

From the website of ADSlogans Unlimited

www.adslogans.co.uk

Permission is granted for educational institutions and other non-commercial users to reproduce and circulate this copyrighted article provided that the above text, in its entirety, is included on the first page.

We would appreciate hearing from you if you do this. Please email us and advise.

The Art & Science of the Advertising Slogan

by Timothy R V Foster (© 2001)

ADSlogans Unlimited is a service of Timothy R. V. Foster

E-Mail: info@adslogans.co.uk

Phone: +44 (0)208 763 2225

Fax: +44 (0)208 763 2011

www.adslogans.co.uk

Introduction

In his book, *Creative Advertising*, Charles L Whittier says a slogan "... should be a statement of such merit about a product or service that it is worthy of continuous repetition in advertising, is worthwhile for the public to remember, and is phrased in such a way that the public is likely to remember it."

To which we add: The purpose of the strapline (slogan, claim, endline, signature, etc.*) is to leave the key brand message in the mind of the target. It is the sign-off that accompanies the logo. It says "If you get nothing else from this ad, get this..!"

*Slogan Nomenclature. What's What, Where?

In the UK, they are...	end lines, endlines or straplines.
In the USA, they are...	tags, tag lines, taglines or theme lines.
In Germany, they are...	claims.
In Belgium, they are...	baselines.
In France, they are...	signatures.
In the Netherlands and Italy, they are...	pay-offs or payoffs.
To the unimaginative, they are...	rip-offs or ripoffs. The bland leading the bland.
Generically, they are...	slogans.
At ADSlogans Unlimited, we call 'em...	slogos (the slogan by the logo).
They are often...	™ Trade marks (UK)
	™ Trademarks (USA)
	SM Service Marks (USA)
	® Registered Trade Marks (UK)
	® Registered Trademarks (USA)
	And the same sort of thing in the rest of the world.

Slogan Characteristics

A perfectly formed tagline should have as many of these characteristics as possible:

1. It should be memorable	See page	4
2. It should recall the brand name		8
3. It should include a key benefit		9
4. It should differentiate the brand		10
5. It should impart positive feelings for the brand.		11
6. It should reflect the brand's personality		12
7. It should be strategic		13
8. It should be campaignable		13
9. It should be competitive		14
10. It should be original		15
11. It should be simple		15
12. It should be neat		16
13. It should be believable		17
14. It should help in ordering the brand		17
15. It should not be in current use by others		18
16. It should not be bland, generic or hackneyed		18
17. It should not prompt a sarcastic or negative response		19
18. It should not be pretentious		20
19. It should not be negative		20
20. It should not be corporate waffle		21
21. It should not make you say "so what?" or "ho hum".		21
22. It should not make you say "oh yeah??"		22
23. It should not be meaningless		22
24. It should not be complicated or clumsy		23
25. You should like it		23
26. Trends in slogans		23

1. A slogan should be memorable

Memorability has to do with the ability the line has to be recalled unaided. A lot of this is based on the brand heritage and how much the line has been used over the years. But if it is a new line, what makes it memorable? I suggest it is the story told in the advertisement - the big idea.

The more the line resonates with the big idea, the more memorable it will be. 'My goodness, my Guinness!', as well as being a slick line, was made memorable by the illustrations of the Guinness drinker seeing his pint under some sort of threat (perched on the nose of a performing seal, for example). It invoked a wry smile and a tinge of sympathy on the part of the audience at the potential loss if the Guinness was dropped.

If it is successful, ideally the line should pass readily into common parlance as would a catchphrase, such as 'Beanz meanz Heinz' or 'Where's the beef?'

In addition to a provocative and relevant illustration or story, alliteration, coined words, puns and rhymes are good ways of making a line memorable, as is a jingle.

Let's look at some examples of these:

- Alliteration
- Coined words
- Puns

We'll look at rhymes in the next section.

1. A slogan should be memorable...continued

Alliteration

This technique is a familiar aide-memoire:

- Allied Irish Bank: Britain's best business bank.
- Doral: Discover the Doral difference.
- Jaguar: Don't dream it. Drive it.
- Girl Guides: Dream. Dare. Do.
- Fila: Functional... Fashionable... Formidable...
- Hire Knowledge: Specialized staffing solution.

