

# HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

## A GOOD TAGLINE NEEDS TO BE CLEVER AND CLEAR



Jacqueline Taylor, Deputy Director, Strategic Operations, Texas Gulf Coast Small Business Development Center Network, shares her expert business advice in her bi-weekly column seen in the Houston Chronicle.

**Q.** Would creating a tagline or slogan for my small business be a good idea? Or are they something only the bigger companies use?

**A.** The right tagline or slogan can help your business stand out from the crowd, and even a very small business can benefit from

using one. With a few well-chosen words, you can convey what you want prospects and customers to know about your brand and what sets you apart. For instance, think about the taglines or slogans of some of the better known tax preparers who advertise during tax season. H&R Block uses “File Taxes Your Way,” promoting the fact that with them, you can either file online or in person at their office. TurboTax uses “Get your maximum tax refund, guaranteed.” They want you to know you won’t miss out on any deductions if you use their software. The first words you see when you go to TaxACT’s website are “You Got This,” suggesting that filing your taxes with them will be a piece of cake.

Your tagline can do the same thing for your small business: give customers a reason to choose you over your competition. So the first thing you should do if you want to create a strong tagline is to define not just what you’re selling, but why customers should do business with you. What’s the benefit of buying from you instead of from another similar business?

Once you’ve defined your value proposition, figure out how to express it in a catchy and memorable way. First just write down all the words and phrases that come to mind. Think of words that reflect your actual product or service, but also words that illustrate the experience you’re promising your customers. Ask your staff to contribute. Play around with word combinations, rhymes and alliteration. Avoid overused words like “quality,” “solutions,” or “excellent.”

Typically, you’ll put your tagline in the form of a statement (US Postal Service’s “We Deliver For You”), command (American Express’s “Don’t Leave Home Without It”), or question (Capital One’s “What’s in Your Wallet?”). Shorter is always better. Clever is always good, but clarity is critical. You want people to understand the message you’re trying to get across. If you have a hard time coming up with something that meets all the criteria, you might want to engage a professional copywriter. You understand your business, but a professional can supply the way with words you might need.

Once you have a tagline that resonates, you’ll want to use it on your website and in your email signature, on brochures, letterhead, purchase orders, invoices, envelopes and business cards. Repetition is key to building your brand.



The Texas Gulf Coast Small Business Development Center (TGC SBDC) Network serves 32 counties in Southeast Texas. The program is anchored by a vibrant office facility in midtown Houston and supported by fourteen centers located with or sponsored by colleges and universities and economic development organizations throughout the Gulf Coast. The TGC SBDC Network focuses on providing business training and advising to start-up entrepreneurs, emerging businesses, and firms needing strategies for high growth. Professional business advisors work with client companies to assess feasibility of ideas and business models, develop business plans, identify funding opportunities, prepare loan and financing packages, and analyze financial results. Business advising is supplemented by a wide range of training classes and seminars concentrating on growing a successful business. Workshops are taught by experienced businessmen and women who blend formal learning and real-world experiences into practical curriculum.

The TGC SBDC Network is a program of the UH CT Bauer College of Business and a resource partner of the US Small Business Administration, and is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the US Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. SBDC programs are nondiscriminatory and available to individuals with disabilities. The University of Houston is an EEO/AA institution. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact the SBDC at 713/752-8488 for accommodations.