



Radio programme about BRAND NAMES



Interviewer: Good afternoon. This is *Uncommon Knowledge*, the programme that looks at everyday things from unusual angles. Today we're talking to the Creative Director of a company that names companies and products.

John: Hello Sarah.

I: Now tell us. How do companies choose their names? Are they usually named after the people who start them?

J: Well sometimes. Many companies are named after their founders, for example the Swedish furniture company IKEA. The first two letters in IKEA - the I and the K - are the initials of Ingvar Kamprad, the company's founder.

I: And what about the last two letters, the E and the A? What do they stand for?

J: The E is for Elmtaryd, which is the name of the farm where Ingvar Kamprad grew up.

I: And the A?

J: The A is for the name of a village near his hometown, called Agunnaryd. I'm not quite sure exactly why this village was important to him, but obviously it was.

I: I always assumed that 'ikea' was a Swedish word with some sort of special meaning.

J: Ah I'm afraid not. But many other companies choose names which have specific meanings. For example, Samsung, the big Korean electronics company.

I: What does Samsung mean?

J: In Korean, Samsung means '*three stars*'. The name was chosen back in the year 1938, and at that time three stars was the most impressive rating that people could imagine for hotels and things like that.

I: So if they'd started the company today, they would probably have called it '*five stars*'- whatever that is in Korean.

J: Absolutely. In any case the company was very different in its early days. For instance, in the beginning, in 1938, Samsung wasn't an electronics company. It was a company that sold fish and vegetables, and fruit to China. It didn't start selling electronics until the 1970s.

I: Oh really? I didn't know that.



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J: And another brand name with a special meaning is Nike, the American company which is famous for its trainers and sports clothes.

I: I think I know this one. Nike is the Greek goddess of victory,. Is that right?

J: Yes, that's right. What's interesting is that 'Nike' wasn't the company's original name. When it started in 1964, its original name was Blue Ribbon Sports. They changed their name to Nike a few years later in 1971.

I: Very interesting.

J: Yes. And another company with an interesting name is Sony, the Japanese electronics company. Sony is a combination of 'sonus', the latin word for sound, and 'sonny', an American slang term that means 'boy'.

I: 'Sound' plus 'boy'.

J: That's right. They chose it because it has an interesting meaning and it's easy for people all over the world to pronounce. Obviously that's an important thing for a business name.

I: One more question, this time about the American internet company, Google. The name has something to do with numbers, I think.

J: That's right. 'Googol' is a word for a very large number: a one followed by 100 zeroes.

I: Really? That's quite hard to visualize.

J: The name shows that there is a huge amount of information online, and you can find it all by Googling it.

I: Yes. It's a really good name for a search engine.

J: Yes, indeed. Now, of course, the spelling is different. 'Google' the company is G-O-O-G-L-E, but the number is spelled 'G-O-O-G-O-L. But that's where the name comes from.

I: Fascinating. Thanks very much for speaking with us this afternoon.

J: You're very welcome.



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