Coined words

Using made-up words can also help:

- Amoy: Chineasy.
- Louis Vuitton: Epileather.
- Burton Menswear: Everywear.
- Ski Fruit: Fruitius. Yogurtus. Delicia.
- Guinness: Guinless isn't good for you.
- Gordon's & Tonic: Innervigoration.
- Neff: Nefficiency.
- KP Peanuts: Pure snacking. Pure snacktivity.
- Smarties: Wotalotlgot.

Puns in the line, no branding

A really good pun can work miracles. However note the lack of brand identity in these otherwise excellent examples. Almost any competing brand could use these lines.:

- Moss Security: Alarmed? You should be.
- Wyborowa Vodka: Enjoyed for centuries straight.
- Pioneer: Everything you hear is true.
- The Economist: For top laps.
- Range Rover: It's how the smooth take the rough.

1. A slogan should be memorable...continued

- Holiday Inn: Pleasing people the world over.
- Casio: Precisely what you're looking for.
- Weight Watchers
Frozen Meals: Taste. Not waist.
- Northern Telecom: Technology the world calls on.
- Zanussi: The appliance of science.
- Lea & Perrins: The Worcester Saucerer.
- Bendix Appliances: We'll do the homework.

Puns in the line, with brand name

In these lines, the brand name appears, but as the solution or promise rather than part of the pun:

- Flowers Fine Ales: Always pick Flowers.
- Barbados: Barbados. Goodness. Gracious.
- Finish Detergent: Brilliant cleaning starts with Finish.
- British Steel: British Steel: British mettle.
- First National
Bank of Chicago: First relationships last.
- Kenco Really
Rich Coffee: Get Rich quick.
- St. Ivel Shape Yogurt: Get your family into Shape, without them even noticing.
- Kodak Gold: Is your film as good as Gold?
- Asda: It 'asda be Asda.
- HMV: No HMV, no video.
- Ritz Crackers: Nothing fitz like a Ritz.
- John Deere Tractors: Nothing runs like a Deere.
- Mumm's Champagne: One word captures the moment. Mumm's the word.
- Money Magazine: Reap the rewards of Money.
- Red Star: Send your parcels Red Star and pull out all the stops.
- Tetley Tea: Tetley make teabags make tea.
- Tic Tac Candy: Tic Tac. Surely the best tactic.
- Impulse Deodorant: You just can't help acting on Impulse.

1. A slogan should be memorable...continued

Puns in the line, with brand name at work

Here the brand goes to work, inextricably part of the pun:

- Absolut Vodka Absolut magic.
- Citibank Because the Citi never sleeps.
- Frosted Chex Chexcellent, or what?
- Quavers Snacks Do me a Quaver.
- Thomas Cook Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it.
- Nytol Sleeping Pills Good mornings follow a good Nytol.
- IBM I think, therefore IBM.
- Abbey National Investments with Abbey endings.
- Cutty Sark Whisky Live a Cutty above.
- Comet Electrical
Stores Lowering prices forever, that's Comet sense.
- Arthur's Cat Food Nothing else is Arthur's good.
- Skoda Favorit Put your money on the Favorit.
- Farley's Baby Food So Farley's, so good.
- Thomas Cook Travel Take a Thomas Cook at our prices!
- Immac Depilatory The look is Immac-ulate.
- Visa Delta
Debit Card Visa's Delta blow to cheques.
- Cadbury's Wispa
Candy You can't keep quiet about a Wispa.
- Campari Aperitif You'll find there is no Camparison.
- Wike Farms Cheese You'll Wike it too.

2. A slogan should recall the brand name

Ideally the brand name should be included in the line. 'My goodness, my Guinness!' thus works, as does 'Aah, Bisto!'. On the other hand, 'Once driven, forever smitten' does not easily invoke the word Vauxhall, nor does 'All it leaves behind is other non-bios' scream out Fairy Ultra. This, by the way, is possibly the worst endline in the history of advertising! It certainly gets my vote. It's a brand manager at P&G speaking to a brand manager at the competition and it means it doesn't leave a nasty residue in the wash -- the laundry equivalent of 'no bathtub ring'. No 'housewife' could possibly understand it.

