

DOMAIN NAME & EMAIL ADDRESS...

WHAT THEY ARE & WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT

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Every business worries about its brand: the business' name, logo, and how these items extend throughout the organization. Now, we must consider our online brand. Often overlooked but a key element to any corporate brand, is the domain name.

What is a domain name?

Your domain name follows the www of your web address or that portion of your email address following the "@" symbol (mydomain.com).

On the web, your domain name is as important as your organizations name or logo. No two individuals or organizations can ever hold the same domain name at the same time. It is totally unique. Look at your domain name and associated email address as your on-line business card. The uniqueness of the domain name provides a professional look to your organization and your online identity.

A short, memorable domain name can make the difference between creating a successful web presence and getting lost in the noise.

A proper domain name and email address adds professionalism and credibility to your organization.

Many people still don't trust the Internet and e-commerce in general, but a proper domain name and email address can prove that your organization deserves their attention, their trust and or their money.

A domain name builds your brand and may create the web version of walk in traffic.

More than anything else, a domain name can increase awareness of your brand. If your domain name matches your company name, it reinforces your brand, making it easier for customers to remember and return. It will also be easier to win business via word of mouth because customers will remember your name and pass it along to friends. If you chose a domain name that matches the concept of your business (instead of your exact business name), you might draw Web surfers in search of that topic.

Shows you're current in your thinking.

Having your own domain name indicates you're part of the Digital Revolution, and it implies that you're up-to-date on emerging technologies. Whether this is true or not, having your own domain name might just put you ahead of your competitors.

What about my email address?

As important as your domain name is your e-mail address. Many people overlook this small aspect but it speaks volumes for or against your professionalism and credibility. Most domain hosting packages will include e-mail hosting as well. It is wise to take advantage of this even if it adds a minimal cost to the hosting services. Having a series of address's (sales@, service@, info@, etc) provides the look and feel of a credible organization. This also applies to your personal e-mail address. The last thing you wish to do is use a free e-mail service (Hotmail, AOL, MSN, Gmail, Yahoo, etc) for your business e-mail.

How do domain names work?

DANGER – Tech talk here!

A domain name is the Internet short cut (or Internet Protocol (IP) Addresses), which is a series of numbers (000.000.000.000) used to identify each item on the Internet. Because it's easier to remember names than lists of numbers, domain names were developed.

For example, it is easier to remember JacksonChamber.org then 216.157.195.055. You could enter either address into your browser address window and it would work but one is far easier to use and remember.

What should I use as a domain name?

When you begin thinking of a domain name, think of words or phrases that are easy to remember and that will bring more traffic to your site. Above everything else, use a domain name that is relevant to your web site. If your web site is a business site, it is a good idea to use the companies name as the domain name or try to think of a domain name that is related to the nature of your business.

Also try to keep your domain name as short as possible, around 5 to 20 characters as they are easier to remember.

The other catch in domain names is assumed spelling. If you have a 'clever' domain name, people may type in what they think is the correct spelling but then end up someplace they would rather not be. This can also lead to brand problems.

How do I acquire a domain name?

There are two main ways you can get a domain name. You can either register it yourself or you can get your web host or ISP (Internet Service Provider) to register it for you.

To register a domain name yourself you will need to choose a Registrar. A Registrar is an ICANN accredited domain registration company. There are hundreds of Registrars on the Internet today.

Most web hosting companies will offer domain registration services to their clients. The advantage is that they have done this process many times before and have all the necessary information. This process could save you time and, as long as you give the "correct" domain name desired, there will be no unfamiliar dealings with Registrars.

Next it's time to check to see if someone has already picked this name. You can do that at the site of any of the major registrars by using the provided name checking service. If your name is clear, all you need to do is follow the steps and in a few minutes you will have registered your first domain name.

Because you will only be registering the name for a few years at a time it is important to renew it before it expires. The only sure way to do this is to make sure that you are listed properly with the domain registrar. Make sure that you are listed as the administrative and billing contacts. Also ensure that the e-mail addresses for these contacts are active. This way you will receive any important information and renewal notifications so you will be able to administrator your domain name easily.

You must keep this in mind; you only pay for the USE of the name for the period chosen. The price of your domain name and the length of the registration will vary depending on who you choose to register it with. Most will offer a discount on the cost for longer periods.

Some suggested Domain Registration sites: www.networksolutions.com www.godaddy.com
www.active-domain.com www.register.com www.domain.com

Whomever you choose to use, take your time and follow the directions and it's a snap to register your domain and start to develop your own web presence.

The Bottom Line

A good domain name is one of the best investments you can make. It can generate traffic to your Web site and build your business and reputation.