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Name Calling: Complexities of product naming from a manufacturer's perspective.

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"What's in a name?"

Apparently, Shakespeare was never tasked with executing a global product launch.

At the rate at which new products are introduced in our industry, product naming is a constant effort for manufacturers, and it's not as easy as you might think.

Following a launch, we are often asked why we called something **A** instead of **B**, and the simple answer is, "it's not always that simple."

Let's start with the basic process:

- While a new platform is in development, it will be assigned an internal reference name, or "working" name

- 24–36 months before launch, our marketing team reviews features as part of an initial brainstorming session to determine appropriate naming options and launch theme
- Successful options go forward and undergo a history check to ensure that the name has not been used previously by another industry player
- A legal review is next to ensure there are no trademark concerns
- Preference testing is then conducted with consumer/professional focus groups
- Final translations are run to ensure that the suggested names are globally appropriate

That last step is not as straightforward as it sounds. Before we look at some examples from the hearing industry, it's comforting to realize that we are not alone when it comes to struggles with international branding.

When Mercedes Benz moved into China their name was rendered as "Bensi," which they quickly learned translated to "rush to die." How could they miss something so obvious? Simply put, some of these names aren't caught in straight translations for several reasons.

Let's start with slang. Even when looking at other English-speaking markets, we must still be cautious about using certain words. Take Roots clothing for instance. Most Canadians have proudly donned the brand at one time or another, but I'd recommend a quick online search before you pack it on a trip to Australia.

Our industry is not immune to salacious translations. The popular power instrument "Naida" was likely a tough pill to swallow when first introduced to Finnish market (I'll let you search that one too).

Now, let's say we've successfully dodged the slang/dialect pitfalls, there can still be issues with a name that simply sounds like something else. For example, our recent launch of the More platform concerned our team in Quebec as it sounded like "morte." Fortunately, our team was more critical than the market, and the product family is very much alive and well in *la belle province*.

With a mind-numbing array of audiological features, variations by technology level, and a growing variety of instrument styles, it's no longer as simple as coming up with a name for our BTE/ITE offerings. We are also in a situation where most major manufacturers have multiple brands within their portfolio, with unique product attributes and naming methodology. Therefore, considerations for naming also need to capture/imply the following:

- Power level
- BTE Type (standard vs. receiver in the ear)
- Custom
- Wireless vs. non
- ASHA / MFI
- Battery type (ZA vs. Li-Ion)
- Adult vs. Pediatric
- T-coil...etc.

It is entirely understandable that Hearing Care Professionals long for simplification, and many efforts have been made to this end. Whether it's hierarchy numbering, chip generation suffixes, or dedicated product names, the goal is always to make the device options memorable.

In a perfect world, the offering should be painless to explain to both professionals and consumers alike. A major success for Oticon in this regard was the launch of OPN (pronounced open, not O-P-N), in which the name implied why the technology was so different from an Audiology

standpoint.

Manufacturers work extremely hard to keep our names distinct, sensible, and globally relevant in an industry overflowing with an alphabet soup of TLAs (three-letter acronyms). Yet, despite our efforts, we realize that we can’t please all people, all the time.

That said, most of us are very open to feedback, so please don’t hesitate to reach out if you are keen to see a naming idea immortalized in a new instrument. If it can make it through the screening gauntlet described above, your suggestion just might make the cut in the years to come.