



# Wordcraft: The Art of Turning Little Words into Big Business

*Alex Frankel*

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"Five little words: BlackBerry, Accenture, Viagra, Cayenne, e-business. Two of the words are appropriated (BlackBerry and Cayenne); two are completely made up (Viagra and Accenture); and one (e-business) is a composite word made of a word and a letter that already exist. . . . These five words are the characters in this book."

Words shape and move the modern marketplace; they are at once ubiquitous and invisible. But where do words such as Saturn, PowerBook, and Tylenol originate? How did we come to "xerox" our paperwork and "have a cup of Starbucks"? Which names work, and why? For journalist Alex Frankel, what began as an exercise in curiosity--tracing the evolution of a handful of the most successful brand names from the marketplace to their places of origin--resulted in a year-long journey in which he gained access to a previously undiscovered world of forward-thinking creatives: professional namers, the unique group of marketers responsible for inventing words that ultimately become a part of our everyday vocabularies.

**Wordcraft** is Frankel's in-depth look at how companies name themselves and their products and, in the process of defining their business through words and language, develop narratives that define the way they present themselves to the outside world. His lively, fly-on-the-wall narrative takes us into the conference rooms of Lexicon, the world's largest professional naming firm, where we see how the highly successful email pager known as the BlackBerry got its name. We travel to Germany to learn how Porsche approached the naming of its controversial SUV, a car that challenged the company's famously sporty image. The creative team behind Viagra explains how they took a completely fabricated word and turned it into a powerful idea. We witness how IBM assumed ownership of the word and story of "e-business" and in so doing turned around its corporate mindset and returned to a dominant industry position.

The book is filled with stories about how things get their names, but it's not just tales of business meetings and product launches. We meet the characters who populate the naming world, "information age neologists" like freelance namer Andrea Michaels, who plays professional Scrabble and competes on TV game shows when not brainstorming for corporate clients. And we learn about the civic unrest that erupted in Denver when the naming rights for Mile High Stadium were sold. Frankel laces his narrative with cultural and historical references and quotations from thinkers as diverse as Marianne Moore and Lawrence Lessig, all of which add a layer of richness and depth to this book's multithreaded and engaging stories.

For anyone intrigued by the power of words and ideas in today's marketplace, **Wordcraft** is a captivating tour of a fascinating world.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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