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Business Name Brainstorming Worksheet

For North Carolina Small Business Owners

This worksheet is designed to help you choose a business name that is usable, defensible, and hard to regret later.

Take your time. Write in pencil.

1. What Does Your Business Actually Do?

List what you sell or provide. Be specific.

Goods / Services (primary):

Goods / Services (secondary or future plans):

This matters because names that lock you into one narrow activity can cause problems later.

2. Who Is This Business For?

Most naming mistakes come from trying to appeal to “everyone.”

Ideal customer or client:

Age range (if relevant): _____

Cultural signals they recognize or value:

(Examples: professional, blue-collar, artistic, traditional, queer-friendly, tech-forward)

Industries or communities they are part of:

Hobbies or interests they are likely to have:

3. Where Will This Name Be Used?

You need to check availability with

- ☐ [Secretary of State](#)
- ☐ Website domain
 - .com
 - .net
 - .info
- ☐ Social media
 - Facebook Page
 - Instagram Handle
 - TikTok Handle
 - X Handle
 - Reddit Handle
 - Twitch

- ☐ Industry specific groups
 - ☐ Trade unions
 - ☐ Licensing boards

Names that are hard to spell, easy to confuse, or already crowded cause friction in all of these places.

4. Competitor Reality Check

List businesses your customers might confuse you with.

Direct competitors:

1. _____
2. _____

What they do wrong or poorly:

What you do differently or better:

Your name should help customers tell you apart, not lump you together.

5. Well-Named Businesses You Admire

These do not have to be in your industry.

Business name: _____

What does the name signal about the business?

Business name: _____

What does the name signal about the business?

Pay attention to whether the name is playful, serious, abstract, blunt, or symbolic.

6. Trademark Strength Target

Circle one. Be honest.

Fanciful (made-up word; strongest, highest effort)

Arbitrary (real word unrelated to the work; strong)

Suggestive (hints at the work; medium strength)

Descriptive (states what you do; weak)

Notes on why this level fits your business:

Reminder:

- Generic and purely descriptive names are hard or impossible to protect
- Stronger names reduce confusion and future disputes

7. Research Prompts

Use these to come up with word lists.

Words tied to the history or tradition of your work:

Tools, materials, or processes you use:

Values you want associated with your work:

Words you want to avoid entirely:

8. Candidate Names

Write multiple options. Do not stop at one.

Name option #1: _____

Why this name works:

Name option #2: _____

Why this name works:

Name option #3: _____

Why this name works:

9. Availability Check (Do This Before You Commit)

For each serious contender, confirm availability with:

- ☐ North Carolina Secretary of State
- ☐ United States Patent & Trademark Office
- ☐ Domain
- ☐ Social media handles
- ☐ Trade Union
- ☐ Licensing Board

Notes or conflicts found:

10. Final Reality Check

Answer these in one sentence each.

Will this name still make sense in five years?

Could this name cause confusion or legal cleanup later?

Would you be comfortable signing this name on a contract?
