



Does the name of your company, product or Toastmasters club make you smile or scratch your head?

What's In a Name?

By Craig Harrison, DTM

What's in a name? It depends on whom you ask. William Shakespeare famously believed such distinctions were unimportant – “that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Yet in today's competitive marketplace, your club or your company name can be a gateway to success or a passage to sameness – an entry to excellence or a portal to the pedestrian.

A name should make you smile instead of scratch your head,” says Toastmaster Alexandra Watkins, founder of the San Francisco naming company Eat My Words.

Many Toastmasters clubs do a terrific job of picking their names, selecting smart and creative monikers. Here are a few standouts from around the globe:

- At the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., members from two clubs are proud of the *Stately Speakers* and *Talking Heads of State*.
- In Midrand, South Africa, Bytes Systems Integration's club is known as *Byte Your Tongue*.

- Dole Fresh Vegetables in Monterey, California, hosts *Lettuce Speak*.
- Beirut Arab University in Tripoli, Lebanon, has a club called *Loudspeakers*.

Watkins is an expert on the naming of companies, products, services and even Toastmasters clubs. She has named, or renamed, everything from robots to restaurants to rock concerts. As part of her process to assess the effectiveness of particular labels, Watkins has created two tests: one to help identify monikers that make you smile and another to know which ones make you scratch your head in puzzlement.

The tests offer instructive lessons on the art of naming:

SMILE if your name has these five winning qualities:

Simple – has a no-brainer concept

Meaningful – customers “get it”

Imagery – is visually evocative

Legs – lends itself to wordplay

Emotional – makes a connection

SCRATCH the name off the list if it commits any of these seven sins:

Spelling-challenged – isn’t spelled exactly how it sounds

Copycat – similar to competitors’ names

Random – it’s disconnected from the brand

Annoying – hidden meaning, forced

Tame – is flat, descriptive, uninspired

Curse of knowledge – only insiders get it

Hard to pronounce – is not obvious or accessible

The Importance of Names

Names help us rapidly identify a company or product, service or entity. Some are self-explanatory, others are funny, memorable, descriptive or cryptic – or some combination of these qualities. For Toastmasters, it’s important to note that the same applies to club names.

The best names are catchy. They remain in our memory when we seek to retrieve them. If a name is snappy, evocative, memorable or emotionally alluring, strangers are drawn in. If a name is bland or boring, confusing or contradictory, then people will ignore it, react negatively or otherwise continue in search of a name they can connect with.

Does Your Club’s Name Stand Out?

Your club name can help prospects identify where or when it meets, who it is designed for, who it’s affiliated with and even something about its personality. A creative, catchy name will help your club garner more interest. Whether it employs a play on words, is alliterative, clever, fun to utter or otherwise playful, make it resonate with people who hear or read it.

Leverage Your Location

Many clubs reference their surroundings in creating clever names. Such place-based names amuse potential guests and make members proud of their cities!

- In Green Bay, Wisconsin (home of the Green Bay Packers professional football team), you can visit the *Green Bay Yackers*.
- In an England town called Sandwich, you have the *Toasted Sandwich* club.
- In Manila, Philippines, members meeting at the U.S. Embassy are *Diplomatically Speaking*.

- Meeting at Beverly Hills High School in Beverly Hills, California, Toastmasters members bring the famous TV series to life with *Toastmasters 90210*.

Keeping Good Company

Many corporate club names reference the company, organization or type of work:

- At the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, art enthusiasts discuss their passion at *Toastmodernists*.
- At UPS in Mahwah, New Jersey, members belong to *Speak-UPS*.
- At Genpact Deli IT Park in New Delhi, India, members belong to *GenOrators Toastmasters*.
- Employees of Abbott Diabetes Care in Alameda, California, recently formed *Sweet Talkers*.
- At Federal Express in Kansas City, Missouri, members enjoy *Federal Expressions*.
- Members from the Chicago Housing Authority belong to *Speakers of the House*.
- MillerCoors Corporate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, enjoys *Toast on Tap*.
- U.S. correctional facilities have *Thee Convictions* (California), *Correctly Speaking* (Indiana), *Distinguished Gentlemen* (Louisiana) and *LibORATORS* (Nebraska).

“Is it time to update or tweak your club’s name?”

Many church-housed clubs have distinctive names:

- *Faithfully Speaking* at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada
- *Speak the Truth* at the Unity Southeast Church in Kansas City, Missouri
- *Testifying Toastmasters* at Hanover Church of the Nazarene in Mechanicsville, Virginia

Alliteration’s Allure

Club names using alliteration are often more memorable, and fun to say, too. For example:

- The *Sultans of Speech* rule in Bangalore, India.
- *Vocal Vegans* meet in Las Vegas, Nevada, at lunchtime!
- The *Liverpool Linguists* meet in Liverpool, New York.
- *Motor Mouths* of Toyota Motor Sales gather in Torrance, California.

