BY CAROL TENOPIR

A Name (Un)like Any Other Name

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Plenty, judging from the time, thought, and expense that go into picking a new name for an online company. Can you name the new company monikers for Dow Jones Interactive, Reuters Business Briefing, Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive, UMI, Bell & Howell Information and Learning, the Dialog Corporation, and WLN? Don't be discouraged if you can't. Only close observers can keep up with the continual name changes.

Now, Factiva

About one year ago, Dow Jones & Company and the Reuters Group announced the merger of Dow Jones Interactive and Reuters Business Briefing and the eventual combination of their two online services. The corporate identity merger came first, with personnel in Reuters's London office and Dow Jones's New Jersey office integrating business functions. The expedient new name, Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive, was not expected to last. The new company immediately began seeking a better name.

The name Factiva was chosen last fall to replace Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive. Eventually, Factiva also will become the name of the merged online service, replacing the two separate online systems of Dow Jones Interactive and Reuters Business Briefing.

Since Factiva was introduced, its employees have been trying to burn the new brand name into their customers' consciousness. However, Dow Jones has great brand recognition in North America, and Reuters has similar clout in the rest of the world, so it's no easy task to imbue Factiva with similar implications of quality and stability. The job becomes even more difficult because Factiva is not yet the online service's name. I asked Factiva spokeswoman Dara Schechter about the decision to give up two such recognized brand names.

Schechter prefers the new name, because "with the new name we gave up a mouthful—Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive—and gained a name which reflects the core of our business—facts—and the importance of those facts to inspire business decisions." (Admittedly, Factiva is much easier to remember and to pronounce.) In order not to lose the association with Dow Jones and Reuters, these parent names are built into the new Factiva logo (which uses a lower-case "f").

A complex task

Devising a new name is not a trivial task, and consulting firms specialize in just this. Schechter described the lengthy process that resulted in Factiva. The companies started the process when the joint venture was introduced last May by hiring Interbrand, a "branding consultancy." First, the consultants interviewed staff members and held workshops for staff at all levels and departments worldwide. Staff members were asked how they felt about the company, what sort of company they wanted it to be, how important the parent companies are to them, and what type of name they would like.

This process was extended to focus groups of existing and potential customers. They were asked how they use business information services, what they like and dislike about them, how they compare them to free Internet searches, and what values they associate with Dow Jones and Reuters.

The customer research, according to Schechter, "revealed that, in addition to their concerns about being overwhelmed with information, both current and prospective customers value services that have breadth and depth of information—both globally and locally—and that provide powerful search features to locate the facts relevant to their decision-making." Customer input was incorporated into a new marketing tag line: "inspiring business decisions."

The interview and focus group process led to a list of 200 possible new names considered by the company's leadership team—plus a staff competition that proposed more names. Just four people (the CEO, VP of marketing, creative director, and head of brand) then worked with the consulting firm "to develop a short list of ten names for legal checks. Factiva, which was first on the list, cleared all the legal hurdles and was available as a domain name.

Freighted meaning

Asked what the company hopes the new name conveys, Schechter replied, "We wanted the name to have an association with the root of our business—business information and facts—but also to convey emotion, energy, and dynamism and a sense of being global." Factiva will soon be a part of all of the company's product names, which, says Schechter, "might include a second descriptive word that will mean there is no confusion between the products or between the company name and the products that the company offers."

Since both Dow Jones and Reuters have such strong brand recognition, this process was not undertaken lightly. Whenever you see any marketing materials for Factiva, you will also see the names Dow Jones and Reuters, plus the new tag line "inspiring business decisions." Factiva is sponsoring the huge welcome party at the Special Libraries Association June 2000 annual meeting to imprint the new name (and old brands) on the minds of its primary customer base. Schechter acknowledges that "a few customers were surprised that we decided to take the step away from our parent brands" but "most customers have been very positive."

UMI departs

Dow Jones and Reuters aren't alone. Last year, after 60 years of brand-name recognition for UMI, Bell & Howell (its parent company) announced that

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UMI would henceforth be known as Bell & Howell Information and Learning. An acronym without a name behind it—University Microfilms International had long abandoned its full name in favor of the acronym UMI—isn't so meaningful to new customers.

