

Protecting Your Domain Brand

I want to thank Karen at Gloveit.com for this very excellent question that got me to thinking and sparked a bit of research to find the answer.

In the last article we talked about [Domain Strategy](#) and we briefly skimmed over the topics of “Squatters” and “Top Level Domains”.



The Question is:

“What do we do with foreign countries or anyone who decides to buy your domain with different extensions?”

It is really scary the idea that if you have invested a lot in your brand for someone to make a counterfeit website using your domain name with a different extension. There is also the possibility that they could outperform you in search engine results.

Do we have to buy all these ccTLDs in order to

protect our intellectual property rights?

Vocabulary:

SERP = Search Engine Results Page

TLD = Top Level Domain

ccTLD = Country Code Top Level Domain

gTLD = Generic Top Level Domain

It depends on how you position your company. It is now possible for small companies to trade globally through the internet, however, now foreign squatters and counterfeiters are on the prowl too!

Brand protection in the international market is not a new concept. Big companies like Nike and Coke routinely protect their brands internationally but they also have a lot of money to do so.

So What can the Small Business Do?

It depends on your success mostly. Most small businesses are so small they can't even compete or even care what is going on in a neighboring state in the U.S. market.

Your little domain and website doesn't cost very much to maintain. If you were lucky enough to get the domain name you wanted like a "dot com" you are well ahead of the game.

If you filed registered trademarks federally you are in even better shape.

Enforcing your brand is expensive from a legal perspective and it would be appropriate to include protection measures in your over-all business plan and budget for it if necessary.

International litigation should be considered part of the cost of doing business if you take your brand seriously in a global market.



What is the effect of TLDs in Search?

Optimizing your web site with appropriate keywords is still king with search engines. They play no favorites between .com, .net or .biz (just to name a few).

So if you only got the "dot com" domain your competition can still buy the "dot net" or "dot biz" domains. They may be more successful in natural search engine traffic and thwart your marketing efforts.

It is important to note that having keywords in your domain is also a plus with search engines.

What about ccTLDs in Search?

There are now over 200 countries and territories around the world that are accepting domain name applications with their own country-code top level domains (ccTLDs)

With country code domains the effect is different. They only perform well on searches within their own country. This is something to keep in mind if you want to market in foreign countries.

gTLDs and ccTLDs rank better within their own countries and rarely in the United States. "Dot Coms" dominate in searches inside the U.S. because they are

generally “older”. Google gives brownie points for the age of your domain and the age of your web site.

However try searching using words in a foreign language and you will start seeing lots of different ccTLDs popping up which should give you an indication of how search works in a global market.

Domain Investment

If you intend to do business globally not registering other country code domains (ccTLD) can cost you a lot in legal fees.

Amazon.com as an example did not register the domain name amazon.gr. That domain was registered by a Greek organization with no relationship to Amazon.com, but used the name because of Amazon.com’s success and tried to get customers to go to a counterfeit website.

Amazon filed suit and won. It would have been less expensive to have just secured the ccTLD domain when it was made available.

Brand Protection

VeriSign is an example of company that offers “Brand Protection Services” and there are many others. This would include managing a portfolio of domains and monitoring competitive activity. Just search the net for “Brand Protection” and you will see it is quite an industry.

I look to companies like VeriSign over any other “Brand” that I do not recognize because I know they have the resources and expertise to actually be effective at protecting my intellect property.

Conclusion

It is not a bad idea to purchase ccTLDs if you are thinking of the possibility of global commerce.

I am a “dot com” purist and personally I would only invest in the .net and .biz (or other TLDs) if I was building a significant brand.

Buying all the other possibilities for your domain name is an inexpensive way to protect your brand from competitors. Ask me about discounts on Webcentrica if you are looking to make this type of investment.

As a side note:

If you can't get a dot com domain or the dot net equivalent do not be quick to buy a dot biz. I have read many articles that talk about blocking domains with the .biz extension because they have gotten a bad reputation since they are mostly used by spammers.

In my opinion the reason you would want to purchase a .biz name is to secure your interests and keep competitors at bay.

Posted on December 17th, 2007 by Karl Knelson