

FOR BUSINESS OWNERS, CHOOSING A NAME SHOULD BE ABOUT GIVING THEIR COMPANY AN IDENTITY.

BRANDS

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other word would smell as sweet."

—ROMEO AND JULIET (ACT II, SCENE 2)

By DAVE SIMANOFF
dsimanoff@tampatrib.com

TAMPA — William Shakespeare may have been England's greatest playwright, but he'd have a hard time making a buck as a branding consultant in today's economy. Yeah, a rose by any other name might smell as sweet, but would it sell as well?

Business founders, office building owners and residential developers in the Tampa Bay area are all familiar with the challenge of coming up with the right name: one that doesn't just look good on a sign or a business card, but one that imparts the kind of message that draws in customers and spurs sales.

"The litmus test is whether you can remember it, and whether it conjures up images in your head that are consistent with the images that the company wants to convey," said Judith



Tribune file photo by MICHAEL SPOONEYBARGER (2004)

It's obvious what inspired the name of this locally-based financial institution, which gives customers an instant sense of its identity.

Washburn, an assistant professor of marketing at the Sykes College of Business at the University of Tampa.

Names and brands represent both a company's promise and its identity, and the most creative names might not necessarily be the ones that bring in customers and sales, she said.

"The more creative you are, the more likely you are to break through the media clutter, but you can't be creative just for creativity's sake," she said. "It has to be driven by the strategy."

Bruce Burdge and Kristen Kennedy Showalter thought they would be

able to find a name for their real estate investment company one morning over a cup of coffee.

The process took a month and involved consulting family members, friends in the commercial real estate industry and, eventually, a Latin dictionary. They launched their new firm, Arcis Investments, in July 2003.

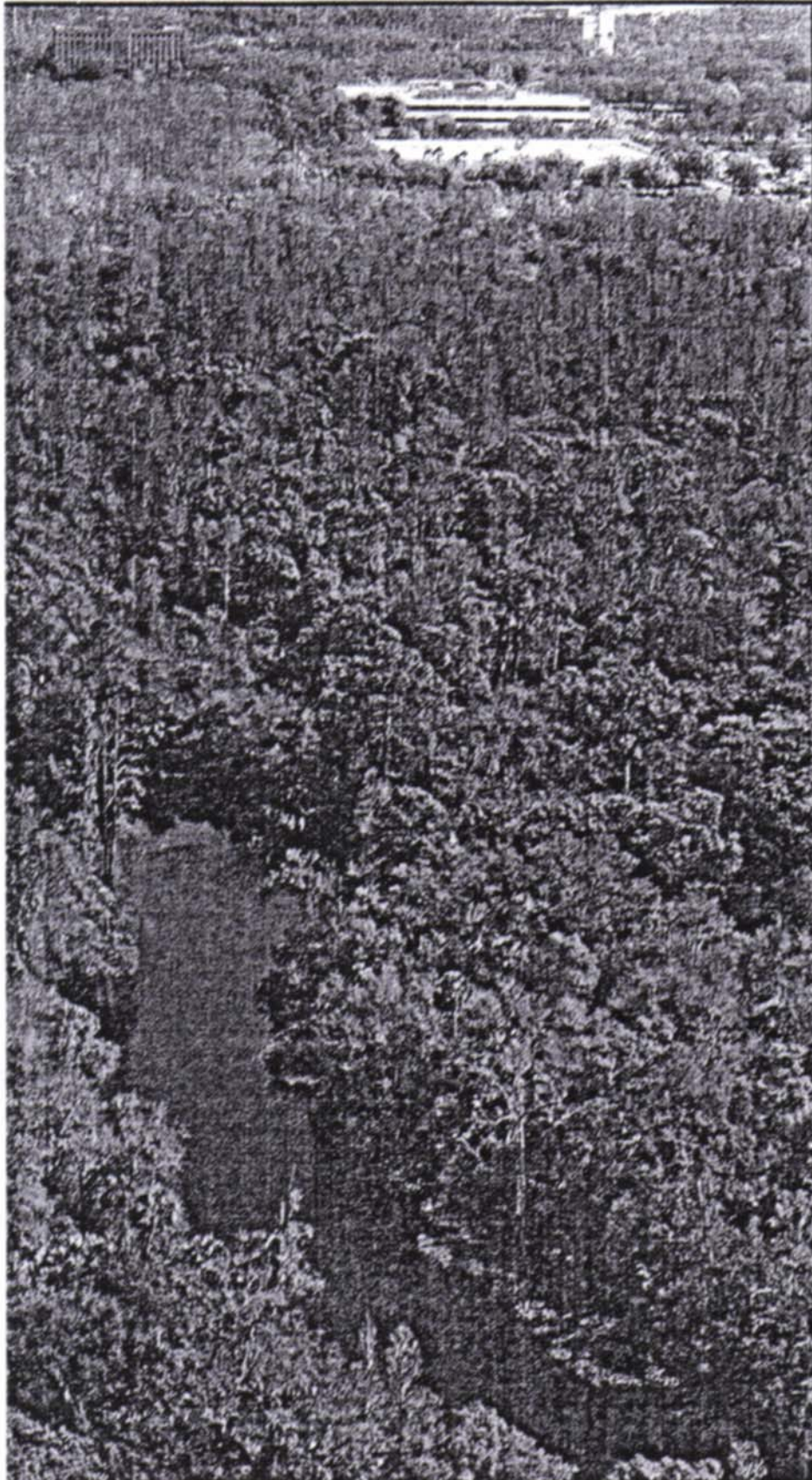
"It was a much more complicated process than I fully appreciated," Burdge said. "Today, I absolutely have a serious appreciation for the complexity involved in coming up with a name."

