



5 tips to ease your search for a business name

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A business name is a valuable asset that helps customers identify you and your goods or services. Once you have settled on a name, it is advisable to conduct a search on its availability on the e-Citizen platform after which you can reserve the name.

Before choosing a name, note that not all names are acceptable for reservation as a business or company name. There are requirements that the name needs to meet during the approval that precedes use of the name to register a business or incorporate a company. Given that you can only search and reserve one name at a time, having some basic information on the process that takes place when you present a name for search with a view to reservation ensures you save time and money by not having to conduct multiple searches. Below are a few things to keep in mind before conducting a search for a business name:

1 Be unique

Avoid common words, names and phrases as they are likely to be already in use for existing businesses and companies. It is advisable to select a name that stands out and is easy to remember. It is also advisable to coin a name from a unique selling point of your business or just use a family name to ensure that the final name is unique or stands out.

2 Prohibited names

Generally, names that indicate a relation with a public authority are prohibited, unless you seek and obtain permission from the said authority. Names that are offensive or undesirable are also unacceptable. This includes names that may imply political affiliations; names that are linked to foreign governments and obscene words. A simple Google search may go a long way in determining whether your name has an alternative meaning or use.





3 Use permitted characters

A proposed name may contain words and characters. However, the characters have to be within the acceptable characters. These include 0 to 9, a full stop, comma, colon, semi-colon or hyphen. Using permitted characters helps make your proposed name unique. The full list of permitted characters and symbols is found under Part 1 of the Sixth Schedule of the Company Regulations 2015. Avoid using characters that do not appear on the list as that may get your proposed name rejected.

4 Avoid names that are registered under intellectual property regime such as trademarks

If it is a trademark, chances are it is owned by another entity. Trademarks include brand names for goods

and services, which are registered with the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI). The owner of a trademark could sue to compel you to stop using your name and perhaps even to pay damages for infringement. If you must use a name that is already registered as a trademark, ensure that you obtain permission from its owner.

5 Avoid names that are phonetically similar to existing names

If from a general search on e-Citizen, you ascertain that a name you wished to use exists, avoid choosing a name that sounds phonetically similar to the already existing name as this does not really distinguish your company or business from an already existing one.