

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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[Context: I worked at a company called "Advanced Information Decision Systems, with the acronym AIDS. They eventually changed their name to "Advanced Decision Systems", ADS.]

Analysis

I've been studying up on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: estimates of 10^6 carriers in the US, occurrences of the disease doubling every year, up to 14 year latency, transmitted heterosexually, only starting to show epidemic proportions, no cure in sight, possibly the scourge of the century....

There are times when INDECISION is inconsequential. This is not one of them.

The messages that we are broadcasting to the community are:

1. We are totally insensitive to the tone of the culture.
2. We are incapable of timely action.
3. We are incapacitated by indecision.

The comments I hear at conferences are not of the type:

"What an unfortunate name!"

They are of the type:

"Why haven't you changed it?"

In our case, ANY action is better than no action. We are actively alienating our clients, our potential clients, our potential employees, and our culture.

STOP IT!

Names that are preferable (choose one randomly):

Advanced Information Inc.
Zyzzzx Corp.
AIMS

Names that are just as bad:

Bubonic Plague Inc.
Advanced FuckUps

Action

A suggestion for our new name:

*** INTELLIGENT DECISIONS ***

Comments:

1. Inc. Corp., etc. could be appended.
2. The name has one word from each of the two names we want to affiliate with:

Artificial INTELLIGENCE

Advanced Information and DECISION Systems

with the disadvantages of neither. Specifically, my subjective analysis:

- a. The ARTIFICIAL in AI has a negative connotation, and should be avoided.
- b. Both ADVANCED and SYSTEMS are gratuitous. Anything complex, like INFORMATION or DECISION, is a SYSTEM. ADVANCED is vague, weak, and without moxie.
- c. INFORMATION is a rather old idea, and has established support systems, the information media. It doesn't communicate the state-of-the-art.

3. ADVANCED INFORMATION

conveys little information (is that what we really do?), projects a confusing image (how does one advance information?), and is not a clean break from the past (are we really changing our name?).

4. Avoid the mistake of affiliating with a narrow technology: AI may be outdated in five years (as a label if not as a concept). We do not want to be left with an anachronistic name, nor one that implies that we are not multi-disciplinary.

5. There are more than 70 companies in Sunnyvale with ADVANCED as a first name. Avoid being swamped in the Commons, and confused with

- Advanced Alarm Systems
- Advanced Communication Systems
- Advanced Computer Controls
- Advanced Electronic Design
- Advanced Information Management
- Advanced Research and Applications
- Advanced Solutions
- Advanced Systems
- Advanced Skin Care by Nancy Ann

There are only three neighbors with INTELLIGENT:

- Intelligent Systems
- Intelligent Technologies
- Intelligent Terminals

plus the reputable IntelliGenetics.

In Washington DC, the neighborhoods are 33 ADVANCED and 1 INTELLIGENT.

6. INTELLIGENT DECISIONS *describes* what we do, without undue emphasis on computers. To handle complex information and difficult problems, one needs computational resources and even AI, but the Company makes INTELLIGENT DECISIONS about what approaches, representations, techniques, and processes to use.

7. INTELLIGENT stresses the human aspect of computation, and is a growth area for labels.

8. DECISION is a well-established as a firm, responsible, professional label.

9. INTELLIGENT DECISIONS has dignity, confidence, flexibility, humanity, and sex appeal. It makes you proud to say it.