

Openings: When Shakespeare's Juliet poses the question "What's in a name?", she opens an interesting investigation into the essence of humanity. From birth to death, we make sense of life by naming all that surrounds us and all that we experience. Within each name is our story, both personal and public.

Spotlight: Naming the work that we do is an important step in communicating who we are. With luck, our vocation is more than a livelihood and therefore, the name we give to our working self can provide great insight into our individuality. Attached to our work name may also be a formal appellation assigned by virtue of office, rank, or attainment. This title informs others of our place within the spectrum of work as it speaks to the relationship between individuals within an enterprise. The nature of titles, and the propensity to use them, provides great insight into our enterprises.

Examine any business card and you can see an enterprise's attitude towards titles. Some use titles while others do not. When used, titles range from formal to casual and from the very specific to the more general. As well, there are many variations on every title from traditional to avant-garde and from conservative to progressive. Paying attention to the titles assigned and developing an awareness of the function that titles play within an organisation leads to an understanding of what that enterprise values.

A title's primary purpose is to assist the person requiring a service to identify the person providing that service. It connects the "who" with the "what"—who you talk with to get what you want—so that interactions are effective and satisfying. Beyond being a vehicle for simplifying communications, a title can achieve other objectives. Conferring a title may assign privilege. Titles can reinforce the chain of command and the differentiation of duties. Titles can also emphasise the identity of the various functional units within an organisation. No matter what the reason is for creating a title, its value is measured through the enhancement it provides to the individual in performing his tasks and how this in turn strengthens the enterprise as a whole.

Every position within every enterprise has a common objective: effective service. The rationale regarding the assignment of a title must be based on better enabling the person in the position to serve stakeholders effectively. Implicitly, every position carries the title of *Service Representative* and requires only a clear identification of to whom the service is directed. An explicit title is optional and should be well thought through before being assigned. Too often, titles fracture rather than unify individuals' efforts. Titles can lead to the depersonalisation of work, a situation that has serious bottom line implications. The reduction of individual responsibility and the polarization of functional units are only two of the outcomes that occur when we start thinking of people as their titles rather than as individuals.

Even when they are appropriate, titles should be treated as footnotes. In our interactions, only as our last recourse do we turn to titles, as either something to hide behind, or something upon which to vent our frustration. Effective communications occur between individuals as one person addressing another. Anything, such as a title, that increases the distance between people reduces the likelihood of arriving at satisfactory solutions. It is much easier to be civil and accommodating when we think of others as people rather than occupants of a position wearing a title.

Musings: Two of my newest neighbours are Noah and Jacob. These very young men are new additions to the world as well as my neighbourhood. Their names, with a heritage reaching back to the patriarchs of the Bible, are not the names of men from my generation. What attracted their parents, unlike the parents of my generation, to these names is unknown. What is known is that these names, like all others, are certain to become less popular over the next few years only to experience a future resurgence.

How does something old appear to be thoroughly modern? No one is under the illusion that these are new names and still, as they roll off a tongue and alight upon an ear, they carry a freshness through the air. It is as though we are transported back in time such that the essence of the very first Noah and Jacob are with us today.

As my young neighbours explore their world, I take delight in their new beginnings and know that their namesakes, those great men of history, are watching over these youngsters.

Lexicon: Following the logic used in naming groups of animals or birds is an impossibility. The sometimes fanciful terms, such as a murder or crows or an exultation of larks, can be traced back as far as the 15th century *Book of St. Albans*. The appeal of the terms may come in part from their absolute refusal to fit into any classification scheme. Just when a pattern seems to emerge (a herd of cattle, deer, or elephants), an anomalous term (a crash of rhinoceroses) plunges us back into chaos.

Links: So just how common is your name? Is it more common this year than it was twenty years ago? To discover which names are perennial favourites and which are trendy, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/>. At this website, the US Social Security Administration provides a very useful tool for analysing the popularity of given names over the past century.