

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

ADDING METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Alex Chahin

Head of Core Rider Product Marketing, Lyft

**Why is it so hard to
name products?**







QUICK POLL

**Have you needed to
name a product?**



QUICK POLL

**Do you find product
naming tricky?**



Imagine a world where...



**naming was less
daunting**



**you got faster
alignment**



**you had more time for
strategic work**

NAMING BRIEF

Easy to pronounce

Easy shortened version

English and Spanish versions

ALEX

**We've named a lot
of products**

TOPICS

Why & what we name products

How we name them

Case studies

Tips & tricks

WHY NAME PRODUCTS

WHY NAME PRODUCTS

**Shorthand for what it is
and the value it provides**

WHY NAME PRODUCTS

**Good names can make
your job easier**

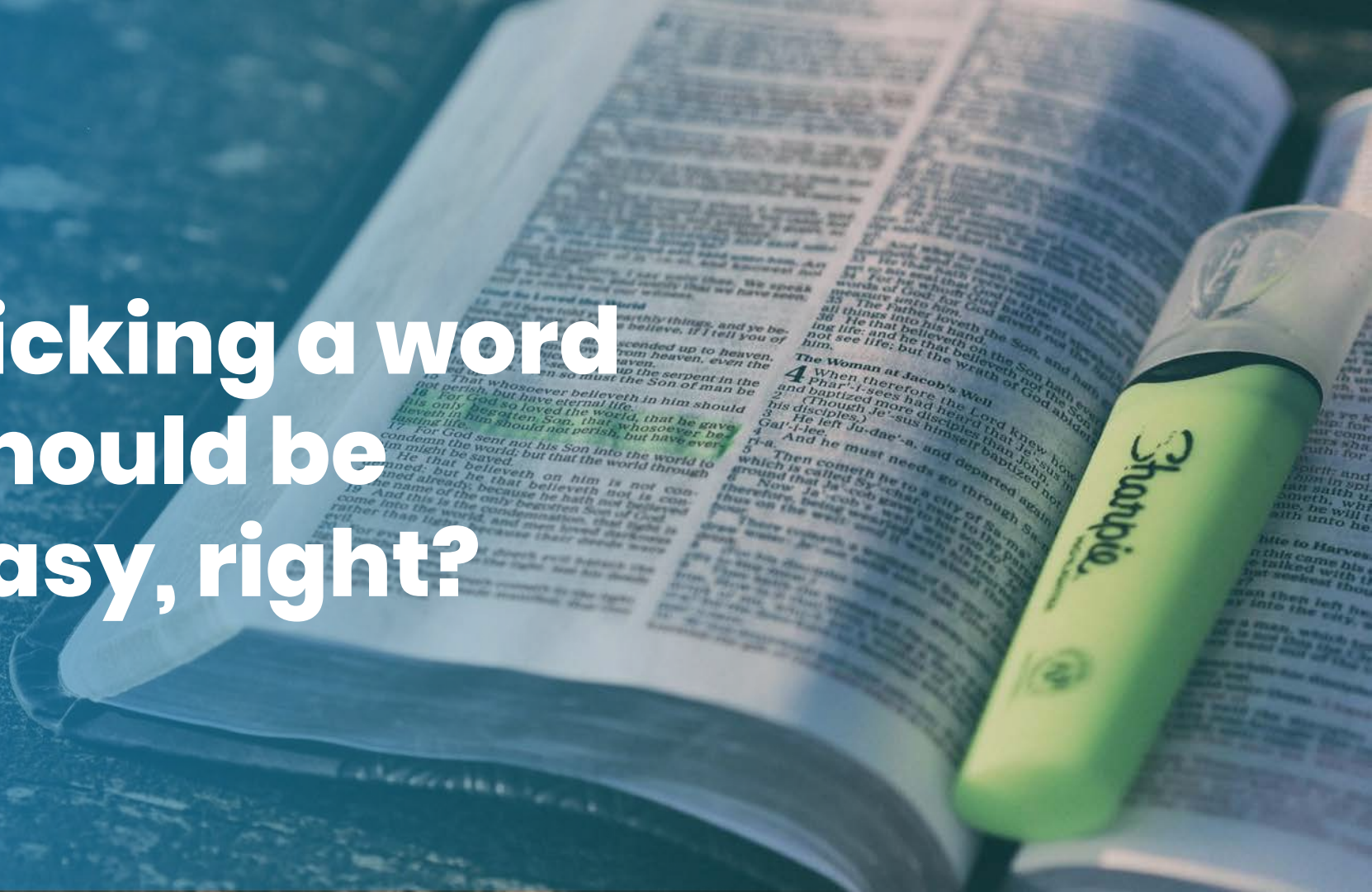
WHY NAME PRODUCTS

**Build equity over time for
faster recognition**

WHY NAME PRODUCTS

**Language for customers
to market on your behalf**

Picking a word
should be
easy, right?



QUICK POLL

**How often do you get
it on the first try?**



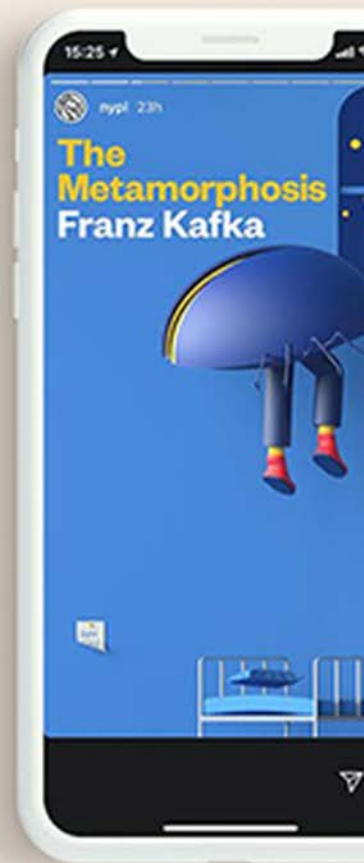
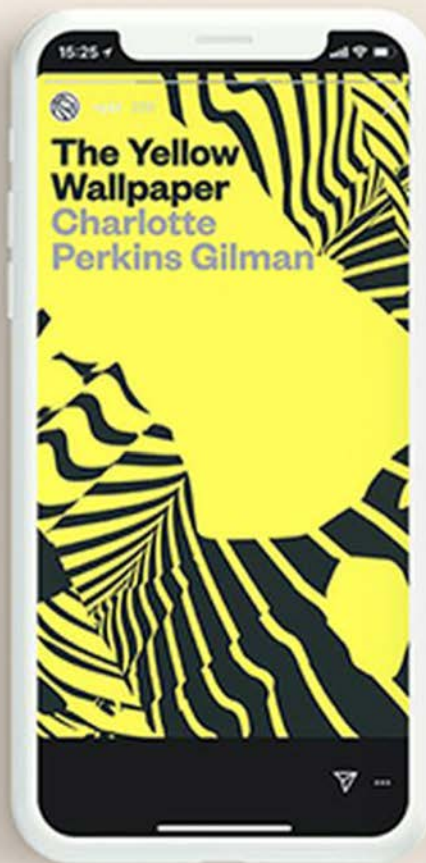
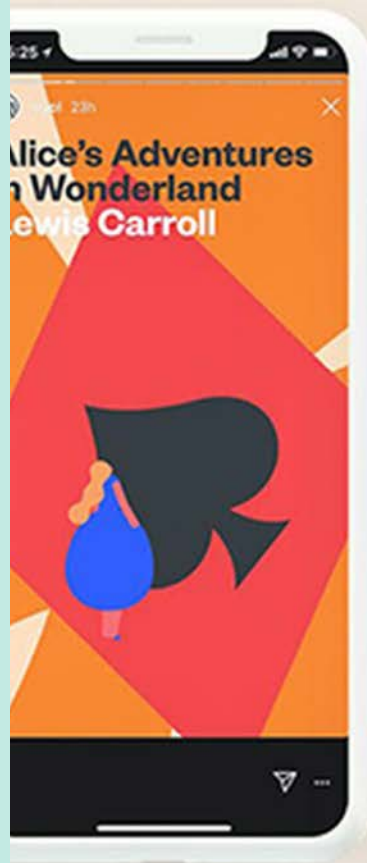
APPLE WATCH



