

## Creating Tag Lines

The only really memorable slogan from the Business Week article (see below), at least in my view, is: "*You're In Good Hands with ... Allstate*" or as you sometimes hear it "*Allstate, the Good Hands People*". It shows you how hard it is to create good tag lines; these companies have practically unlimited marketing budgets and really crappy (for the most part) tag lines. I like the one (naturally) that I created for a mini storage/public storage business (Blue Heron Storage Corp.) better than most of these:

# **BLUE HERON STORAGE** *Outta Site*

You really only have seconds to grab someone's attention and tag lines are a way for you to do it and to reinforce your brand or your brand's message or your corporate mission. In the case of Blue Heron, we are reinforcing the company's mission—to get stuff off of your site (whether that is a residential or commercial building) and onto to ours.

A large part of Blue Heron's market is getting stuff out of a residential customer's basement or garage and making room for their vehicles or creating more living/recreational space for them. For commercial office clients, the market is all about making room for more workers. So by storing excess stuff off-site, the company gets more employees in the same space, increases synergy and doesn't have to lease or otherwise acquire extra space or, at least, postpones that.

We are also trying to tell clients that the Company's service is so good it is 'out of sight' of our competitors...

By putting a Manager's residence right on site and having the Manager and his or her family live there, we can give more and better personal service and provide more real security too for your stored goods.

So the tag line is kind of cute, it's a bit catchy, it's memorable, it's fewer than four words (the absolute maximum for a tag line is four words in my opinion) and it reinforces the dual mission of the company. It also took less than five minutes to come up with it and less than two days to try it out on a dozen or so people before it was adopted. Total cost was about zero.

Compare this with the City of Ottawa spending \$100,000 and months to hire a consultant to come up with the "*Technically Beautiful*" slogan for Ottawa; it was supposed to be a play on the strength of the tech industry here but most people would think of anything "*Technically Legal*", for example, as something less than desirable...

The Town of Biggar, Alberta was way smarter—they reversed out the work by creating a competition. The slogan they ended up with is outstanding and cost the city zip. "*New*

*York is Big but This is Biggar*". I realize this violates the four word maximum but it is so clever and memorable that the townsfolk of Biggar are forgiven.

The Allstate tag line is four words, by the way— *You're In Good Hands*.

The other tag lines don't work for me—they are either boring or don't really work to reinforce the company's mission and its brands or both.

So it isn't money that creates great tag lines, it's brains and creativity. I recently heard a couple that I like a lot:

SBC Communications (a phone company): *Going Beyond the Call*;

CHUMeShop.com (a new 'local' e-mall started by a national radio chain that recognizes your DNS so that the shops and services you see are entirely local): *Browsers Welcome*.

Obviously SBC communications is saying (cleverly) that they do a lot more now than provide local phone service and they will go beyond the call of duty in servicing their clients. CHUM is saying tune your browsers to us and come in and browse these stores and services anytime.

Here is what I wrote recently for a local law firm that I am very fond of.

Bill/Shelly (not their real names):

I notice that your firm does not have a tag line that goes with your firm's name. Most law firms have them these days, in part, as a marketing tool and, in part, as a statement of their values. Why doesn't your firm have one?

I read the philosophy statement on your web site and it basically says that you are committed to the success of this community's business and charitable organizations.

So I came up with a suggestion for you based on your statement of philosophy:

Smith & Jones LLP\*  
*Successful Together*

(\* Not the real name of the firm.)

This says: a) your firm is successful (and people like to deal with successful people), b) that your client's success is also how you measure your success, c) your community's success leads eventually back to your success and your clients' too.

I realize this isn't the most creative tag line I have ever come up with, but it suits the industry and the conservative nature of this particular firm that stresses integrity and service, including community service\*.

(\* For example, this is the firm that recently incorporated a Not-For-Profit corporation for us at *no* charge for their time.)

Here are some tag lines for other local law firms that I gave them to compare with:

Brazeau Seller: *Business People, Business Law*

Gowlings: *The Power of Original Thought*

Perley-Roberston, Hill & McDougall: *The Smartest Legal Decision You'll Ever Make\**

(\* I thought this one was too long but very clever.)

Anyway, you can start to see some common threads in terms of what makes for a good tag line:


- tag lines are catchy;
- tag lines are only a few words long;
- tag lines are creative and have more than one meaning;
- tag lines speak to the core mission and values of your company and organization.





Another tag line I like is the one that the CNN Studio Tour uses: *You're in the News*. It obviously conveys two meanings—one, that CNN is in the news business and two, you are literally *in* the News (I am sure the Tour includes the ability to create a video of a pseudo news program with you as the featured anchor...)

