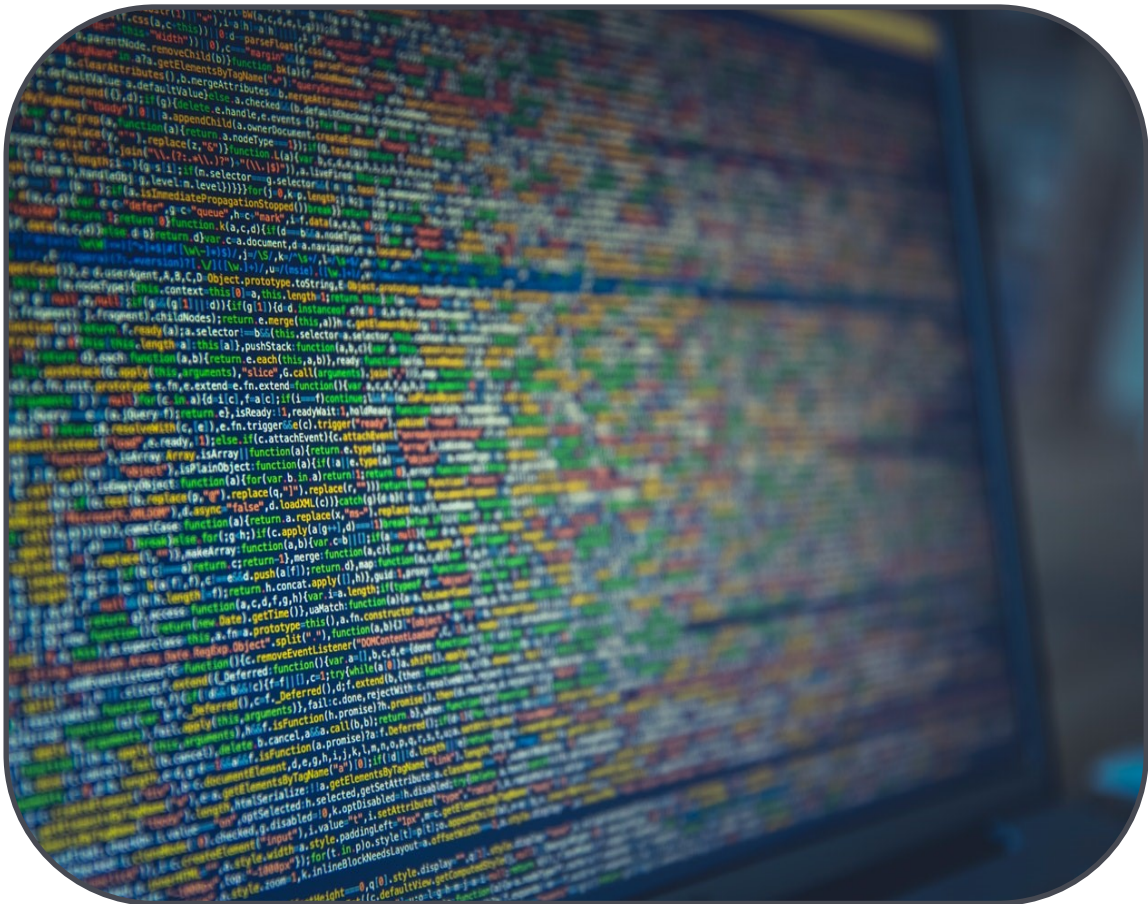


# Finding a name for a changing world

## Understanding the evolution of naming trends in cybersecurity



**As any industry matures, naming becomes a more and more challenging prospect. How do you develop a name creative enough to capture someone's attention and memorable enough to keep it as consumer needs change rapidly around you?**

One of the places we've noticed company names adapting to evolving customer desires is in the cybersecurity space.

The reason for this is two-fold. Their technology is more in demand than ever before, which encourages new entrants into the market. But the space has also existed for just long enough that there's room for disruption, with challengers placing themselves in opposition to industry stalwarts.