AIRBNB EXPERIENCE S



INSTAGRAM STORIES



GOOGLE PIXEL



Descriptive

Branded

Literal

Literal description of the company, product, or service (sometimes abbreviated)

America Online
Bed Bath & Beyond
Bavarian Motor Works

Benefit

States the key benefit for the customer

Seamless
KitchenAid
Best Buy

Portmanteau

Combining two concepts in a resonant way

Netflix
Airbnb
Sephora

Evocative

Evokes a feeling using metaphor, mythology, historical figure, and/or foreign translation

Nike
Alexa
Lego

Invented

Completely invented word that invokes intrigue and appeal

Dasani
Haagen-Dazs
Kodak

WHEN TO USE DESCRIPTIVE

**Fast understanding
is important**

**Less money and time
available**

**Customers faced
with a lot of choice**

WHEN TO USE BRANDED

**Lasting meaning and
equity is important**

**More money and time
available**

**Customers offered
fewer products**

RECAP

Names are shorthand
Descriptive to branded
Strategy for when to use each

THE 7 STEPS FOR NAMING SUCCESS

HERE'S THE SITUATION

**You're the Product Marketing
lead on a new tourism
product for locals**

?????



Turn boredom into something better

Explore the hundreds of local adventures in your backyard

RELATIVES IN TOWN AGAIN



Let's see those houses from "Full House"

4.7 ★ / KID-FRIENDLY

Situated right by Alamo Square, this is



What about that windy road on a hill?

4.6 ★ / SMALL HIKE

Famous for its twists and turns, this



Locals ride those trolleys, right?

4.8 ★ / CITY SCAPES

Placate your parents with an iconic ride



Show me those cute seals by the water

4.5 ★ / LONG WALK

Here's how to avoid the crowds at



Is there anywhere good to see the city

4.9 ★ / CITY SCAPES

Show off San Francisco's views

DESCRIPTIVE EXAMPLES

Local Tours

City Experiences

City Tours

Urban Excursions

BRANDED EXAMPLES

Explorer

Atlas

Columbus

Aventura

?????



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LUCKY YOU

**The team is about to launch a
loyalty program for Voyager,
and you have to name it**



STEP 1

Answer upfront questions

Does it even need a formal name?

Should you consider descriptive & branded?

Who's the final approver on this?

Who is this for, and what do you know about them?

Will you need to do research?

D A C I

D A C I

DRIVER

APPROVER

CONTRIBUTORS

INFORMED

D

A

C

I

DRIVER

APPROVER

CONTRIBUTORS

INFORMED

YOU

CEO

**MARKETING
PRODUCT
CREATIVE
DESIGN
LEGAL**

**SUPPORT
POLICY**

A hand-drawn sketch of a person's face is visible in the top left corner. Below it is a list with three items, each followed by a wavy line. In the top right, there is a box containing the text 'H1-H6 Design'. In the center, there is a box containing the letter 'V' with the word 'Days' written next to it. At the bottom, there is a box containing the word 'Video' and the word 'Model' written below it. A hand holding a green marker is visible in the bottom left corner, pointing towards the text 'Set process expectations'.

STEP 2

Set process expectations

Decide who is going to be involved in the process

Identify timelines & milestones (Creative, Legal, Eng, etc.)

Socialize how the process will work with stakeholders

Acknowledge that it's an emotional process

Decide how you'll decide (e.g., research, strategy, etc.)



STEP 3

Define your naming principles

**Create parameters for what
your name needs to achieve**

**Consider audience, how people
should feel, tone to strike**

**Consider the places the
name will appear**

**Think about constraints
(character count, taboo words)**

**Make sure final approver
agrees with principles**

NAMING PRINCIPLES FOR THIS PROJECT

Be flexible. The structure of the program will evolve over time (e.g., status)

Convey value. Make it clear users get something meaningful.

Must be extensible. Name must be effective across a variety of platforms (e.g. in-app placements, digital and traditional media).

Be enduring. Name should be timeless and relevant as the business and program benefits evolve.

Fit in brand. The voice of Voyager is casual and human.

Be clear. The audience shouldn't have to work hard to understand what it is.



