

## **How Amazon, Google And Other Popular Brands Got Their Names**

From owning exclusive naming rights to being culture conscious while staying memorable, naming a company means ticking many boxes and is arguably one of the toughest decisions when kick-starting a venture.

Read on to discover what inspired these six billionaire founders to settle on their internationally recognized brand names.

### **Amazon—Jeff Bezos**

The world's richest man had many different ideas for his online bookstore in the 90s. Bezos first wanted to call his company "Cadabra", however the suggestion was intercepted by the firm's first lawyer, Todd Tarbert, who convinced Bezos the name sounded too alike to "Cadaver".

Together with his wife MacKenzie, Bezos explored other options and registered several domain names. One of them was Relentless.com, which if searched today, redirects to Amazon.com. Since website listings at the time were alphabetized, he re-strategized to find a word beginning with A. Inspired by the largest river on the planet, Bezos finally found Amazon suitably symbolic for what would become the world's largest e-commerce store.

### **Google—Larry Page and Sergey Brin**

When the Google founders were first working on their massive data index website, they temporarily named it "BackRub". It was during a brainstorming session at Stanford University, when "googolplex"—one of the largest describable numbers with a name—was suggested by graduate student Sean Anderson.

Page counteracted with the shorter term "googol", as he felt it represented their intent to index an unfathomable number of Internet web pages. Not realizing that "googol" was spelled with 'ol' at the end, Anderson accidentally searched for "google.com". Page preferred this name even more and registered the domain on September 15, 1997.

### **Lululemon—Chip Wilson**

Wilson was motivated to name his yoga-wear brand something authentically North American. So, he wanted a name that Japanese people would struggle to pronounce, by including the letter L as it doesn't exist in Japanese phonetics.

A shortlist by a group of 100 people consisted of 20 brand names and 20 logos. "In essence, the name 'lululemon' has no roots and means nothing other than it had three 'L's' in it," admits Wilson.

### **Nike—Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman**

Founded in 1964, Nike was originally “Blue Ribbon Sports” and didn’t undergo a name change until 1971. Knight and Bowerman nearly went for “Dimension 6” before deciding on “Nike”, who is the Greek goddess of victory. Greek warriors would say “Nike” to each other when they won a war.

Wanting to make the brand more distinctive, Knight was also determined to create an iconic logo. After tweaking sketches of fat lightning bolts and chubby check marks, the “swoosh” logo was chosen, which referred to the fibers used in the footwear. The logo made its first appearance on products in 1972, which designer Carolyn Davidson was paid only \$30 to design.

### **Under Armour—Kevin Plank**

Plank credits his oldest brother Bill for the accidental brand name change from the original idea of “Body Armor”. “How’s that company you’re working on, uhh... Under Armor?” Bill once asked Kevin. The name immediately felt right to Plank and he received a trademark for Under Armour three weeks later.

The addition of the U in the “Armour” spelling was driven by Plank’s uncertainty on the future of the internet. “I thought the phone number 888-4ARMOUR was much more compelling than 888-44ARMOR”, confirms the billionaire.

### **Zara—Amancio Ortega**

The release of the film “Zorba the Greek” influenced Ortega to name his small store in northwestern Spain “Zorba” in 1975. However, this didn’t last long as two blocks down was a bar with the same popular name. The bar owner’s justified complaint to avoid the double Zorba confusion, inspired Ortega to be more resourceful with his amendments.

Although he had already made the mold for the letters of his signboard, he rearranged their order to be cost-effective, eventually settling on the shorter and snappier “Zara”.

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