



Healthcare Branding: “A systematic approach to product naming saves both time and money“

Translated by Elena O’Meara- 08/02/2012

Site : <http://www.medica-tradefair.com/>

The number of national brand applications has increased by 9 percent in the medical technology and pharmaceutical leading classes in 2010 compared to the previous year. And yet in many companies there is a lack of a long-term branding strategy. The consequence of which is an unsystematic growing brand portfolio that offers little orientation and gets in the way of successful product marketing.

Sybille Kircher is managing Partner at the brand naming agency Nomen International in Düsseldorf, Germany, and specialized in the design and development of international useable brand names and nomenclatures. MEDICA.de spoke with her about ways out of a dead-end street.

MEDICA.de: Which significance do brand names have in medical technology?

Sybille Kircher: Brand names are always an indicator for the capacity for innovation of an industry sector. A strong brand name puts highly complex correlations in a nutshell, protects the product from imitation and distinguishes the manufacturer from his competitive

environment. Brand names for medical technology however are in conflict with the developer, for the most part engineers in medical technology, the physician and caregiver as well as the patient. This conflict often leads to the fact that from a marketing strategic point of view, the best name for the product is not being chosen. Yet it is crucial to consistently gear it towards the customer.

MEDICA.de: What characterizes a great brand name?

Kircher: A great name is like a tailor-made suit. It embodies the nature of the product personality, fits perfectly and is distinct, stands out, provides protection and is timeless. Take the name VYOO for instance for a diagnosis system by SIRS-Lab in Germany. You actually have to do a double take and this is exactly what the manufacturer wants you to do. When you take a closer look, the unusual name is very meaningful and revealing, because it is based on the English verb “to view“.

MEDICA.de: The brand awareness of the industry sector is very distinct by now. What challenges are manufacturers faced with today?

Kircher: It is primarily about considering brand names in a company in their entirety, meaning to develop a long-term branding strategy and align the brand name portfolio accordingly. Given the increasing range of products, many manufacturers by now have reached their limits when it comes to product naming. Systematic naming helps with product planning and product structuring. It reveals the variety of product versions and offers more guidance, for instance by the exact determination of equipment, for example from baseline to high end.

MEDICA.de: What can manufacturers do whose brand portfolio has become nontransparent?

Kircher: One option is a restructuring of the brand name portfolio. To do this, the existing names are being analyzed, structured and – if needed – simplified and renamed. It also gets defined which products will receive names in the future and according to which naming model these should be developed. The naming guidelines regulate future naming from working title to product description all the way to type designation codes.

MEDICA.de: Are there manufacturers who have already restructured their brand portfolio?

Kircher: At this point in time many companies work on their brand portfolio. Pioneer work has been done by the Trumpf Gruppe (Trumpf Group) in Ditzingen, Germany, which in 2004 had put its entire existing product labeling to the test and renamed it where required and necessary.

MEDICA.de: What did this actually look like in practice?

Kircher: At the beginning it was determined that the new naming system should have a

logical structure and should also be globally operational in terms of trademark rights as well as linguistic and cultural aspects. Another important criterion was the expandability of the structure in case of future product developments. In addition, every product should express a direct link and relationship to the family brand via its name. To guarantee this, the existing part of the name “Tru“was being kept. It is worldwide legally protected and the phonetic closeness to the English word “true“conveys very positive values on an international level. The different naming levels were systematically and thoroughly checked through and provided with a clear and distinct naming rule. This strategy, with whose help every product can be effortlessly classified into the large product line-up thanks to its derivable name, was applied to selected product groups - and also to the area of medical technology.

MEDICA.de: What happens to well-established product names that don't fit in the new naming system?

Kircher: There are always names that are beacons and guiding lights in their field and therefore stand out in the market environment. Such names should never be changed. One example for this is the Michelangelo® prosthetic hand by Otto Bock. The manufacturer deliberately chose this name, even though it does not fit into the existing naming pattern. A nomenclature needs to be seen as a framework and not a constraint.

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