STEP 4

Brainstorm & ideate

**Schedule time with
cross-functional
partners**

**Decide which brainstorm
format will work best**

**Share key context,
especially the principles**

**Vote on best ones before
people leave the room**

**Use brainstorm output to get
to your shortlist**

Descriptive

Branded

Literal

Literal description of the company, product, or service (sometimes abbreviated)

Benefit

States the key benefit for the customer

Portmanteau

Combining two concepts in a resonant way

Evocative

Evokes a feeling using metaphor, mythology, historical figure, and/or foreign translation

Invented

Completely invented word that invokes intrigue and appeal

**Loyalty Program
Rewards
Club**

**Perks
Savings
Value**

**Rewerks
Explorewards**

**Beyond
Trove
Treasure
Tesoro**

**Avanta
Valorita
Gemsy**

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Gemso

A background image showing a hand pointing at several yellow sticky notes pinned to a light blue wall. The sticky notes contain handwritten text, though it is not legible. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

STEP 5

Conduct research

Decide on the right measurement approach

Create product description and mock screens

Include 5–7 names, considering mix of types

Make sure the final approver agrees with the shortlist

Make sure to get quantitative and qualitative read

1

**Give respondents product description
and 5–7 names to rank on set attributes**

2

**Give description and rank 5–7 names,
but pick favorite after seeing design mock**

3

**Only give respondents names, and ask
them to describe what they think it is**

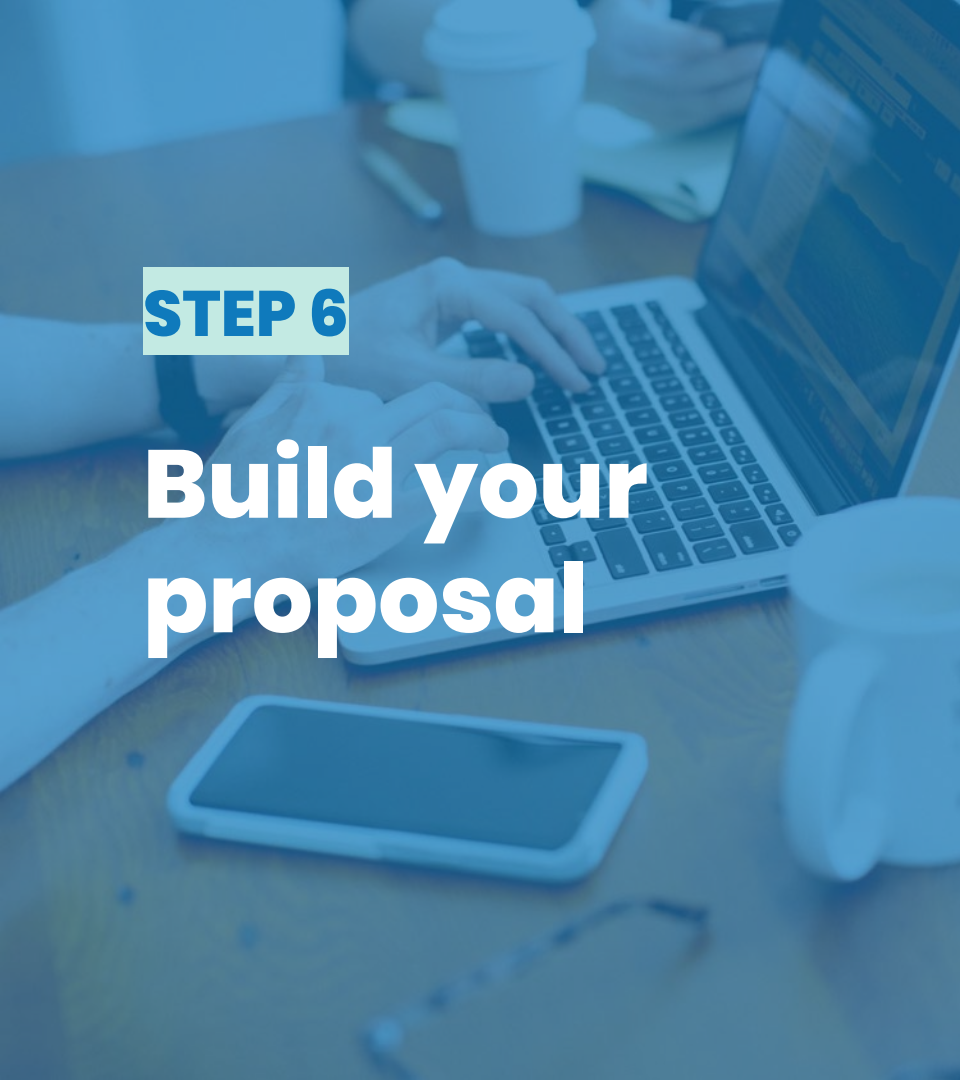
Name	Easy to Understand	Unique	Likely to participate	Understand Needs	Weighted Score	Overall Favorite	Favorite after seeing design
Voyager Rewards							
Voyager Club							
Voyager Beyond							
Voyager Treasure							
Voyager Trove							

