Brainstorm.
Get together a group of people whom you trust and in whom you have confidence-- family, friends, colleagues, noncompeting business experts -- and be creative. Start by rattling off names that identify your company's products and services. Your company name should do two things: it should be easy for people to remember, and it should distinguish your business from the competition. Be sure to serve refreshments as a way of acknowledging your helpers.

Avoid generic names.
Joe's Videography, Sue's Knitting, or Writing Consulting Company aren't memorable, and they won't set you apart from the pack. They may also be difficult to register or trademark. Geographical names aren't a great idea either, especially if you plan to sell products over the Internet.

Don't be too narrow -- or too literal.
Don't restrict your service or product line by narrowly describing your business. Think about how your business may evolve over time, and make sure your business name will remain consistent with your vision for the future.

Keep it brief.
Keep the company name short, and make it easy to pronounce and to spell. Try to pick a catchy name that people will like to repeat.

Think about your visual identity.
While it may be premature to start designing a logo, you have to consider how your company name will translate into a visual identity. Most people â€œseeâ€ images when they read or hear a word. Incorporating a visual element into your business name can be a powerful aid to the customer's memory, as well as a powerful advertising tool. Make sure that the images your name conjures up are positive.

Consider the big picture.
Your company name is more than just a moniker: it is the cornerstone of your brand and reflects your greater business picture. It echos your employees, their experiences, and their conduct; it evidences the quality of your products and services; and it inspires your logo and your marketing strategies. The name you choose should match the spirit and meaning of your business.

Test the name.
Run prospective names by friends, family, or a focus group to get feedback and insight. Also solicit feedback from potential customers, suppliers, and others in your support network. They may come up with a downside to a potential name or suggest an improvement of which you hadn't thought.

Secure your domain name.
In today's marketplace, having a Web site is critical. If your business is Web-based, your

company name will depend upon what domain name you secure. But if you're a brick-and-mortar company, you'll still need to find a domain name that reflects your business name or your product offering. There's a good chance the "yourbusinessname.com" won't be available, so you may have to get creative in coming up with a Web address that works.

Make sure the name is available

Next, check if your domain name is available . If the name is available, you should seriously consider registering it now.

Stake your claim.

Register your company name or file your incorporation papers right away. Also, begin to use either TM (trademark) or SM (service mark) symbols with your name. Register your domain name and any obvious variations on that name. Apply for a trademark.