What's the point of running an advertisement in which the brand name is not clear? Yet millions of pounds are wasted in this way. If the brand name isn't in the strapline, it had better be firmly suggested. Nike dares to run commercials that sign off only with their visual logo -- the 'swoosh' -- like a tick mark or check mark, as the Americans say. The word Nike is unspoken and does not appear. This use of semiotics is immensely powerful when it works, because it forces the viewer to say the brand name.

Rhymes – with brand name

One of the best techniques for bringing in the brand name is to make the strapline rhyme with it. Here are some lines we've selected from the ADSlogans Unlimited database.

See how well it works if the brand name is the rhyming word:

- City Link City Linking, smart thinking.
- Granada Ads work harder in the new Granada.
- Haig Scotch Don't be vague. Ask for Haig.
- Kia-Ora We all adore a Kia-Ora.
- Natwest Bank To save and invest, talk to Natwest.
- Nicotinell It needn't be hell with Nicotinell.
- Quavers The flavour of a Quaver is never known to waver.
- Radio Rentals Stay contented, get Radio Rented.
- Teletext Don't get vexed. Ask Teletext.
- Thomas Cook Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it.

2. A slogan should recall the brand name...continued

Rhymes – brand name mention

A fall-back position is to use a rhyme and mention the brand name without it actually rhyming. Not so effective, perhaps?

- Mars A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play.
- Viakal It's the Viakal fizz that does the bizz! (1992)
- Andrews Antacid It's the Andrews fizz that does the bizz. (1996)
- Milk Milk's gotta lotta bottle.
- Oraldene Soothe it away the Oraldene way.
- Flanders, Belgium Savour the flavour of Belgium.

Note how the competitive edge is lost when the brand name is not the rhyme. It could easily be 'An apple a day helps you work, rest and play,' or 'Savour the flavour of a Quaver'. But the idea of 'To save and invest, talk to Alliance and Leicester' does not threaten NatWest. A&L in fact uses: 'You get a smarter investor at the Alliance & Leicester,' which in turn wouldn't work as: 'You get a smarter investor at Barclays.'

3. A slogan should include a key benefit

'Engineered like no other car in the world' does this beautifully for Mercedes Benz. 'Britain's second largest international scheduled airline' is a 'so what?' statement for the late Air Europe. You might well say "I want a car that is engineered like no other car in the world." But it is unlikely you would say "I want two tickets to Paris on Britain's second largest international scheduled airline!"

In America they say 'sell the sizzle, not the steak.' In Britain they say 'sell the sizzle, not the sausage.' Either way, it means sell the benefits not the features.

Since the tagline is the leave-behind, the takeaway, surely the opportunity to implant a key benefit should not be missed? Here are some...

- Hat Council If you want to get ahead, get a hat.
- Polaroid The fun develops instantly.
- Swan Light Won't make a pom tiddly.

2. A slogan should include a key benefit...continued

- Weight Watchers Taste. Not waist.
- Adjustamatic Beds For the rest of your life.
- Holiday Inn Pleasing people the world over.
- Philips The best way to get music out of your system.
- Radio Times If it's on, it's in.
- The Economist Free enterprise with every issue.

Look at these lines which have no apparent benefits:

- AT&T It's all part of the I Plan from AT&T.
- Equity & Law Equity & Law. Need we say more.
- RAM Enterprises RAM is a woman-owned small disadvantaged business.
- Exxon We're Exxon.
- Lite Tuff That's Lite Tuff!
- Sapolio Soap Use Sapolio.
- Showerlux No wonder we're ahead.
- MFI Take a look at us now.

The problem with the AT&T line was that at no point did they articulate what the 'I Plan' was. They might just as well have said 'It's all part of fxyzldcrk from AT&T.'

4. A slogan should differentiate the brand

'Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach' does this brilliantly. When the line needed refreshing, it was extended in later executions to show seemingly impossible situations, such as a deserted motorway in the rush hour, with the line 'Only Heineken can do this', and lately showing unlikely but admirable situations, such as a group of sanitation engineers trying to keep the noise down to the comment: 'How refreshing! How Heineken!'