Name	Easy to Understand	Unique	Likely to participate	Understand Needs	Weighted Score	Overall Favorite	Favorite after seeing design
Voyager Rewards	75%	10%	40%	54%	49%	38%	33%
Voyager Club	80%	7%	36%	56%	49%	19%	17%
Voyager Beyond	15%	52%	17%	18%	22%	15%	10%
Voyager Treasure	15%	42%	18%	22%	21%	18%	26%
Voyager Trove	23%	21%	20%	25%	22%	10%	15%

Name	Easy to Understand	Unique	Likely to participate	Understand Needs	Weighted Score	Overall Favorite	Favorite after seeing design
Voyager Rewards	75%	10%	40%	54%	49%	38%	33%
Voyager Club	80%	7%	36%	56%	49%	19%	17%
Voyager Beyond	15%	52%	17%	18%	22%	15%	10%
Voyager Treasure	15%	42%	18%	22%	21%	18%	26% ↑
Voyager Trove	23%	21%	20%	25%	22%	10%	15% ↑

CAVEAT

**If you believe branded is
the best path, research
isn't as useful**

A background image showing a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. On the desk, there is a white smartphone, a white coffee cup, and a pair of glasses. The image has a blue tint.

STEP 6

Build your proposal

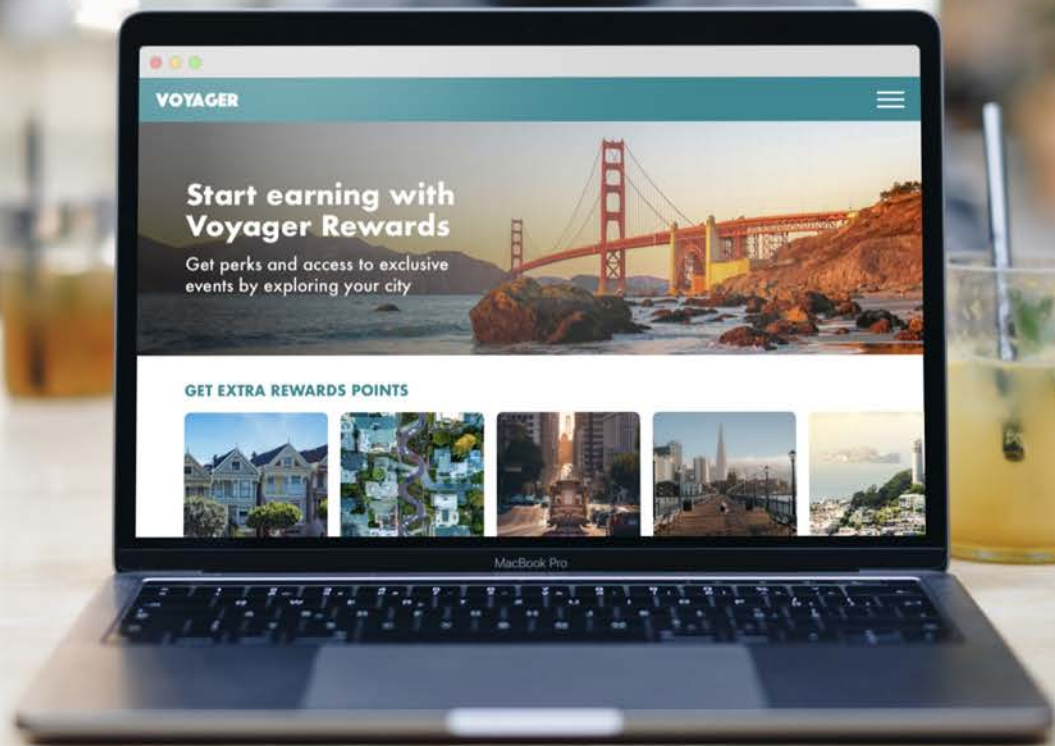
Take the time to make it feel real

