

United creates 'Ted' as low-cost carrier

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By Donna De Marco, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

There are plenty of famous Teds: Ted Koppel, Ted Kennedy, Ted Turner, Ted Bundy.

Now add United Airlines' Ted to the list.

The bankrupt airline has used its last three letters to name its new low-cost carrier "Ted."

"It's proof positive that naming is a lot harder than it used to be," said Burton Alper, principal and strategy director at Catchword Branding in Oakland, Calif. "The name comes to you from left field."

United has followed in the footsteps of competitor Delta Air Lines, which introduced its low-cost carrier "Song" earlier this year.

Mr. Alper said Delta's name makes a little more sense than United's.

The name "Song" is approachable and friendly and it refers to the phrase "we got it for a song," meaning something inexpensive, Mr. Alper said.

"Delta wins so far with a low-cost launch," he said. "It's inexpensive without sounding cheap and it's distinctive in a crowded marketplace."

Mr. Alper, whose firm has created names like Pepsi Blue and Dreamery for Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream, said a company looking at a new name has to consider first impressions, the availability of the name and if it can be understood in different cultures and languages.

"United chose the name Ted to emphasize that the service is an essential, integrated part of the company - it's the last three letters of the company's name," said Sean Donohue, vice president in charge of Ted.

The good news is, Ted probably will draw attention and media coverage because the name is so odd, Mr. Alper said.

"It's free publicity," he said. "That's one approach - not one I'd recommend."