Here are a few others that I have been involved with one way or another:

- HardStorage.com (stores crucial data in DVD or CD ROM format in a super secure location): *Your Data Bank*
- GradeAStudent.com: *At-Home Computer Service You can Afford*
- FAQ.TV: *Internet Video Solutions*
- Villager.ca: *Next Generation Homes*
- Manchester.ca (land development company): *New Solutions*
- Exploriem.org (Professional Entrepreneurs Organization): *Because EXPerience Matters*
- Maple Leaf Homes: *Craftsmanship and Creativity*
- FuelIndustries.com (elite web developer): *For the Ride of Your Life*
- Ottawa Senators: *This is Hockey Country*

A couple of my students in the School of Architecture came up with a name for their project “*Up-Grade*” that did quadruple duty because it also was their ‘firm’s’ name plus it described site conditions and it was their tag line too. Imagine that, a name that doubles as a tag line as well. Here is their design solution for an infill project; you can see that they were dealing with a site that has a substantial grade. They did a great job with the design of the project and showed a flare for the business side of architecture too.





**UP-GRADE**

The duality of our firm name refers to the sloping site condition as well as our firm's role in up-grading the built form on site.

Blake Eddy - Joshua Coulas, Up-Grade

Tag lines should be fun to create but it isn't something that is necessarily made better by spending a lot of money on it. For most entrepreneurs, they can either come up with a decent tag line themselves or within their network of friends and family. For the right type of businesses or organizations (like, say, the Town of Biggar, Alberta), they can reverse out the work to residents, customers, fans, etc. in the form of a contest. There are a lot of smart, creative (and bored) people out there who love to participate in these types of things. So use their talents too.

Dr. Bruce M. Firestone, Ottawa, Canada. December 2004.

<http://www.dramatispersonae.org/EntrepreneurialistCultureFrontPage.htm>

<http://www.DramatisPersonae.org>

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## ADDENDUM

### NEWS ANALYSIS

By David Kiley

[http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2004/nf20041014\\_4965\\_db035.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2004/nf20041014_4965_db035.htm)

Can You Name That Slogan?

Businesses spend millions to create a catchy tagline for their products. Too bad consumers don't remember most of them

Quick -- what's Miller Beer's ad slogan? How about Kmart's ([KMRT](#))? And

Buick's ([GM](#))? If you don't know, you won't advance in *Jeopardy!* when the category is "advertising." But you won't be alone. In [an annual survey](#) conducted by Atlanta-based marketing-consulting firm Emergence, just a measly 1% of those surveyed matched those familiar brands with their slogans. (Want to test your slogan-savvy? [Take our quiz](#)).

Insurance companies Allstate ([ALL](#)) ("You're in Good Hands") and State Farm ("Like a Good Neighbor") had the most recognizable slogans, with 87% and 70% recognition, respectively. Not bad for an industry that has never been accused of being "cutting edge" or veterans of "guerilla" marketing.

Jeanie Caggiano, executive creative director at Leo Burnett, the ad agency handling Allstate, says she can't remember anyone suggesting that the 48-year-old slogan be changed. In fact, it's part of the company's logo. "Closest we have come is to turn it into a question by ending ads with 'Are You in Good Hands?'" she says. "It's part of the American lexicon, and that makes great advertising."

"CRUMBLE INTO DUST." Soft-drink, fast-food, and beer brands rely heavily on advertising to shift market share and drive traffic to stores. Yet Wendy's ([WEN](#)) scored zero recognition after more than two years of advertising "It's Better Here." Coke's ([KO](#)) 18-month-old "Real" effort scored just 5%. On the other hand, McDonald's ([MCD](#)), which launched "I'm Lovin' It" in early 2003, scored a better than respectable 33%.

What separates a good ad slogan from a poor one? David Droga, worldwide executive creative director for French ad agency Publicis, says slogans work best when they reflect "not only the soul of the brand, but the company itself and its reason for being in business." Contemporary catch-phrases, he says, "just crumble into dust."

Michelob Ultra may fall into that trap, lining itself up with the here-today-perhaps-gone-tomorrow fixation on carbs as it pitches "Lose The Carbs. Not The Taste." Just 6% of respondents matched up that slogan with Michelob ([BUD](#)). Among Droga's own network of clients, Hewlett-Packard ([HPQ](#)) earns high marks for its "Invent" tagline -- the word Madison Avenue prefers over slogan -- and Heineken for "It's all about the beer."

WILL COKE STAY "REAL"? Wal-Mart's "Always low prices. Always" was recognized by 67% of survey respondents, a terrific score aided by the sheer volume of people who shop at Wal-Mart ([WMT](#)). Clearly, ubiquity helps any slogan have staying power.

Coke, looking to come up with an "iconic" ad campaign this month out of a competition among its worldwide ad agencies, is open to scrapping "Real" as its slogan, though the odds are that the word "Real" would somehow be salvaged in a new slogan given the enormous equity in Coke's having advertised "It's The

Real Thing" from 1970-75. Anything with "Real" would be better than Coke's original and flat slogan, coined in 1886 -- "Drink Coca-Cola."