Speaking of alliterative club names, Canada is crowded with them:

- *Envision Enunciators* enjoy the limelight in Langley, British Columbia.
- *District Dialoguers* discuss it all at District Hall in Vancouver.
- *Burnaby Blabbers* blurt it out in nearby Burnaby.
- *Tireless Talkers* converse at Calgary's transit building.
- *Frantastic Filibusters* find fun at Fransen Engineering in Richmond, British Columbia.

Showcase What's Special

Is yours a specialty club? Does it have a singular focus? If so, its name should reflect its uniqueness.

- *Point of Order* fits the bill for a Parliamentary club in San Carlos, California.
- *The Trill of the Quill* is a club for writers in Vancouver, Washington.
- *We Are Republicans* says it plainly in Naperville, Illinois.

Humor clubs are popular in the U.S.: *Laughlovers*, *Laughmasters* and *Humor Masters* in California; *Humor Home* and *The Comedy Shack* in Florida; *The Humor* and *Drama* club in Cambridge, Massachusetts; *Humorous Toastmasters* in New York, New York; *Laughing Matters* in Austin, Texas; and *Seriously Funny* in Bellevue, Washington.

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- *Tales & Tellers* is a storytelling club in Danville, California.
- Many clubs cater to the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) community and allied groups: the *Speak Out!* club in Long Beach, California; *Rainbow Toastmasters* in San Francisco, California; *Speak Up and About* in Minneapolis, Minnesota; *Rainbow Toastmasters* in Toronto, Ontario, Canada; *Pride Toastmasters* in New York, New York; and *Hear Me Out* in Mission Hills, Kansas.

The many bilingual clubs around the world include: *Shanghai Humor Bilingual Toastmasters* and *1st Bilingual Zhangjiang*, both in Shanghai, China; *Inspiration Bilingue* in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada; *Filipino Toastmasters Club* in Manama, Bahrain; and *Los Bilingues* in Tualatin, Oregon.

- Love blooms in some clubs: *Twice as Nice* is a club for couples in Chicago, Illinois. *Heart2Heart* focuses on singles and relationships in the San Francisco Bay Area, as does *Bachelors/Bachelorettes* in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Humor Helps

A name that's humorous is far more inviting for guests harboring fear of speaking in front of strangers. It relaxes them as they consider whether or not to visit. Bayer Animal Health in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, named its club *Sit, Stay, Speak*.

- *Irrationally Motivated* is an advanced Toastmasters club in Taipei, Taiwan.
- *Flying Toasters* soars at the Panasonic Avionics Corporation in Lake Forest, California.
- *The Court of Blarney* club meets at the police building in Newmarket, Ontario, Canada.
- *Sony Saystation* is for Sony employees who design the company's PlayStation.
- *Money Talks* clubs can be found at numerous banks and also at the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco.
- *Electric Toasters* meets at the utility company Pacific Gas and Electric, also in San Francisco.
 - *It's Toastmasters Y'all* in Richmond Hill, Georgia.

Rooted in Success: The Magnificent Seven

Of course, you can never go wrong harkening back to your roots. Seven clubs worldwide reference the founder of Toastmasters International, Ralph C.

Smedley, in their name, a surefire recipe for success!

- *Avanzados Ralph Smedley de Guadalajara* in Guadalajara, Mexico
- *Smedley Chapter One* club of Tustin, California
- *Smedley Club* in Sri Lanka
- *Smedley Hometown Memorial Club* in Waverly, Illinois
- *Smedley Speakers Society* in Bangalore, India
- *Smedley's Speakers Advanced Club* in Staten Island, New York
- *The Ralph Smedley Club* in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Play the Name Game To Win

Take a good look at your club name. Does it still work? Many clubs retain names from former locations where they gathered, even though such sites are no longer rep-

representative of the neighborhood or city they meet in now. How confusing for all. Other clubs may be carrying outdated names reflective of their original focus. Is it time to update or tweak your club's name?


Some minor duties and expenses are required when altering a club name. First, such a change needs a two-thirds favorable vote of the active membership present and voting at the club meeting. A quorum of the active membership is required to conduct club business. After the favorable two-thirds vote of the active membership, a club officer must make the club-name change on the Toastmasters Web site at www.toastmasters.org. Simply log in to the Members page, then click on the **Club Central** link and find your club's name and number. Then find the option titled **Change My Club's Bylaws** and enter your club's new name there. U.S. clubs also will need to report the name change to their local IRS office. The club can then opt to buy a new banner displaying the new name from the Toastmasters online store.

If a new name brings in new members who are a good fit, isn't it worth a little effort?

Name That Club

Alexandra Watkins reminds us that even if we keep the initials of a club name, we can assign them new meaning. Her secret wish: to update the initials of her home club in San Francisco, SF Toastmasters, to mean Seriously Fun Toastmasters!

And here's a special offer from her: She will brainstorm with any current or newly forming club at no cost to generate a list of possible club names. Contact her through www.EatMyWords.com with the word "Toastmasters club name" in the subject line.

What's in a name? Gold! Let your name put smiles on the faces of your guests – and new members onto your club rolls. 

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