According to Tina Creguer, director, communications/public relations, "When people asked what it stood for, we'd find ourselves in a very convoluted discussion about what it *used* to stand for, and people's eyes would glaze over and wish they'd never asked." Creguer explained that, although the UMI name "had high recognition and a strong image in the library market, it had no meaning with other groups."

She added that "given that many of our new products and services are web-based, the name UMI was somewhat limiting. But since the microfilm business is still an important part of who we are, we have retained that name as a brand name for those products."

A new name can serve as more of an umbrella for disparate products and services. Although descriptive and accurate, Bell & Howell Information and Learning does not fall trippingly from the tongue (like Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive).

A new "new name"

Shortly after the new name was introduced, Bell & Howell announced that its Publishing Services division had been merged with the Information and Learning division. Another new name was called for. After some delays, the new "new name" was delivered April 14. Henceforth, UMI/Bell & Howell Information and Learning/Bell & Howell Publishing Services would be known as ProQuest Inc.

Unlike Factiva, ProQuest has been an established brand name with library customers, used for CD-ROM and online services for almost a decade. According to a ProQuest news release, the web-based version of ProQuest is available to almost two-thirds of America's 1.5 million college students, attracting nearly two million page views per day.

ProQuest may be less well known among current customers of Bell & Howell Publishing Services, however. Many of them are automotive dealerships or others that need technical reference material, electronic parts catalogs, or dealership performance databases.

Not only does the name have a positive image with current library customers, ProQuest personnel believe it conveys a forward-thinking image to potential customers in all target markets. According to Jim Roemer, president and CEO of the parent company Bell & Howell, "Under this new name, we will continue our commitment to serving the 'quest' for valuable and premium information by automotive and power sports dealers and manufacturers, libraries, educational institutions, and other customers."

ProQuest's Creguer acknowledged that the process has its pros and cons. On the positive side, she said, "It's an opportunity to reintroduce yourself to customers.... When you work with customers year after year, there's no logical point in time to stop and define your company."

> A good name invokes the positive impressions of the old brand, while suggesting new directions and forward thinking

On the negative side, name changes can always cause confusion. When UMI was changed to Bell & Howell Information and Learning, many customers didn't realize that UMI had been a Bell & Howell company for years and thought it had just been purchased. According to Creguer, "They naturally wondered if that meant any changes to our product offerings. In spite of our best efforts to communicate clearly, there was still some confusion."

Since the new name is so closely identified with a current product, there may be less confusion for online customers. Still, there is bound to be some turmoil, especially for customers of other UMI products such as the microfilm collections.

Other name changes

This is not the first time in the information industry that a company name was changed to match the name of its most famous product or service. When Reed Elsevier purchased Lexis-Nexis from Mead Data Central, the familiar product name Lexis-Nexis became the new division name. When M.A.I.D bought the Dialog and Data-Star online services from Knight-Ridder, it immediately renamed the company the Dialog Corporation.

This year, when Gale purchased the Dialog Information Services Division (including the Dialog, Data-Star, and Profound online services) from the Dialog Corporation, it also took control of the corporate Dialog name. (The remaining products and divisions of the old Dialog Corporation will be delivered from the renamed Bright Station plc.) Gale rightly assumes that nearly 30 years of a strong Dialog brand in the library market will mean more than some recent missteps, such as with DialUnits pricing.

Name recognition

In mergers, the stronger brand or most-recognized name may get the nod, but not always. When Gale and Information Access Company (IAC) (both Thomson companies) merged, the new entity was named Gale Group, because Gale was found to have more name recognition than IAC among librarians. Although IAC's main product, InfoTrac, has considerably strong name recognition, Thomson and Gale decided not to name the new company after a single product.

OCLC has more name recognition in most places, but WLN is better known in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States and Canada. When OCLC and WLN merged in 1999, the name OCLC won out, and WLN customers became OCLC customers. The office in Washington, however, was renamed the OCLC/WLN Pacific Northwest Service Center to avoid confusion and maintain brand identification for former WLN customers.

Expect more name changes

With the accelerated pace of mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures, even more name changes can be expected. Some new names will work the first time, while others may take several tries. A good name invokes the positive impressions of the old brand while suggesting new directions and forward thinking. Factiva and ProQuest have these hopes for their newest names.