The distinction here is that the line should depict a characteristic about the brand that sets it apart from its competitors. In the above examples, we see Swan Light, an Australian low-

4. A slogan should differentiate the brand...continued

alcohol beer. 'Won't make a pom tiddly' is brilliant. It plays on the expression 'tiddly pom', the sort of noise a stiff-upper-lip Brit would say in the colonies when reviewing the troops as they march past, and, of course, a Brit to an Oz is a pom. And what could be worse than a tiddly (tipsy) pom? This line gets my vote as one of the all-time greats. And it runs on double-decker bus 'super sides'.

Here is a selection of lines that deliver differentiation:

- British Rail Let the train take the strain.
- Cheese Council Anyway you please it, cheese it.
- Pilkington K Glass Amazingly pays in your glazing.
- Mail on Sunday A newspaper, not a snoozepaper.
- Timex watch Takes a licking and keeps on ticking.
- Metropolitan Home Mode for your abode.
- Natrena Why have low calories when you can have no calories.
- Safeway Everything you want from a store, and a little bit more.
- Tesco The price is dropping on your weekly shopping.
- Ariel Ultra Not just nearly clean, but really clean.

5. A slogan should impart positive feelings for the brand

Some lines are more positive than others. 'Once driven, forever smitten', for example, or 'Aah, Bisto!'. Contrast this with Triumph's line for its TR7 sports car in 1976: 'It doesn't look like you can afford it', or America's Newport cigarettes: 'After all, if smoking isn't a pleasure, why bother?' "Because I'm hooked, you bastard!" might well be the answer from those who are addicted to the weed, a sentiment the cigarette company may not appreciate as part of its message.

Publishers will tell you that negative book titles don't sell. It is my belief that negative advertising is hard to justify.

Notice how boring all the negative electioneering is in general elections. The voters just want to turn off.

5. A slogan should impart positive feelings for the brand...continued

Here is a group of positive lines, to make you feel better:

- Capital FM Feel 95 point great.
- Delta Airlines You'll love the way we fly.
- Egg Marketing Board Fast food and good for you.
- Horlicks The key to a nice, relaxed evening.
- Solpadeine Makes you feel human again.

6. A slogan should reflect the brand's personality

How can a brand have a personality? Our dictionary says personality means 'habitual patterns and qualities of behaviour of any individual as expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes; distinctive individual qualities of a person considered collectively.'

So think of the brand as a person. Then consider whether the line works for that person.

Here is a group of lines that suit , contrasted with lines that wouldn't:

- Guinness Good things come to those who wait. YES!
- Guinness The quicker picker-upper. NO!
- Volkswagen Beetle Think small. YES!
- Volkswagen Beetle As good as it looks. NO!
- McDonald's Did somebody say McDonald's? YES!
- McDonald's A sandwich served with an east coast style and a midwest smile! NO!

- American Express
card Don't leave home without it. YES!
- American Express
card Money talks. NO!

7. A slogan should be strategic

Some companies can effectively convey their business strategy in their lines:

- BICC Group Engineering tomorrow's world.
- BT It's good to talk.
- Dupont Better things for better living, through chemistry.
- Glaxo/Wellcome Disease has no greater enemy.
- Hyundai From chips to ships.
- Union Carbide The discovery company.

8. A slogan should be campaignable

This means that the line should work across a series of advertising executions. It should have some shelf-life. Then you could have a dozen different ads or commercials, each with its own unique story, with a single common tagline that supports them all, like these:

- American Express Card Do you know me?
(Endorsements by famous names who are not readily recognizable.)
- Blackglama Minks What becomes a legend most?
(Big stars flaunt their mink coats [not any more, they don't].)
- Dewar's Scotch Whisky They're doers.
(Profiles of interesting people who just happen to drink Dewar's Scotch.)
- Hamlet Cigars Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet.
(Pot-pourri of aggravations for which the tranquilizer is lighting up a Hamlet.)
- Heineken Beer How refreshing! How Heineken!
(Variety of unbelievable situations [wouldn't it be nice if...].)
- One2One (cellular phone) Who would you like to have a One2One with?
(Celebrities fantasize about chatting with their own heroes.)
- Sainsbury's (supermarket) Everyone's favourite ingredient.
(Recipes from various celebrities calling for Sainsbury's ingredients.)

9. A slogan should not be usable by a competitor

In other words, you should not be able to substitute a competitive brand name and use the line. For example, 'My goodness, my Murphy's!' just would not work, but 'A company called TRW' could be a company called anything. Let's look at these characteristics in more detail, illustrating the points with more examples.

