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THE GIST OF YOU

Grades: 6 and up

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials: Two sets of cards (see below); scratch paper and art materials

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Psychology, Business, Art, and Language Arts

Pertinent information: This activity can be used with a variety of audiences, from students to educators to citizen advocates.

Preparation: Find relevant taglines from corporations and non-profit organizations. You may want to include some local businesses and non-profits, if they'll be familiar to your participants. Samples might include:

Corporations:

- I'm lovin' it. (McDonald's)
- Think different. (Apple)
- Just do it. (Nike)

Non-profits:

- Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet. (Sierra Club)
- Be the change. (Mercy Corps)
- Celebrating animals. Confronting cruelty. (Humane Society of the United States)

Create a set of cards, each with a tagline from a corporation written on one side. Don't include the name of the corporation. Create another set of cards with taglines from non-profits on them. You'll want to make the sets of cards distinctive from each other somehow (different colored paper, etc.).

1. Pass out the cards face down to participants (depending on time, you may want to pass out one card per participant, or a card for every few participants). Ask participants to refrain from looking at what's on the front of the cards.

2. Once the cards are all passed out, have each participant who has a “corporate” card read aloud the tagline on their card and guess the name of the corporation it belongs to (you can have the individual or the whole group guess). After they’ve guessed, share the correct answer. Repeat until all “corporate” cards have been read and identified.
3. Ask: “What is the name for these kinds of phrases – for this combination of words?” (Tagline) Explain about corporate taglines: Most companies have one. It’s a concise, unique way to brand an organization. Usually it goes along with the identity packaging, such as the logo, mission statement, etc. This is a way to guide a company over the years and to remind them of what their purpose is; what their intention is in serving customers. It’s also a way for customers to identify and relate to the business.

Mention that taglines aren’t limited to corporations. They can also apply to other organizations.

4. Have participants with the second (non-profit) set take turns reading theirs aloud and guessing/identifying the non-profit organizations they belong to. Reveal the correct answers.
5. Share with the group that these taglines don’t need to be limited to organizations: “Imagine if you had one for yourself to guide your life. We can extract elements from corporations and organizations and apply them to our own individual efforts. This is a great way to tag yourself. You could use your tagline to create your own buttons, bumper stickers, business card or email signature.”
6. Pass out scratch paper and art supplies. Invite participants to craft their own taglines. Mention that the taglines should be concise, unique and represent the essence of participants.

You might want to give helpful suggestions to participants for crafting their taglines, such as having participants write down key words that represent them, or words that are especially meaningful to them. Mention that their taglines can be a seed to build on their own aspirations for themselves.

Depending on the audience and venue, you may want to quietly play inspirational music to help participants relax and think.

Alternative: Allow participants alternate ways to create their tagline, such as through a visual representation (e.g., a logo), a collage, a poem, etc.

7. Invite participants to share their taglines with a partner and talk about why they chose the tagline they did. Those who are comfortable could then share them with the entire group.

If you use this activity with a group that will continue to work together for some time, you can encourage them to write their taglines on their nametags or other similar locations.

Sample taglines others have created from this activity:

- Loving living.
- Open heart. Open mind. Open hands.
- Touching hearts, healing hurts.

Activity by Charley Korn (M.Ed. student)