Many marketing experts say advertisers have become too quick to ditch slogans, for reasons that often have little to do with sales. Often, a new sales chief or marketing director simply feels the need to put his or her own stamp on the job for the two or three years that they have the job.

AD KILLERS. "It's only a matter of time before Corporate America wakes up and realizes that what it's doing simply isn't working," says Kelly O'Keefe, chairman and CEO of Emergence. "Companies continue to shell out big bucks for catchy slogans, yet for the second year in a row, this survey shows that consumers aren't getting the message."

The survey had little good news for advertisers. Nearly 75% of respondents said TV commercials bother them. No wonder consumers are embracing ad-killing technologies like TiVo ([TIVO](#)) and pop-up blockers.

### **Can you match the brands with the slogan?**

(Answers below)

#### *1. Capital One*

- A. The Only Card You Need
- B. Right Where You Want Us
- C. What's In Your Wallet?

#### *2. Sprite*

- A. Obey Your Thirst
- B. Refreshment Every Day
- C. What's Your Pleasure?

#### *3. Heineken*

- A. The Beer To Have When Your Having More Than One
- B. It's All About The Beer
- C. As Good As It Gets

#### *4. GE*

- A. Innovation Is Our Pursuit
- B. We Bring Good Things To Life
- C. Ideas Around The World

#### *5. Taco Bell*

- A. Think Outside The Bun
- B. You Just Can't Get Enough
- C. Beans Go Good With Everything At TB

6. *Gatorade*

- A. When Winning Is Everything
- B. For The Athlete In You
- C. Is It In You?

7. *Chevrolet*

- A. You Dreamed It. Now Drive It
- B. An American Revolution
- C. America's Heartbeat

8. *Budweiser*

- A. True
- B. Wassup Today?
- C. This Is Refreshment

9. *Chrysler*

- A. Inspiration Comes Standard
- B. That Thing Got A Hemi?
- C. The American Classic

10. *Staples*

- A. You Need What We've Got
- B. That Was Easy
- C. Working For You

11. *Dr. Pepper*

- A. Be You
- B. Be Serious
- C. Are You a Pepper?

12. *Sears*

- A. Your One Stop Family Shop
- B. Good Life. Great Price
- C. Everything You Need. Always.

**Correct Answers. 1. C, ; 2. A; 3 B; 4. B; 5. A; 6. C; 7. B; 8. A; 9. A; 10. B; 11. A; 12. B**

**EMERGENCE'S SLOGAN SURVEY**

Five hundred consumers were asked to see if they could correctly match a slogan with the right brand.

Here are the results:

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>Tag Line</b>	<b>%Correct</b>
<b>ALLSTATE</b>	You're in good hands	87%
<b>STATE FARM</b>	Like a good neighbor	70%
<b>WAL-MART</b>	Always low price. Always.	67%

<b>GE</b>	Imagination At Work.	5%
<b>SPRITE</b>	Obey your thirst	35%
<b>TACO BELL</b>	Think outside the bun	34%
<b>MCDONALD'S</b>	I'm Lovin It	33%
<b>CAPITAL ONE</b>	What's in your wallet?	27%
<b>GATORADE</b>	Is it in you?	19%
<b>CHEVROLET</b>	An American Revolution	17%
<b>J.C. PENNEY</b>	It's all inside	15%
<b>NISSAN</b>	Shift	12%
<b>TOYOTA</b>	Get the feeling	11%
<b>BUDWEISER</b>	True	10%
<b>HARDEE'S</b>	Where the food's the star	6%
<b>SIERRA MIST</b>	Yeah, it's kinda like that	6%
<b>COCA-COLA</b>	Real	5%
<b>DR. PEPPER</b>	Be you	5%
<b>GE</b>	Imagination at work	5%
<b>HEINEKEN</b>	It's all about the beer	4%
<b>MICHELOB ULTRA</b>	Lose the carbs. Not the taste.	4%
<b>SEARS</b>	Good life. Great price.	4%
<b>CHRYSLER</b>	Inspiration comes standard	3%
<b>CORONA</b>	Miles away from ordinary	3%
<b>ARBY'S</b>	What are you eating today?	2%
<b>MILLER</b>	Good call	1%
<b>BUICK</b>	The spirit of American style	1%
<b>KMART</b>	Right here, right now.	1%
<b>STAPLES</b>	That was easy	0%*
<b>WENDY'S</b>	It's better here	0%*

*Editor's note:* It's tough to understand why GE ever changed slogans. It's old tagline, "We Bring Good Things To Life" was recognized by 39% of respondents. It's current slogan "Imagination at Work." was pitched since 2002, is backed by about \$70 million in ad spending per year, but scored just 5% recognition.

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