

7 Important Tips for Successful Domain Portfolio Management

By R. Jackson – April 6, 2009

Your company is about to launch a new product. You begin to plan how you will market your new brand on the Internet. You will need to decide what domain names to register and which domain extensions to register them in, including the global markets associated with those extensions. You need to take into consideration keywords that describe or your brand, or services related to it, and common misspellings that could lead to traffic diversion. This all needs to be considered in order to both protect and effectively market your new brand to your potential customers. Then you begin to decide, “When should I register these domains”...not too soon to tip our hand to the competition, but you cannot wait until the last minute. Registering and managing a portfolio of domain names for multiple brands across different departments or different divisions is no easy task. Throw in the continuing management of domain contacts, scheduled DNS changes, expiring marketing campaigns associated with domains and the management of domain renewals, and you find yourself with a challenge.

Below are the key seven tips that we have found that can help you effectively manage your domains portfolio, ensuring that these valuable domains remain registered to your company and your brands and trademarks are protected while being financially responsible.

1. Create and Publish a Corporate Domain Policy

In a very small organization where one or two people are responsible for domain registrations, you may not need a domain policy; however, if you have multiple employees, multiple divisions, multiple companies, and/or multiple locations, a domain policy is a critical step that will provide structure to your corporate domain strategy. A corporate domain policy establishes:

- Who is responsible for what role, i.e. who is responsible for registrations, renewals, and the technical configuration of the domains
- The purpose of each domain i.e. trademark protection, marketing campaign, etc.
- A standard template for domain names to register for new brands and marketing campaigns with appropriate flexibility
- Account security and access limitations, including tracking
- A catalog of all information necessary for the registration of domain names that have additional requirements, including local contact addresses and trademarks
- Which budget each domain is assigned to
- Ongoing and emergency support for domain maintenance and technical configurations

But you cannot just create a corporate domain policy; you also need to communicate it to your company, especially those individuals who are using the domains. We

recommend that you send the policy via e-mail, but also publish the policy on your company's intranet site so you can update it as necessary.

2. Control Who Can Register and Renew Domain Names

We have all heard about, or directly experienced, organizations that lose their domain names because the person that usually renews them has left the company or domains were registered without the domain manager even knowing. Or what about the company who had its' domain hijacked by a terminated employee? Keep strict authority on who controls the registration your domain names, has authorization to make changes, and is responsible for renewals – and then have a transition plan if the responsible parties leave the company or are moved into a new role within the company.

3. Record the Requestor and Business Purpose for Each Domain Name

Domain names are registered for a variety of reasons. Your core domain names and misspellings may be top of mind, but you may also register 'short-term' domain names to support a side product, partnership, marketing initiative, promotion or contest. By keeping a record of the business purpose for each domain, it assists you in the ongoing maintenance of each domain. This very simple step is often forgotten but becomes vitally important when domain renewal dates approach.

4. Register Domains With Most Common Typos

Your competitors and/or cybersquatters are counting on your domain name getting misspelled or mistyped. Make sure you know which typos are most likely to occur prior to your launch and you'll save your company a lot of heartache. A common mistake is not to register your domain with 'www', but without the period (wwwdomain) – make sure you do. But this is just one of many typos. We recommend that you start typing in your domain name with some typos like double letters or missing letter and evaluate which one a Web user is likely to replicate.

5. Register the ccTLD For Each Country That You Plan To Do Business

Don't forget to protect you brand in countries where you conduct business or may conduct business in the future. The Internet users of many global countries prefer to use the country code domain extensions rather than the more common .COM and .NET extensions. Outline the list of international countries that may be purchasing your products, countries where you may have plans to sell your products, or even countries that may attempt to copy your products and register your domains in those countries to protect your trademark. It is always best to register country code domains before you launch a product because if your marketing activities work, you may find that the global marketplace is already aware of your brand.

6. Use Domain Forwarding

Domain forwarding is a service from your registrar that enables you to point multiple domain names to one Website. For example, you will reach www.google.com whether you type www.google.com, www.gogle.com, or www.google.com – all of these URLs have been directed to Google's domain name. You can also use this for

each of your product or service names, contests or promotions – this way you can get the optimum traffic for your Website by having many domain names resolve to one site. Domain forwarding is an extremely useful tool. It will greatly improve the customer experience of visitors to your Web site.

7. Use Auto-Renew Feature

The auto-renew feature is a simple feature that pays big dividends. Set your domains to auto-renew as a no-cost insurance policy to prevent losing a domain name. A domain registration is the licensed right to use a domain name during the paid registration period. If you fail to renew your domain name, it could be costly to retrieve the name or may even become registered to someone else, like a competitor or domain speculator, thus lost forever. We urge you to not risk losing your domains and use auto-renew.

Your domain portfolio is critical to the online, as well as the offline, performance of your company. These steps will help you to get the most from your domain name portfolio in the most efficient way, thereby providing the maximum benefit to your bottom line.

If you have any questions, or would like more information on this topic, please e-mail whitepapers@safenames.net.