house of brands, or hybrid (and why)

Family pattern: descriptive sub-names, shared affix, themed set, or numbered/lettered tiers

Master brand (if any) and how much distinctiveness this name must carry on its own

Sibling names this must sit beside, and the logic connecting them

Legibility check: can a new customer guess how the pieces relate without a manual?

Checklist: Brief and Generation Quality Check

- My brief is one to two pages and signed by the decision-makers.
- The brief connects the name to a positioning, not just a vibe.
- I wrote honest must-avoids, including negative meanings and dating trends.
- I generated 100-plus raw candidates without criticising during the session.
- I hit a quota in all seven Igor categories, including the harder ones.
- Everything is captured in a single list so the cull will be easy.

Linguistics, Sound, and Meaning

Read your candidates like a linguist: predict feel with sound symbolism, pressure-test pronunciation and spelling, and screen across cultures.

Worksheet: Run a Sound-Symbolism Profile on Five Candidates

For five shortlisted names, map the dominant sounds and predict the impression they create, then judge fit against your brief's adjectives. This is a prediction you will confirm by testing later.

Candidate and its dominant consonants: plosive/punchy, sibilant/smooth, or liquid/soft?

Dominant vowels: front/high (small, light, fast) or back/long (large, heavy, premium)?

Predicted impression in three words

Does the predicted impression match the tone adjectives in my brief? (yes/no, why)

Keep, watch, or drop based on sound fit

Exercise: Say-It-and-Spell-It Test on Your Shortlist

Say each shortlisted name aloud to a few people who have never seen it written, then ask them to spell it. Record results before spending any money clearing a name.

- For each name, how many people pronounced it as intended on first hearing?
- For each name, how many spelled it correctly first time, and what were the common misspellings?
- Which names contain fork sounds (soft/hard C or G, silent or doubled letters, odd vowel clusters)?
- For any creative-spelling name, am I willing to keep teaching the spelling forever? (yes/no)

Worksheet: Cross-Cultural and Linguistic Screen

List your markets and their languages, then screen each shortlisted name for unwanted meanings, slang, and pronounceability. Use native speakers where you can, and record the findings as decision evidence. Markets and languages to screen (include large diaspora communities at home)

Name and any unwanted meaning, slang, or profanity found, by language

Pronounceability by speakers of each language: clean, awkward, or unsayable?

Unwanted associations: existing brands, public figures, events, or superstitions

Verdict per name: safe, fixable, or kill on cultural grounds

Checklist: Linguistic Screening Check

- I profiled each finalist's sound and confirmed it matches my brief's tone.
- I ran a say-it-and-spell-it test with people unfamiliar with the names.
- I flagged every fork sound and decided whether the spelling trade is worth it.
- I checked each finalist for bad meanings and slang in all relevant languages.
- I tested pronounceability with speakers of my priority markets.
- I right-sized the cultural screen to my real geographic ambitions, but did not skip it.

Screening, Testing, and Selection

Clear candidates legally and digitally, validate the leaders with simple tests, score them on a weighted matrix, and write the rationale that defends your choice.

Worksheet: Trademark and Domain Knockout Log

Run a DIY knockout search on each finalist using the free databases, plus a domain and handle check. Record every hit so you can judge risk and brief a lawyer efficiently. Do this before falling in love with any name.

Name and the goods/services class(es) it would fall under (Nice Classification)

USPTO TESS result: identical or confusingly similar marks in your class(es)?

CIPO / EUIPO / WIPO and web + social result: any common-law or registered users found?

Domain availability: exact .com plus acceptable fallbacks (.co, .io, .ai, get/try/app modifier)

Handle availability across the platforms you will use

Knockout verdict: clear to proceed, risky, or dead

Exercise: Validate the Leaders With Lightweight Tests

With 5 to 15 people who resemble your real customers (never your own team), run pronunciation, spelling, association, and memory tests. Test for problems and fit, not popularity.

- Association test: shown each name alone, what did people think it sells and how did it feel? Does it match the intended impression?
 - Strategy-fit test: shown the name with a one-line description, did people feel they fit, or did anything clash?
 - Memory test: after a brief distraction, which names did people recall?
 - Red flags vs unfamiliarity: which findings are genuine problems (mispronounced, bad association) versus a distinctive name simply feeling new?
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Worksheet: Build and Run the Weighted Scorecard

List three to five viable finalists, agree a weight for each criterion with decision-makers, score each name 1 to 5, multiply by weight, and total. The highest weighted score is your leading candidate.

Finalists (3 to 5 names that survived screening and testing)

Criteria and agreed weights (e.g. distinctiveness, strategic fit, memorability, spelling/pronunciation, sound/feel, legal availability, digital availability)

Weighted scores per name (score x weight, totalled)

Leading candidate and the runner-up to secure as backup

Any close or polarising result that needs discussion before deciding

Checklist: Decision and Launch Readiness

- I ran a knockout trademark search on every finalist before choosing.
- I checked domains and handles and know my acceptable fallbacks.
- I validated the leaders with target-audience people, not my own team.
- I scored finalists on a weighted matrix with stakeholder-agreed weights.
- I will pay for a full legal clearance on the one or two finalists before committing.
- I secured the trademark, domain, and handles for the winner and a backup before announcing.
- I wrote a one-page naming rationale to defend the decision later.

Your Action Plan

1. Choose one real naming project (company, product, or feature) to carry through the whole plan.
2. Write and get sign-off on a one-page naming brief covering strategy, audience, tone, must-avoids, and architecture.
3. Run a structured ideation sprint to 100-plus candidates with a quota in all seven Igor categories.
4. Profile your shortlist's sound symbolism and keep only names whose feel matches the brief.
5. Run a say-it-and-spell-it test and drop names that strangers cannot pronounce or spell.
6. Screen the shortlist across your markets and languages for bad meanings and pronounceability.
7. Run a DIY trademark knockout on USPTO TESS, CIPO/EUIPO/WIPO, and the web, plus domain and handle checks.
8. Validate the leaders with 5 to 15 target-audience people using association, fit, and memory tests.
9. Score three to five finalists on a weighted scorecard with stakeholder-agreed weights.
10. Commission a full legal clearance on the finalist, secure the trademark, domain, and handles for it and a backup, and write a one-page naming rationale.