Neither he nor Kennedy wanted to use their own names for the company. Nor did they want to use abbreviations: BK Investments would remind people of Burger King, while KB Investments sounded too similar to KB Home or KB Toys.

Many potential names got scratched off the list after Burdge and Kennedy ran them by other people and got some negative responses.

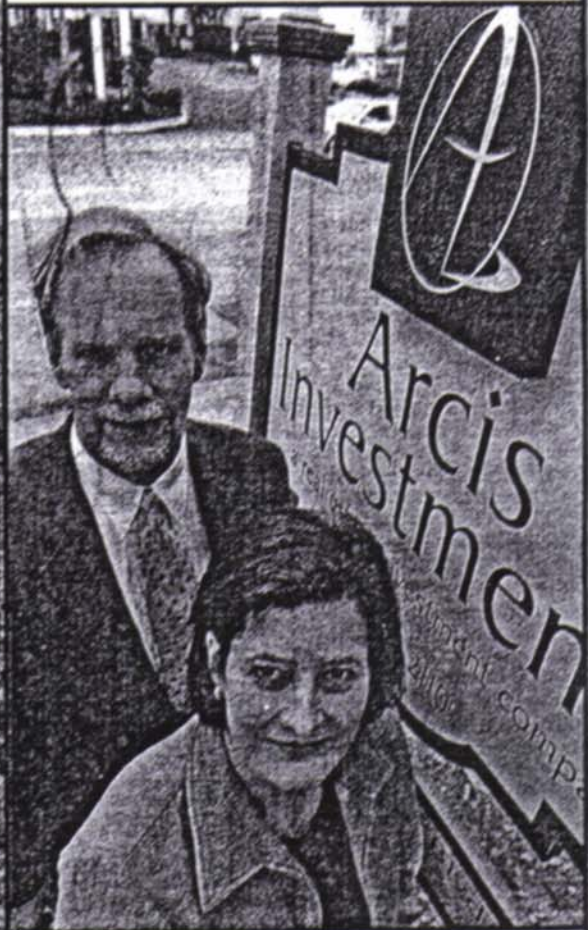
For example, Burdge said he originally liked the idea of naming the new firm Osprey Investments: he always found the birds majestic, they were common in Florida, and they

See CHOOSING NAME, Page 8
Advice on how to navigate process.



"It was a much more complicated process than I fully appreciated. Today, I absolutely have a serious appreciation for the complexity involved in coming up with a name."

BRUCE BURDGE
Cofounder of a real estate investment company



Tribune photo by CRYSTAL L. LAUDERDALE

Kristen Kennedy Showalter, above front, and Bruce Burdge took their inspiration from a Latin dictionary to name their real estate investment company. They say arcis, the word for citadel or stronghold, conveyed the right image for their business. Below, The FishHawk Ranch development's namesake is the ranch that used to operate on the property.

...borough River had been easier to find on the property off Fletcher Avenue near Interstate 75, Hidden porate Park would likely have a different name.