Pull together mocks and customer quotes

Conduct a word study to pressure test language

Show your work and the path to the recommendation

Don't forget key context (other products, competition)



VOYAGER



Start earning with Voyager Rewards

Get perks and access to exclusive
events by exploring your city

GET EXTRA REWARDS POINTS



A group of four people (three women and one man) are seated around a round wooden table in a modern office setting. They are looking at laptops and appear to be in a meeting. The office has large windows with blinds and shelves with books and framed pictures in the background. The entire image is overlaid with a blue tint.

STEP 7

Get final approval

Schedule in-person review with approver

Reach out to Legal to vet your top choices

Have a next-best-option going in

Get final sign off and move forward

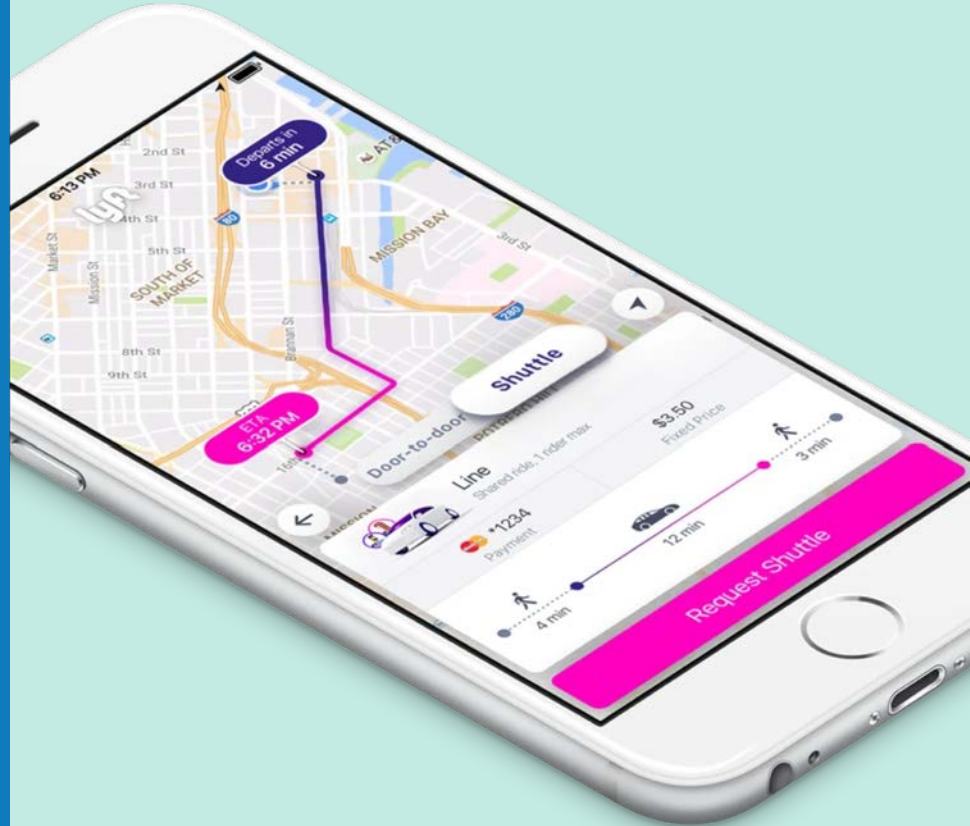


RECAP

- 1. Answer upfront questions**
- 2. Set process expectations**
- 3. Define your naming principles**
- 4. Brainstorm & ideate**
- 5. Conduct research**
- 6. Build your proposal**
- 7. Get final approval**

