

The stories behind 10 great names

Apple was the favourite fruit of company founder Steve Jobs. When it came to choosing a name for his computer he wanted a change from the cold, complicated names of other computer companies of the era – IBM, NEC, Cincom and Logitech. The Beatles' choice of the name **Apple** for their label was a pun; **Apple Corps** (pronounced 'core') was set up to replace the company Beatles Ltd.

Audi, the German car company, is the imperative or command form of the Latin verb meaning 'listen'. The company's founder, August Horch, was previously boss of another car manufacturing firm called A Horch & Cie, but when, after a dispute, he left to start up another company, he was forbidden to use his own name. *Horchen* means 'to listen' in German, so the name **Audi** is actually a pun.

BlackBerry was a name thought up by the US naming company Lexicon Branding. The gadget was provisionally named PocketLink, then an employee noticed that the miniature buttons looked like strawberry seeds. The long 'a' of the word *straw* didn't convey speed and niftiness, so **BlackBerry** with a short 'a' sound was chosen instead.

Coca-Cola's name is based on two of the drink's ingredients – extracts from coca leaves and from cola nuts. *Cola nuts* can also be spelt *kola*, but the founder of **Coca-Cola** preferred the look of the two Cs.

eBay was originally going to be called Echo Bay, but the URL echobay.com had already been taken.

Google was originally nicknamed BackRub by its founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, because their system analysed back-links (ie links from other web pages). In 1997 the pair wanted a new name that would give a sense of the huge amount of data the search engine could process. **Google** is a play on the word *googol*, the word for the huge number that is represented by a one followed by a hundred noughts.

Hotmail is not only a snappy word linking *mail* with a positive adjective (*hot* in the sense exciting, new or topical) but it also contains the computer mark-up language initials HTML.

Kodak is a made-up word. Company founder George Eastman wanted a short name that would be easy to spell and to pronounce – and to trademark. He liked the letter K, which he described as a strong, incisive letter.

Nike began in the 1960s as Blue Ribbon Sports and officially became **Nike** in 1978. The company takes its name from **Nike**, the winged Greek goddess of victory – very apt for a company involved in the sports world. Nike's Swoosh logo represents one of the goddess' wings.

Starbucks is based on a character in Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*. This was the favourite novel of Gordon Bowker, one of the founders of the coffee chain and he originally wanted to call the company Pequod after the whaling ship in the book. His partners weren't so keen and suggested Starbo, the name of a local disused mining camp. Bowker saw the connection with Starbuck, the first mate on the *Pequod*, and so **Starbucks** was born.

There are more great names in the e-guide **Choosing a winning name for your business**.