## What's in a name?

Naming usually falls along a spectrum with three broad categories: **Descriptive, Associative and Abstract.**

Descriptive names, like Verbal Identity, make it obvious what you're going to get when you sign up. They tell you what their service, specialism or origins are. Another example would be The American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

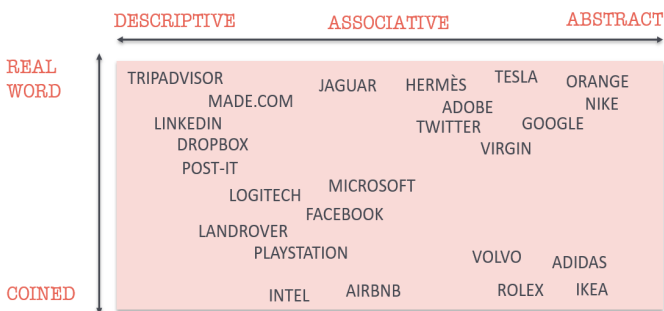
Names that link an idea or image to a product or service are Associative. So Airbnb would be a good example here. You're not staying in a BnB in the sky, but the service is quick and you'll have somewhere to sleep at the end of it.

Abstract is exactly what it sounds like. A name that doesn't have much bearing on the company's function – like Google.

## You couldn't make it up

Of course, there's another dimension to naming: do you want to root it in the real world that your customer knows? Or maybe you want to signal innovation or irreverence by making up an entirely new word?

So most names will fall on a spectrum like this:



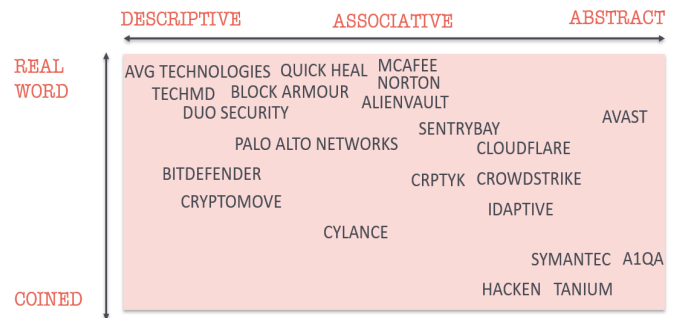
## Cybersecurity captures a common naming trend

What we've seen with cybersecurity firms, is that names have trended towards the abstract as the technology becomes more widely used.

Founder-led names like Norton and McAfee were common in the '80s. The technology was new, so a visionary leader was often put in pride of place, promising an exciting new era of technology.

Then as cybersecurity became more common, and firms were trying to gain market share with non-savvy consumers yet to be snapped up by McAfee and Norton, companies put their function first. AVG (Anti-Virus Guard) is an obvious one.

Now we're seeing the point where brands are largely moving from descriptive to abstract or associative names. Start-ups like Hacken and Tanium that promise agile and creative solutions to problems go beyond the functional to something more imaginative.



## So where do I begin?

If you're thinking about your company's name, from our experience, there are five or six key stages:

**Category Analysis** – What are the conventions for the names in this category? Does our name need to state its position at the heart of the category or does it need to expand the concept of the category?

**Competitive Analysis** – How have the competitors grabbed land within the category? What should our brand be fighting for?

**Brand Positioning** – If this hasn't been done already.

**Name and 'Name Architecture' Generation** – Brands are rarely launched in isolation. How must their name fit in with senior brands? If different varieties/flavours are being launched, how should their names vary but remain 'part of a family'?

**Trademark Screening/Legal** – Requires specialised services.

**Testing** – Always recommended!

## A bit about us

Verbal Identity works with highly differentiated national and global brands, helping CEOs clarify their Vision and align the leadership team with it, often in less than 16 weeks.

We have developed our own proven methodology which has led to the successful investment of more than half a billion dollars. More than this, it has produced teams who are aligned and committed to the guiding Vision.

To learn more, talk with our Senior Partner, [Chris West](#).

