

Protect Your Dealership's Domain Name Or Pay the Price

By Tony Puckerin

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This article is for the 83% of automobile dealers nationwide who according to the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) have an established web site. The intention is to provide tips on how these dealers can protect their domain names from the general public. It is important that dealers understand that protecting their domain names is simple and inexpensive. Not knowing can be very expensive.

WHAT IS A DOMAIN NAME?

Your domain name is your Internet address, much like your physical address, it tells the world where to find you. It is your Internet identity and therefore must be unique. It must also be available. Your name is expressed in the form www.my-yourname.com, dot net or dot org. THE KEEPERS OF THE NET Recently the body of individuals who administer the Internet ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers at <http://www.icann.org/>), agreed to create seven more domain name extensions dot tv, dot pro, dot aero, dot museum, dot info, dot coop and dot biz.. These extensions have created a host of possibilities, good and bad. For the immediate future, dealers should focus on the three top level domains (TDLs) which are dot com, dot net and dot org extensions.

THE MOST POPULAR

Domain name extension is dot com. Therefore, despite what others may say, it is imperative that your domain name ends with the dot com extension. This extension is the most memorable and most likely to be found. If your search for a chosen domain name shows that the dot com extension is taken, do not accept the dot net extension.

BE CREATIVE

It would be more prudent to change your name by being creative. For example, instead of naming yourself DumboFord.com you may try 4DumboFord.com, or 2DumboFord.com. Incidentally, domain names that begin with numbers are usually ranked higher on any directory or list. The trick is to choose a name that projects your image, your known name, and simultaneously is optimized to rank the highest on search engines and directories. This is not a simple task. For help in finding a creative name go to <http://www.cdomain.com> or try <http://www.nameboy.com>, visit them to get new creative ideas.

HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT DOMAIN NAME IS AVAILABLE?

There are many sites that will allow you to quickly find out if the domain name you want is available. By far the most popular is Network Solutions also known as InterNic. Here you can enter any name you want and instantly find out if it is available. Even when it has been taken you will also

find out if it is available with the .org or .net extensions. You can visit <http://www.networksolutions.com> to find out about how to register and check domain name availability. If you already have a domain name you can check to see if the .org and the .net extensions is available with your name.

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT OTHER EXTENSIONS?

Protection. You should not only secure the extensions of your name but also any variation that may exist. The cost of securing an extension is minimal when compared to the potential financial embarrassment you could face. Write it off as the cost of being on the Internet, but it must be done. Each extension, i.e. yourname.com, yourname.org and yourname.net should be secured. If you are a multi franchised dealer then you must purchase every variation of your name e.g. if the name of your dealership is Dumbo Ford/Cadillac/Suzuki you must purchase Dumboford, Dumbocadillac Dumbosuzuki. The big question is; How far should you go to protect your name? The answer is as far as you think necessary. Think of it as protection money, or insurance to your internet future.

THIS IS WHAT CAN HAPPEN

A multi franchise dealer in the Metropolitan Boston did not go the extra mile to protect their name. The dealership has a Mazda, Ford, VolksWagen, and Nissan franchise. Each franchise name uses the root name "Quirk". As such in order to include all the franchises they chose the domain name <http://www.quirkcars.com>

Apparently this dealership, like so many others across the United States, did something to incense someone in their market. The result is that this individual or individuals registered and maintain following domain names. <http://www.quirkautos.com> <http://www.quirkmotors.com> Take a look and see if this is what you would want for your dealership.

PROTECT YOURSELF OR PAY

This dealership did not see the need to secure these domain names. Now they are left with two options; either endure the pain and potential loss of business, or pay the owner of the site to remove it. Neither option is very desirable. The point here is that dealers must go the extra mile and secure all possible variations of their name. This is only one example, there are many other possible scenarios, none with a perfect ending for the dealership. "Ah", you say, "that..."

COULD BE EXPENSIVE

Insurance is always expensive but it is always relative to the perceived value. Network Solution's fees for registering a single domain name is \$35 and they require a two year registration contract. That is \$70 per registration. Not a lot for a dealer, but if you are on a tight budget the registration business is now wide open with a variety of low annual registration fees.

The following is a list of sites with a variety of less expensive domain name registrations. Word of advice. You get what you pay for, but when your primary motive is to take your name out of the market the lower level of service from the cheaper registrants is not as important. The following is a list of registrants you can use to reduce the cost of protecting your name.

ALTERNATIVE REGISTRANTS

<http://www.onestop.net> /\$11.00 per year

<http://www.joker.com> /\$12.00 per year

<http://www.dotster.com> /\$15.00 per year

<http://www.budgetregister.com> /\$14.99 per year

<http://www.dnscentral.com> /\$15.00 per year

<http://www.123domains.com> /\$13.99 per year

<http://www.000domains.com> /\$13.50 per year

<http://www.domaininvestigator.com> /\$ 20.00 per year

<http://buydomains.com> /\$16.00 per year

For a complete list of alternatives go to <http://www.newregistrars.com/registrars.html>

REGISTRATION TIP

If someone other than yourself registers your domain name make sure that you are registered as the owner and administrative contact. It can be a nightmare later on if you are registered any other way. Webmasters or hosts should only be entered as technical contacts.

This article was authored by Tony Puck a 14 year veteran of the retail automobile sales industry in the Metropolitan Boston market. Mr. Puck has been using the Internet for the last five years and is currently an Independent Internet Consultant. Get

Mr. Puck's free Customer Relationship Management Report by sending a blank email to tonypuck@smartreply.net. Visit automobile marketing site at <http://www.automobilenetmarketing.com>

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