So many slogans have absolutely no competitive differentiation. You could add any brand name to the line and it would make sense. And this often is proven by how many users of a line there are.

One of the most overused lines in the ADSlogans Unlimited database is 'simply the best' and its variations:

- American Legend Simply the Best.
- Amiga Simply the Best.
- Aspen Simply the Best.
- Binatone Simply the Best.
- Bishop's Nissan Simply the Best.
- Duet Simply the Best.
- Edinburgh
 Woolen Mills Simply the Best.
- HME Firetrucks Simply ... the best.
- Jaystone & Associates Simply the Best.
- Kuoni Simply, the Best.
- Lee Lohman Simply the Best.
- MGM Auto Group Simply the Best.
- Northeast Sailplane Simply the best.
- Radio Cambridgeshire Simply the best.
- Sanderson Farms Simply the best.
- Sunshine Flights Simply the best.
- True Digital Simply the best.
- Woolacombe Bay Hotel Simply the best.

11. A slogan should be simple..continued

- Hotel Ana, Singapore Highly strung grand pianos, relaxed guests.
Not the other way round.
- Fireman's Fund
Insurance Inventor and scientist make dreams come true; the
insurance man keeps nightmares from happening.
- Iberia Airlines The best connections in the world mean nothing
if an airline forgets the human one.

But like these:

- Blackpool More than just a front.
- Larkspur
Landing Hotel Home suite hotel.
- Lloyd's Life
Insurance Cash if you die, cash if you don't.
- British Airways
Concorde You leave. Arrive before.

12. A slogan should be neat.

We're using the word neat in the teenage sense. A neat line helps move the brand up a point in the punter's perception.

Here are some lines that are neat-o!

- Apple Computer Think different.
- The Economist For top laps.
- Heinz Beanz meanz Heinz.
- Kellogg's Help yourself.
- Mazda Get in. Be moved.
- Thomas Cook Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it.
- Zenith Data Systems The best way of expressing your intelligence.

13. A slogan should be believable

Poetic licence is allowed. Even exaggeration:

- Fix-All Liquid Cement A million and one uses.
- Heineken Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach.
- Whitman's Sampler A woman never forgets the man who remembers.

But you can go over the top...

- Cadbury's Nobody knows Easter better than Cadbury's.
- Haagan-Dazs It's better than anything.
- KFPM (radio station) The World's Biggest Little Station.
- Old Gold cigarettes Not a cough in a carload.

14. The line should help when you're ordering the product or service, or at least aspiring to it.

- Here are some that help:
 - "I want to have 'the ultimate driving machine'." (BMW)
 - "Give me 'taste. Not waist'." (Weight Watchers Meals)
 - "'Why fool around with anyone else?'" (FedEx)
- Here are some that don't:
 - "I want a beer that's 'good, but not that good.'" (Tennents)
 - "I want two tickets to Brussels on 'Britain's second largest international scheduled airline!'" (Air Europe -- now out of business)

15. The line should not be in current use by others.

The more different users of a slogan, the less effective it is. ADSlogans Unlimited offers its LineCheck service so you can make sure your line isn't in use by others.

Whose are these lines?.....

- Who? Our people make the difference.
- Who? Engineering the future.
- Who? Taste the difference.
- Who? Nobody sells for less!
- Who? Where quality costs less.
- Who? We care.
- Who? The cutting edge.

16. The line should not be bland, generic or hackneyed

Slogans that are bland, redolent of Mom and apple-pie, clearly suffer a weakness. Almost any brand could use these lines:

- Ames Rubber Excellence through total quality.
- Currie Motors Nice people to do business with.
- CWS Ltd People who care.
- Henredon furniture For those who value excellence.
- Itel computers Whatever it takes, wherever it is.
- Omega The sign of excellence.
- Royal Bank
of Scotland Where people matter.
- Singer We make it better.
- Unisys We make it happen.
- Carling Black Label Your best bet yet.

And then there are the generic lines... Imagine an organization that provides slogans. They might sell slogans off the shelf -- like these:

16. The line should not be bland, generic or hackneyed...continued

- Tomorrow's answers... today!
- Our customers come first.
- Satisfaction guaranteed.
- You can be sure with us.
- World class.
- The best there is.
- We do it carefully.

