

SEVEN DOMAIN NAME ESSENTIALS

"Your domain is your business identity online. Selecting one that's right for you is as unique as your business and your personality."

BY MARK KAWABE

A domain name is more than just a name: it is the key to your online identity. With over 119,000,000 domain names in existence today (according to DomainTools, LLC), it's rather important for you to choose one that suits your online goals. Here are some pointers.

Choose the Dot Com Version if Available: Always register the .com version of your chosen domain when possible. Then register the .ca. The .com extension is part of our internet subconscious.

Be Unique—but not too unique: Have you been to the photo sharing site Flickr? Notice the missing "e"? Tell your friends to visit this site and they'll

wind up at Flickr.com instead. Sometimes you can take advantage of people's mistakes. Whitehouse.com was an adult entertainment website which was often visited by people looking for whitehouse.gov. However, you're usually better off building your own brand over time with your own unique name.

Make it Memorable: Word of mouth marketing can

be just as important as search engine optimization. Make your domain easy to repeat verbally without the need to explain the spelling. Choosing a domain that clearly identifies your content is best (think or CareerBuilder.com). If you have more money to spend on branding you can be more creative like Monster.com or Amazon.com. Monster doesn't automatically make one think of a job finding service, does it?

Include a Keyword (if it fits): Most companies make the domain name the same as their company name. That's perfectly acceptable. However, if you can get a domain name that includes a keyword related to your business your website may get a slight positioning boost in the search engines.

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Avoid Hyphens: If you have a choice between www.freds-auto-sales.com and www.fredsautosales.com take the non-hyphenated version. People will forget the domain is hyphenated or they'll put them in the wrong place if they remember. Of course, if someone registers the non-hyphenated version of your domain name, you'll probably lose traffic to that website over time.

Pass on the Numbers and Slang: It is 2 easy 2 confuse ur customers when u use 2 many numbers or slang spellings of words. This is another reason you shouldn't use a zero in your domain name as it's easily confused with a capital "o".

Avoid Copyright Issues: The law is clear on this. If you are marketing a new sports car on a domain called www.betterthansporsche.com you can bet you'll be hearing from lawyers. The owner of the domain www.crappytire.com also got a legal earful from Canadian Tire (who ultimately lost their case against him).

Your domain is your business identity online. Selecting one that's right for you is as unique as your business and your personality. Remember it is one of the six critical elements of a successful online presence so it's important to choose well. ■

Mark Kawabe is a Niagara internet marketing specialist at The Web For Business.com. For more tips and advice visit TheWebForBusiness.com.

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