Tribune photo by ROBERT BURKE

CHOOSING NAME

Continued From Page 7

also lived in Connecticut, where he grew up. Some of the people he and Kennedy polled associated the bird with a predatory image.

"There was no one name that everybody loved, but there were lots of names that some people lived and a lot of people had a real negative impression about," Burdge said.

Finally, Kennedy and Burdge decided they would seek out a word that had no connotations, good or bad. They scoured a Latin dictionary and found *arcis*, the word for citadel or stronghold.

It was a eureka moment. The word resonated on two levels: it described a physical building, which represented the company's involvement in real estate, and it also carried a connotation of safety, security and trust, which was important for a firm that was to advise people on how to invest their money.

The only problem so far with the name: some people pronounce it as "AR-ciss," when it's supposed to be "AR-kiss."

"We did not anticipate that," Burdge said. Most people usually remember the correct pronunciation once they hear it, he said.

The pronunciation issue hasn't caused Burdge and Kennedy any woe.

"I can tell you that I'm very pleased with the name," Burdge said. "Given the opportunity to go back in time and pick a different name, I wouldn't."

Developing Identity

Residential developer Bill Bishop said his challenge is to find a name that evokes a sense of place, and one that can evolve to become associated with a community.

"I try to identify a word or name that has the potential of becoming 'a place' and outgrowing its necessary beginning as a project," he said. "I try to find a word that has a locational, descriptive or historical context or meaning."

Bishop considered geography and nearby landmarks in naming Westchase, the growing community in northwest Hillsborough.

"One of the most notable features of the area, at least

NAME ORIGINS

You've seen these names across the Tampa Bay area. Here's where they come from:

PEOPLE

Sykes Enterprises Inc.: John H. Sykes used his last name when he founded this call center company in 1977.

Lykes Bros. Inc.: Howell Tyson Lykes and his seven sons incorporated this Tampa company in 1910.

Walter Industries Inc.: Jim Walter founded the homebuilding company and made his first sale in 1946.

Raymond James Financial: Raymond & Associates merged with Robert A. James Investments in 1964.

The Bellamy on Bayshore: JMC Communities' new luxury condominium in Tampa gets its name from Francis Bellamy, author of the Pledge of Allegiance and a onetime south Tampa resident.

PLACES

The Bank of Tampa: It's a self-explanatory name for a locally based institution. Ditto for the Bank of St. Petersburg.

TECO Energy: Tampa Electric Co.'s initials provided the name for its parent company.

Outback Steakhouse Inc.: This Tampa-based restaurant company's name reflects its Australian-themed eateries and menus.

345 Bayshore: This apartment complex-turned-condominium tower is located at, you guessed it, 345 Bayshore.

THINGS

Fifth Third Bank: The bank that bought First National Bank of Florida was created in 1908 by merger of Third National Bank and Fifth National Bank in Cincinnati. Popular misconception: the bank was founded on the corner of Fifth and Third streets.

The Original Hooters Corp.: According to this Clearwater-based restaurant chain's menus: "Now the dilemma... what to name the place. Simple. What else brings a gleam to men's eyes everywhere besides beer, chicken wings and an occasional winning football season? Hence the name Hooters."

Kash N' Karry: The Tampa-based supermarket chain, now owned by Delhaize Group, changed its name in 1962 from Tampa Wholesale to Kash N' Karry, a no-nonsense moniker reflecting the company's no-gimmick attitude. Today, Kash N' Karry is changing its name to Sweetbay Supermarket, a reference to the Sweetbay Magnolia tree that's common in west central Florida.

then, was Tampa Bay Downs," he said. "I was looking for an equestrian connection but not one that implied an equestrian community. 'Chase,' as in steeplechase, does that and more. Chase is active, evokes flowing water and a number of other generally positive images.

Westchase seemed like a good hybrid name."

Bishop chose "Highland Park" for his latest residential development because green spaces and parks are a large part play a large role in the design of the community. Also, Highland Park isn't laid out like a conventional suburban development, so he sought a name that didn't sound like a conventional suburban development.

Many cities in the United States have established neighborhoods called Highland Parks, he said.

"Pittsburgh, where I grew up, has a Highland Park. Dallas has a very well known, and affluent, Highland Park. There are many others," he said. "Perhaps the Highland Park name conveys a bit more formality in planning than would many other more suburban names."