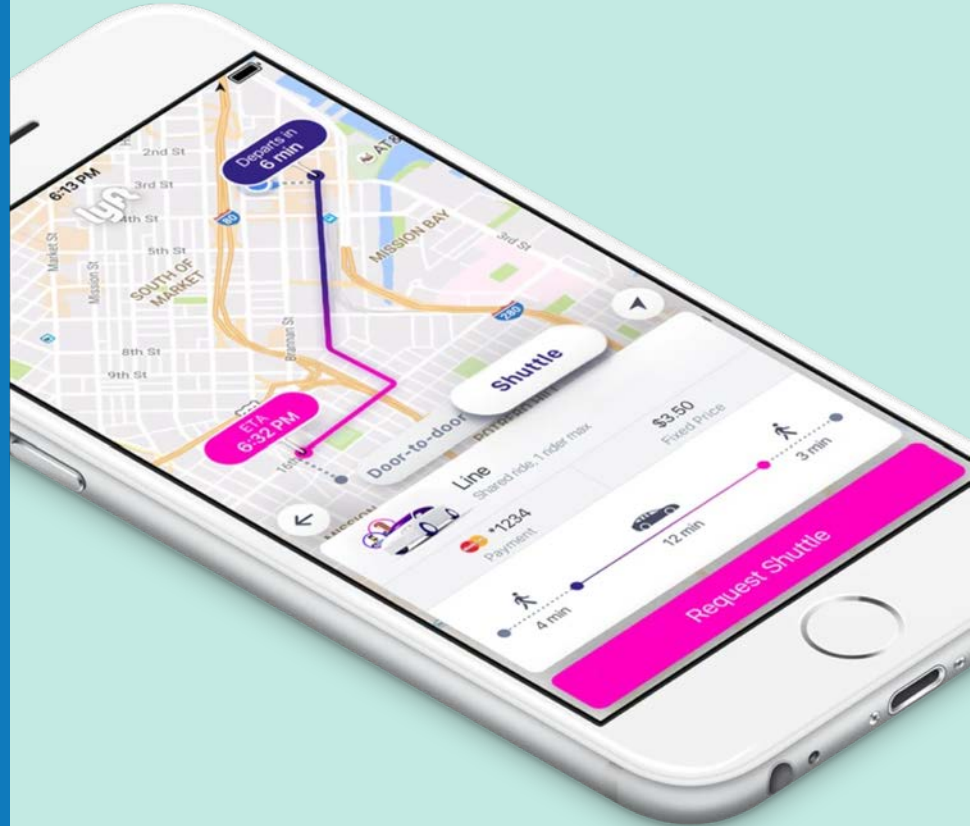
CASE STUDY

Lyft Line Renaming



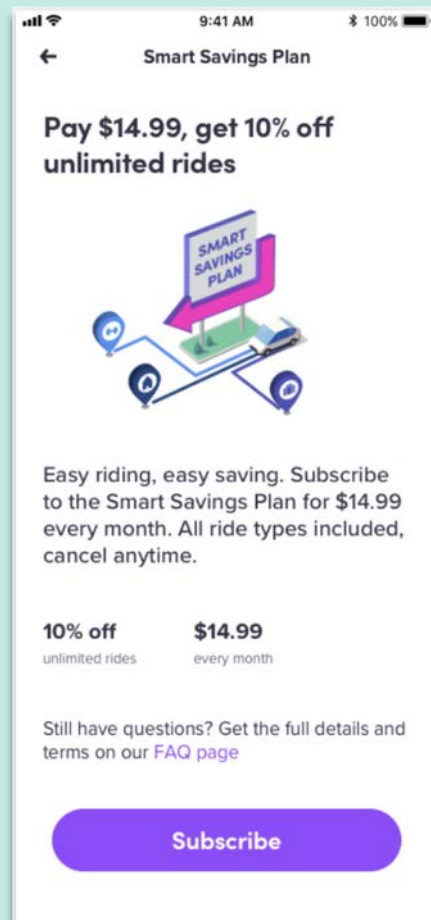
INSIGHT

**Descriptive is
better for fast
understanding**



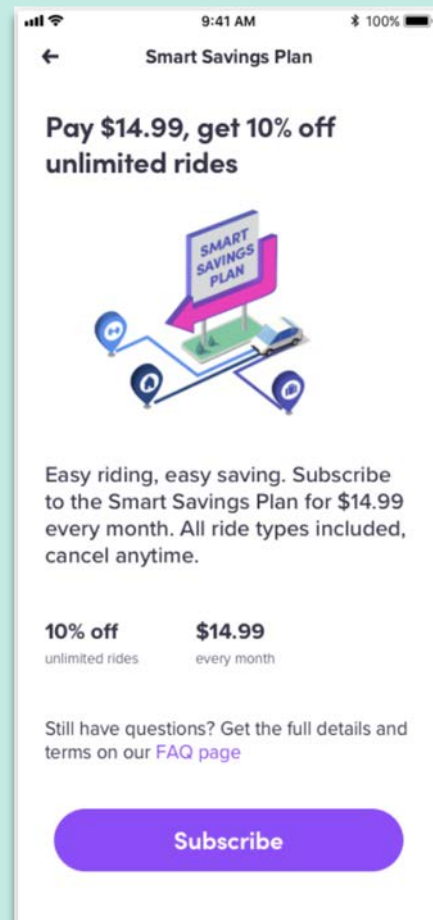
CASE STUDY

Subscription Naming



INSIGHT

Consider how
naming makes
people feel and
fuels identity



CASE STUDY

New Coke



INSIGHT

**Naming has
outsized power
in framing how
people think of
the product**



**IT'S TIME
FOR SOME
REAL TALK**

EXPECTATION

**There's a perfect name
out there for my product**



REALITY

**Names have no meaning
out of the gate, and
familiarity leads to liking**

EXPECTATION

**If I find a strong name,
leadership will love it**



REALITY

**So much of the process is
managing soft skills and
showing your work**

EXPECTATION

