

A case history of branding from scratch

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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When the printing and manufacturing Paarl Media Group decided to list on the JSE, it started on a journey into what could well have been into the dark unknown of choosing a new name...

Fortunately, the group executive decided to leave the task of finding the best name, to its own marketing team, which, by logical deduction and the ticking of all the imperatives, came up with Novus Holdings Limited.

In essence, the new listed company, which would have Paarl Media, Correll Tissue and Paarl Labels as initial subsidiaries, would have to have a name that would be easily remembered and recognised by all potential stakeholders, not least of which being the investment community and business media.

CEO Stephen van der Walt immediately liked the name Novus, which, he said, exemplified the group's strategy of unlocking its growth potential and diversity into manufacturing and technology.

Universal appeal and unusually strong

A considerable amount of research and comparative study by the PMG project team went into the process of finding the most ideal holding company name.



Quite apart from meeting all the PMG branding criteria through a scoring process and logical deduction, by far and away the most powerful company name for any holding company worldwide right now is "NOVUS." Something important given the group's future global aspirations.

It is unusually strong in a global context because it is one of the only words that is spelt and pronounced the same way in almost every language using the alphabet on which English is based. This includes French, Spanish, German, Dutch, and Italian. Even some Middle and Far Eastern countries using Asiatic or Arabic alphabetic, use the word NOVUS as it is spelt here.

In addition to NOVUS being immediately understood by all these languages as a globally accepted word for innovation, leadership and progress, it also lends itself ideally to signify a holding company with global intent and dedicated to embracing technology, development and positioning itself as a market leader.

In addition, as it will be a listed company, "Novus Holdings Ltd" adds even more gravitas and a clear perception of substance, integrity and trust.

It is the full name that starts to distinguish itself from all the other companies worldwide using Novus as a name.

Doing the homework pays off

What distinguishes it even more is that it will be unique in terms of its full and abbreviated stock exchange sector listing.

On top of that, the well-targeted marketing strategy being planned by the project team will also ensure that the new group will top the SEO rankings in just about every country on the globe but especially in South Africa.

The problems every branding team faces in the corporate world were all overcome as a consequence of doing their homework, scoring intelligently and unemotionally and then communicating in detail with the executive group to whom they

were reporting.

The group ensured that everyone involved was made aware of some cast iron branding imperatives.

That, for example:

* The biggest challenge for those developing a new brand name is developing sufficiently strong arguments backed by data and logic, to convince board members that it is the best possible option.

*Brands do not create corporate reputations but rather corporate integrity, performance and success creates brand reputation and value.

*Historically, the choice of brand name has more often than not led to considerable argument at board level and those brands chosen by committee are compromise solutions. Some of the greatest brand names have been decided upon by company founders who did not allow any form of input other than their own convictions. For example, Ford, Mercedes, Virgin, Kellogg's, Google, Amazon etc.

*In choosing a brand, it is important to have a strong name that can roll off the tongue in any language; does not have a negative connotation in foreign cultures and countries and which ideally, gives a clear idea of what the company believes in, strives for and involved in.

* Personal opinion is a dangerous decision-maker because it seems so reasonable to the person with the opinion. Unless executives can put distance between what they believe and what the brand believes, the naming process brand can quickly fall victim to compromise, distraction and sectorial and personal bias.

* The psychology of naming means that:

- No new brand name has ever been instantly liked
- No brand name idea "jumps out" immediately
- There are hardly ever any eureka moments in choosing brand names
- Naming a company or product is like naming a child. No matter how much the parents might agree on and like a name, it takes weeks or sometimes months for that name to become so synonymous with that child that it is almost impossible to consider any other name as being appropriate.

Don't do it by committee

The most daunting task of all was to get across the fact that the biggest mistake that can possibly be made in making a company is to try to do this by committee.

What is fascinating about this branding project is that while the new group wishes to diversify, it is still firmly based on the print industry.

There is no question, in my mind, that print, in terms of what this group plans, is still very much alive, well and relevant.

The mistake many commentators make is not to draw the distinction between "print" and "newspapers".

Indeed, newspapers the world over are battling, but these are largely mainstream nationals or metropolitan daily or weekly newspapers.

Community newspapers, on the other hand, are thriving - particularly in South Africa - and for many of the country's biggest retail groups, inserts and advertisements in community newspapers still form the front line of their marketing thrust.

Equally, while many consumer magazines might well be struggling, the custom magazine market is flourishing with some of South Africa's biggest circulation magazines belonging to commercial brands.

The Paarl Media print presses continue to run at full steam ahead as a result of the group targeting those sectors of the market that are the most measurable and sustainable.

As it already has some of the most advanced technology available, so it is no surprise to hear that the group wishes to get more involved in technology driven innovation.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

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