Bexley and Conner, two developments under way in Pasco County, get their names from an obvious source: the land used to be owned by the Bexley and Conner families.

Don Whyte, president of Newland Communities Southeast, said his company adopted Bexley as the name for its new development because it's a name with roots and history in the Tampa Bay area, and one that doesn't have any other connotations.

Another Newland community, FishHawk Ranch, is named after the ranch that used to operate on the property before it was developed. A fish hawk is another name for an osprey.

Before developing the site, Newland did market research with potential buyers and found the name didn't appeal to some at first, but it really grew on those people.

"The more they heard it, the more they liked it," Whyte said.

Like Bishop, Whyte believes it's important to develop a name that denotes a place, and not one that describes a subdivision.

"We usually look for names that can mean what the community ends up being in people's minds," he said.

Getting Creative

Hidden River Corporate Park on Fletcher Avenue near Interstate 75 got its name one afternoon 12 years ago when two businessmen trekked through the untamed woods and cow pastures to find the Hillsborough River.

Developer Joe Taggart promised partner Eddie Smith spectacular views of the river and a lagoon.

"I had the project under contract and back then it was all fenced in, and there was cattle all over the property. It was all wooded. My key didn't work and we had to climb over the fence," Taggart recalls.

"We walked back — we were three-fourths of the way there, and Eddie says to me, 'Are you sure there's a river back there Joe? Maybe we ought to call this place Hidden River.'"

The name stuck with Taggart. Later, when he hired a professional marketing firm to develop a name for the business park, he asked them to consider "Hidden River" as one of the possibilities. They told him that they couldn't come up with anything better.

Taggart, the retired senior vice president for Crescent Resources in Florida, said that developing names is one of the most difficult — and most fun — aspects of the development business.

"It's very hard — and naming the streets is just as hard," he said. "Every time you think you've got a good name for a street, you call the city or the county and find out it's already taken or reserved."

Sometimes, a little imagination is required to find a suitable street name.

When Highwoods Properties needed a palm tree-themed street name for a road in Highwoods Preserve, the business park it's developing in New Tampa, it found that every species of palm tree — Sabal Palm, Queen Palm, and so on — had already been taken in Hillsborough.

Its solution: use the name of a palm tree that doesn't exist. Highwoods Palm Way was approved by the county.

The Same Name

Most of downtown Tampa's office buildings get their names from their address, such as 100 North Tampa, or their anchor tenant, such as SunTrust Financial Centre.

But in the late 1990s, a banking merger left two of downtown Tampa's business buildings, NationsBank Plaza and Barnett Plaza, with a case of mistaken identity.

When NationsBank bought Barnett in 1998, the company replaced the green Barnett logo at the top of Barnett Plaza with its own red-and-blue logo.

However, the bank didn't

have naming rights to Barnett Plaza, and the building owners balked at changing the name of the building because there was already a building with NationsBank's name in downtown Tampa.

As a result, the building with NationsBank's logo kept the name Barnett Plaza, and the neighboring cylindrical building, which didn't have any signage in the skyline, remained NationsBank Plaza.

Tenants and visitors were confused until 2000, when NationsBank acquired San Francisco-based Bank of America. The company shed its name and adopted Bank of America's. Barnett Plaza's owners agreed to change the name of their building to Bank of America Plaza, and the bank put its new red-and-blue logo on top of the building. NationsBank Plaza's name was changed to 400 North Ashley Plaza.

Rules To Follow

Washburn, the marketing professor at the University of Tampa, offers some guidelines to companies looking for names:

First, she says, a company needs to understand both its target market and its products in order to craft a name and a brand that's effective.

"What are you trying to deliver, and what is the key benefit?" she says. "How do you deliver something that's better, superior to all the other choices?"

Once a company has a name, a brand and a message, the next step is to share it with customers in a clear, focused and consistent way.

"People have to be reminded," she said. "It's very hard to break out of that existing clutter, so they're only going to remember that promise when they're repeatedly made aware of that connection between your promise and your product."

Washburn suggests companies consider names that express what the company is about, and not "a monument to you or some founder of the company."

She said creativity should be an important part of process, but the result should be to develop a name or brand that expresses something about the company, its products or its promise to customers.

"Creativity is part of it, but creativity in and of itself does not sell products," she said.

Reporter Dave Simanoff can be reached at (813) 259-7762.