**People will remember to
be objective throughout
the process**

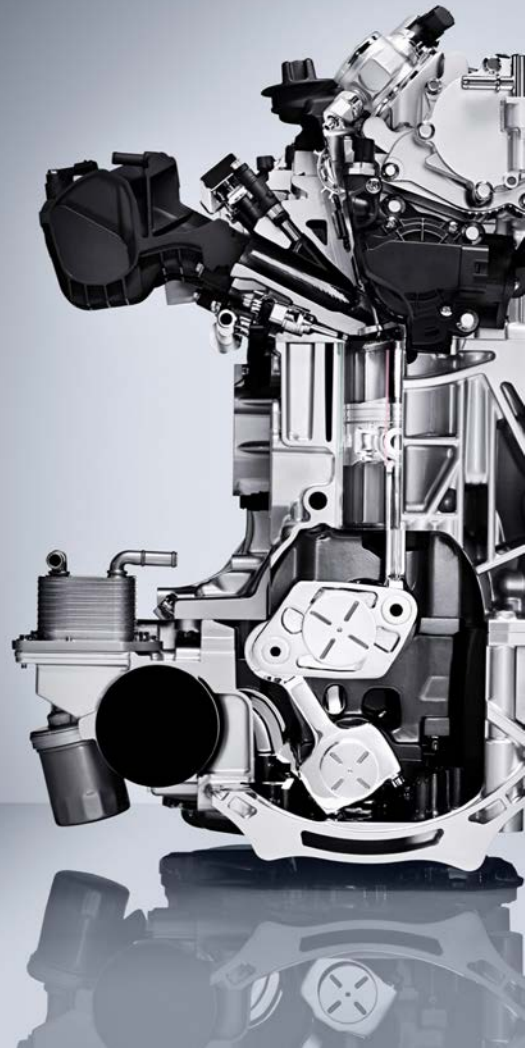


REALITY

**Naming is an emotional
process, and people
bring their own bias to it**

IF YOU ONLY REMEMBER 3 THINGS

1. Range of names from descriptive to branded, but skew toward descriptive
2. Explaining the process is as important as the final outcome
3. Visualize it and make it feel real (mocks, quotes, etc.)



FINAL POLL

**Did you learn something
you can use on your next
naming project?**



You now have the tools to...



**make naming less
daunting**



**get faster
alignment**



**create time for more
strategic work**





**NOW GO
AND NAME
SOMETHING!**

THANK YOU



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linkedin.com/in/alexchahin/



@alex_chahin