

Choosing a Domain Name

The centrality of the Internet as a source of information and commerce has led to an unexpected and complicated dilemma as companies seeking to secure website URLs that accurately reflect the names of their company and aren't too complicated to remember are finding that the URLs of their choice are almost always already reserved and unavailable.

This has led to a new science of sorts – the selection of a domain name. The choice of which domain name to use is a marketing decision and should be approached from a marketing perspective. The restricted availability may mean that other changes in the marketing need to be made to accommodate the URL and provide the company with some consistency. For example, there are instances where a company's name is already reserved as a URL and so the company selects instead a URL that focuses on its industry, its product, or even its marketing slogan. All of these are acceptable alternatives, but need to be properly integrated into the overall marketing plan so that the URL becomes memorable.

In considering a domain name Tudog recommends you do the following:

1. **Clarify the Purpose** – there are different uses for domain names and depending on your intended use you may find that your options are broader (or conversely narrower) than you originally anticipated. If your domain is to serve as the main point of entry into your website then you need to be certain that the name somehow reflects your company, either by including its name in the URL or some other element that allows people to make the logical association with your company. On the other hand, if the domain name is a sub section of your website or a sales page, you have a bit more leeway, as the domain name can be more focused on the specific purpose of the page of the kind of offering being presented. The rule, however, is to determine what you need the domain name for and then be certain that the name you select meets that purpose.

2. **Benefits are Good** – if you can't secure the domain name of your company or an acronym that reflects your name, your next best bet is either something having to do with your industry or some sort of benefit you deliver. Even better is the combination of the two. So if, for example, you had a discount book company called All Books, and you found that the domain name allbooks was taken in the configurations you want (.com, .net, etc.), you could then seek out a name that describes what you do and what your distinctive competence is, such as everybookcheap.com.

3. **Include a Keyword** – in the online world the name of the game is traffic and the way to make sure traffic is coming to your website you need to be certain your domain is popping up on the search engines when someone searches for something within your category. One way to be sure that you will rank higher than others (without buying keywords) is to include a keyword in your domain name. So, if you sell shoes and your domain name includes the word "shoes" you will organically rank higher in the search engines than a shoes website that does not have the word "shoe" in their domain name.

4. **Keep it Short** – it is important to keep in mind that you want people to remember your domain name so that they can visit it. Long names are more difficult to remember,

especially if they are not the names of a company or product. It is best to try to find a shorter name that is easier to remember. It is important though that it not be a random sound or mix of letters that people will find difficult to recall when they decide to visit your website.

5. Go Dot Com – once upon a time there was dot com and then there was dot net and then suddenly there were a whole slew of other dots (dot tv for example) that came along and broadened the scope of the domain names available. Even with these additional options it is still much better to get the dot com, even if it means compromising on the name you want. The other suffixes have not caught on, with the possible exception of dot net (and dot org for organizations and dot gov for government agencies).

6. Consider Buying the Dot Net Too – the proliferation of other suffixes has led to some confusion in the marketplace as people intending to go to one website sometimes end up at another. If you own both the dot com and dot net of your domain name you will substantially reduce the risk of someone landing at the wrong site when they sought to come to yours. The other suffixes have yet to gain the momentum required to demand control of them as well, so for now the dot com and dot net are enough.

The selection of a domain name is a critical part of today's marketing paradigm and needs to be viewed as the integral part of your planning and execution that it has become. The idea of operating a business today without a website that is at least informative in nature is absurd, and so too is having a domain name that is disconnected or irrelevant to the name of your company or its purpose and mission. The crowded environment in the dot com arena means that you need to find a name that is both distinctive enough that it has not yet been taken and also easy enough that it can be remembered. These are sometimes tasks at the opposite side of the spectrum. It is your job to unite them. Having a great domain name is part of a great web presence. And having a great web presence is part of succeeding in today's business world.