

# TAG, You're It!

## Marketing tag lines reach out and touch us every day.

If you're like most of us, you know that "Nothing runs like a Deere," and that GE "Brings good things to life," that "You're in good hands with AllState," and that "When you've said Budweiser, you've said it all." Are you old enough to remember that "A little dab'll do ya"? (A popular Brylcreem line, for those who are not.)

Advertising is everywhere, and it is inescapable, from the sides of buses and taxis, to the various station identification logos that are now a permanent fixture on TV screens. Whether in magazines, newspapers, or on radio or television, ads are designed to catch your attention and sell product. But many memorable marketing campaigns have transcended mere advertising and become part of our cultural history, a nationally recognized common ground. And whether you love them or hate them, you can't escape them.

How often have you been plagued by a catchy jingle running through your head, or referenced a product's slogan in everyday speech? Ever told someone to "Just do it"? Phrases like "Where's the beef?", "I've fallen, and I can't get up!" and "Whassup?" begin as marketing tag lines and slogans, and end up becoming part of mainstream culture.

But what is a tag line, and what is it really supposed to do?

A tag line is a brief phrase or statement that conveys the essential unique message about a product, business, or brand name. Whether used for a consumer product like cereal or for an industrial product such as saw blades, a good tag line is a natural fit with the product's positioning. It will differentiate the product from the competition, establish an image, and maintain consistency throughout a marketing campaign.

Effective tag lines catch attention and are memorable, but more importantly, they also convey a message to a company's many audiences: customers, employees, stockholders, even vendors. It's more than just a catchy phrase, it is a streamlined "vision" or mission statement, that encapsulates the company's message within a few brief words. Or even one word: Hertz—Exactly.

The keys to a good tag line include brevity, and pinpoint focus. A tag line won't be hard-hitting or memorable if it is generic, broad, or nondescript. Many companies can claim to be global or worldwide, to provide solutions, to be



the best, to offer the most. But tag lines that rely on these qualities often lack impact. In trying to make one all-encompassing statement, they lose their focus on the key message, the unique selling point a company or product offers.

The best tag lines are short and to the point, unique to their company or brand, and strike a chord with everyone who reads them. More than that, though, they work on more than one level, tapping intellectual, intuitive and emotional associations to generate a mental image or feeling.

## Care To Tag Along?

Test your own tag line memory! How many of the tag lines below can you match with the correct company or product?

Correct answers are on page 15.

- \_\_\_ We try harder.
- \_\_\_ Don't leave home without it.
- \_\_\_ The greatest show on earth.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, Take me away!
- \_\_\_ M'm m'm good.
- \_\_\_ Please don't squeeze the \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Things go better with \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Aren't you glad you use \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Quality is Job 1.
- \_\_\_ It keeps going, and going, and going...
- \_\_\_ Put a tiger in your tank.
- \_\_\_ The best a man can get.
- \_\_\_ Bet you can't eat just one!
- \_\_\_ Good to the last drop.
- \_\_\_ Our repairmen are the loneliest guys in town.
- \_\_\_ When it rains, it pours.
- \_\_\_ All the news that's fit to print.
- \_\_\_ We will sell no wine before its time.
- \_\_\_ Nobody doesn't like \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ It's everywhere you want to be.
- \_\_\_ Diamonds are forever.
- \_\_\_ Let your fingers do the walking.

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. DeBeers              | 12. Esso Gasoline       |
| 2. Morton Salt          | 13. Paul Masson Wines   |
| 3. Avis                 | 14. Ford Motor Company  |
| 4. Sara Lee             | 15. Lay's Potato Chips  |
| 5. American Express     | 16. Campbell's Soup     |
| 6. Maxwell House Coffee | 17. Energizer Batteries |
| 7. Barnum & Bailey      | 18. Maytag Appliances   |
| 8. New York Times       | 19. Yellow Pages        |
| 9. Dial                 | 20. Calgon              |
| 10. Coca-Cola           | 21. Charmin             |
| 11. Visa                | 22. Gillette            |



There are dozens of tag lines and phrases that you see every day, both at home and at work. A couple of business-to-business examples you might be familiar with:

- American Saw: "Lenox. Nothing Else Cuts It." Working on two levels, this tag line conveys quality and reliability with the implication that these saws are held to standards that competitors can't meet, and also that they can tackle cutting challenges that other blades can't.
- DuPont: "The miracles of science." After nearly 65 years, DuPont changed its corporate tag line from "Better things for better living through chemistry" to "The miracles of science," reflecting the company's dedication to research and development, and drawing its audience to share the wonder of modern technology.
- 3M: "Innovation." Short and to the point, "Innovation" makes a high-impact statement about the company, its mission, and its products.
- BASF: "We don't make a lot of the products you buy. We make a lot of the products you buy better.®" This

tag line effectively communicates BASF's corporate mission, promoting the thousands of BASF products that serve as ingredients in finished products consumers use daily.

A good tag line or slogan can enhance company or brand recognition; position it in a busy, competitive marketplace; and add or promote a key attribute. A bad one is just a string of extra words, offering no clear benefit or differentiation. How many companies claim to be "Your single source for all your (lawn, office, healthcare, tool, footwear, computer, electronics) needs"? Slogans like these are so generic, you can fill in the blank with almost anything, and one "full service" place looks pretty much like another.

Bad tag lines are vague, meaningless, and forgettable, while good tag lines stand and deliver: you know what they mean, what you're going to get, and who you're going to get it from. And the best ones? Well, the best ones stick with us beyond the advertising medium, and end up part of our everyday life. So the next time you find yourself using a catchy phrase, try to remember where it came from. ❖