

How do I find the right branding agency?

When looking for a branding or naming agency, there are a number of test criteria that should be taken into consideration. Since there is no pitch where you can have initial ideas presented, unlike advertising agencies, the question arises: How can the quality of the various branding agencies be assessed to find the right agency for your project?

1. Do I need a branding agency or is a classic advertising agency sufficient?

Branding agencies are specialised in developing new brand names, providing advice and offering all peripheral services. This includes not only language research and concept tests, but above all full trademark similarity research. On the other hand, advertising agencies often focus on the creative abilities to develop name ideas. Rarely comprehensive researches and the resulting assessments of the actual usability of the names proposed are offered. You should therefore specifically question whether and to what extent the provider is specialised in the development and verification of brand names.

2. **References.** As in other areas, a branding agency should provide a sufficient number of references. This refers both to the clients and the names developed so far. This provides a good indication of the industry sectors, company sizes and tasks for which the company has been active so far. Even if it is not possible to show all customer references due to existing confidentiality agreements, a sufficient number should be published as proof of the agency's expertise.

3. **Experience & expertise.** In addition to the references, an indication of how long an agency has been on the market and, furthermore, the expertise and the CVs of the individual employees provide a reliable insight into the expertise of the branding agency. The know-how should not be limited to one single person, but should be distributed among several people with different professional focuses.

4. **Legal and economic independence.** Attention should be paid on the structure of the agency. It is not uncommon for branding services to be offered by subsidiaries or business units within large agency networks that are neither legally independent nor free to choose their internal and external resources. Occasionally, there are also franchising providers where the managing directors of the respective national subsidiaries have a minority shareholding and are subject to fixed rules on purchasing (for example in the case of brand research and database providers). The best possible creative freedom is always given when a company can operate independently of corporate directives, network dependencies or franchising requirements.

5. **Agency and project size.** When choosing an agency, also make sure that the company suits you. Both in terms of the size of the team and the size of the projects worked on so far. Occasionally, naming services are also offered by individual entrepreneurs who do not always have the resources and know-how, for example to carry out trademark searches in more than 150 countries. Furthermore, it is also important that the branding agency and the people involved are suitable for you as a client. This ranges from the cooperation on a purely interpersonal level, the prerequisite that the responsible project manager should come from the agency's management team to the professional qualifications of the individual team members.

6. **Are the relevant services performed in-house or are they purchased?** In addition to the creative work involved in developing a new brand name, it is particularly the detailed conceptual and trademark law examinations of a name candidate that are of groundbreaking importance in the run-up to the selection of a name. Here it is important that these central tasks also belong to the core competencies of the branding agency and are carried out in-house with permanent staff. If, in addition to the creative services, the important research work is carried out by external network partners and changing persons, it cannot always be guaranteed that results will be produced with a unique quality and the greatest possible research care.

7. **Authenticity & honesty.** In addition to all the above mentioned criteria, it is also the profile of the agency, the credibility of the promised services and the authenticity of the contact persons responsible for the project that are important. Last but not least a good gut feeling is often decisive whether the agency will be the one to prove itself as a long-term partner. Since a branding project is often a multi-stage development process in which the client's needs have to be carefully examined and understood, it is extremely important that you as a client have the feeling of being understood from the very beginning. This is the only way to ensure that you are properly lifted up with the branding agency and can expect first-class results.