Is that what you want?

Hackneyed means 'made trite and commonplace by overuse'.

A hackneyed line is dull and monotonous. Like these:

- Put your money where your mouse is. -- for any internet bank.
- The wings of [country] -- for any national airline.
- The spirit of [location] -- for any national liquor.
- [Country's] largest [industry] -- for any big company.
- Don't just [verb 1], when you can [verb 2] -- verb 2 is usually a bastardization of the advertiser's name.
- Don't say [commodity], say [brand] -- widely used in many areas.

17. A slogan should not prompt a sarcastic or negative response

These do:

Delta Airlines. We get you there.

("I should certainly hope so. Do I get my money back if we crash?")

Mobil. We want you to live.

("And the Flibberty's Fine Funerals line must be 'We want you to die!'")

FileMaker software. What's your problem?

("It don't work!")

Eastern Airlines. We have to earn our wings every day.

("I've heard of short-term financing, but this is ridiculous!")

Is that a Playtex under there?

("Sexist pig!")

18. A slogan should not be pretentious

This is the pomposity test.

Try reading the line with the utmost gravity, like an American narrator in a 50's corporate film, giving it the true spin of importance.

Does it sound a bit pretentious?

These do:

- Kyocera. Doing what others dare not.
- Churchill. Surprisingly passionate about insurance.
- The Hair Clinic. Where excellence is an everyday word.
- Ariel Ultra. Digests the fatty food stains ordinary compacts leave behind at 40°.
- Olivetti. Our force is your energy.

19. A slogan should not be negative

Here is a group of lines that don't profess good tidings:

- Northern Ash Lung cancer doesn't come in extra mild.
- Meat & Livestock
 Comm Slam in the lamb.
- Bacardi Spice Distilled in hell.
- Lea & Perrins Steak sauce only a cow could hate.
- Hungry Joes Bad news for baked potatoes.
- Tennents Pilsner It's good, but not that good.
- Triumph TR 7 It doesn't look like you can afford it.

22. A slogan should not make you say “Oh yeah??”

These do:

- British Telecom It's you we answer to.
 ("Oh yeah??")
- Kmart Changing for the better.
 ("Oh yeah??")
- British Rail We're getting there.
 ("Oh yeah??")
- Tellabs Leadership in providing innovative solutions to the
 ("Oh yeah??") telecommunications industry worldwide.

23. A slogan should not be meaningless

These are... What on earth are they trying to say?

- Bassett's Licorice
 Allsorts One too many and you might turn Bertie.
- Environment Agency Use a bin. It beats getting your bird nicked by a logo.
- Exxon We're Exxon.
- Foster's Tickle it you wrigglers!
- Lite Tuff That's Lite Tuff!
- Pork Farms The huntiest choppers in the clundy.

24. A slogan should not be complicated or clumsy

These are a little complex...

- Caltex At the heart of your engine. And the community.
- Madasafish Freedom for the net generation.
- Bally Ribbon Mills Manufacturers and distributors of quality narrow woven-edged fabrics since 1923.
- Rico Windows Your local family-run business in its 14th year trading under the same name.
- Tyco International Telecommunication and electronics. Healthcare and specialty products. Fire and security. Flow control.
- Requisite Technologies E-content solutions that power B2B e-commerce.

25. You should like it

What's the point of using a slogan you don't like? If you really don't like it, Slogananalysis® our free online slogan analyzer should help you find out why. See our website for details.

26. Slogan trends

There are two trends in slogans these days. One is the single-word line, such as exemplified here:

- Budweiser True.
- Hankook Tyres Driven.
- IBM Think.
- Irn-Bru Different.
- Rover Relax.
- United Airlines Rising.

26. Slogan trends...continued

It could be trendy – all in three words (or three terse ideas)

It is hard to deliver a complex message in a single word, so that brings us to the other trend – the triple threat...

- Air France New. Fast. Efficient.
- British Gas Energy. Efficiency. Advice.
- ICI World problems. World solutions. World class.
- Jaguar Grace... Space... Pace...
- Marks & Spencer Quality. Value. Service.

This is not the end. Consider it a “pause”.