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[Seth Godin on Subtlety: The Trademark Perspective](#)

Posted on August 22, 2010 by [Steve Baird](#)

Seth Godin's recent post entitled [Subtlety, deconstructed](#), struck a chord with me, and should strike a chord with all trademark types and the brand owners they represent. Here is my favorite excerpt:

“Subtle design and messaging challenge the user to make her own connections instead of spelling out every detail. Connections we make are more powerful than connections made for us. If Amazon and Zappos had been called "reallybigbookstore.com" and "tonsofshoes.com" it might have made some early investors happy, but they would have built little of value.”

As you may recall, I have been tough on [Seth Godin's trademark advice in the past](#), but I couldn't agree more with his view set forth above on naming and building powerful consumer connections and a resulting asset of significant value, by utilizing subtle design and messaging.

We have spoken and written about not "[hitting the consumer over the head](#)" in the context of naming and placement on the [Spectrum of Distinctiveness](#), instead, encouraging the use of [suggestive as opposed to descriptive](#) names and marks, but, let us not forget, there is a [trademark paradox](#) that does appear to reward use of a blunt instrument, called [look-for advertising](#), at least when it comes to developing trademark rights in certain [non-traditional marks](#).

