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10 things that most hosting companies don't want you to know.

Domain Name Secrets:

1 – I have a new business venture idea. Should I get my domain name now?

Yes, yes, and yes again.

Having a website is becoming a necessity for any serious business venture. And as you might expect thousands of business are born annually. Every day that passes means your business name could be taken. This is especially critical if you're planning on using your own name. There are only 9 people with the same last name as mine in my big city; but I can find 8 people around the country with my name! You may remember several years ago there was frenzy about domain names selling for thousands of dollars. That frenzy has passed but it did have an effect on the number of domain names available; combinations of 4 and 5 letters were registered because so many companies have antonyms.

So it becomes critical to register your domain name now. Since all domain names are registered for a year at a time; by registering the name now, you ensure you have control for at least the next year.

Registration gives you many choices, including choosing to do nothing while you're still putting together all the other pieces of your business.

2- What are the limitations regarding domain names?

The rules are simple to follow. Domain names cannot be longer than 63 characters that does not include the 'dot' extension. Domain names must be at least 2 characters long and cannot start with a hyphen. Domain names are all lower case and can include hyphens. In this example, "WhoIsHostingService".com is the same as "whoishostingservice".com. However, "WhoIsHostingService".com is not the same as "Who-Is-Hosting-Service".com Spaces and periods cannot be included in a domain name.

3- It's also so confusing, which type of domain name extension do I need?

There are few common simple standards to understand.

All non-profit organizations have an 'org' extension. That 'org' extension is assumed to mean that your business is non-profit, so unless your business really is not for profit, don't select the extension.

All websites that are used by the US Federal government use the reserved extension of "gov".

If possible, select the 'com' extension. The majority of business in the US, and North America use this extension. There are other extensions now available as well that are slowly gaining in popularity. "Biz" is designed to indicate that the registration of the website is a commercial

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enterprise, and more and more business are using it. So if the 'com' extension is already being used, consider this extension.

You might have seen a business with an extension of 'co.uk'. Domain name extensions like these are indicators of the country where the business originates.

4 – Someone else is using the domain name that I want, what should I do?

For example, you want to use the name, "SamsHardware.com, and someone in another town has registered it. To resolve this problem consider adding the name of your town to your domain name selection, so "SamsHardwareTownName.com" might be the solution you need. Most of your customers will find it easy to remember your business name with the city where you're located included.

If your business is based nationally or internationally, including the town name isn't an option. Consider using the new 'biz' extension instead. The new extension was designed for business, so consider this option carefully before opting to change the domain name.

5. Is there any reason why I need to register multiple domain names?

Yes, in fact there are several reasons why it might be important to you.

Does your domain name contain a number? Let's say your new business is called "RosesForYou.com". But you thought it was catchy so you registered "Roses4You.com". You were on the right track because many people today will enter your domain name many different ways, like "RosesForYou.com", "Roses4you.com". and "Rose4U.com". By registering all of them, you help ensure that your customers will find you regardless of which version they have chosen to enter.

Does your domain name include the word 'to'? This is exactly the same situation as we discussed in the last paragraph. Sure, registering more than one domain name does cost you additional money, however don't forget the main point is to drive your customers to your website!

Does your domain name exactly match the name of your business? Yes? Great! No? Then it's time to register the exact name if it's available. If your business contains an "a" or a "the" in the name, register the domain name with and without these words.

Finally, if a word in your domain name is commonly misspelled, don't forget to register the common misspelling. It's just one more step that will help drive traffic to your web site.

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6 – Should I register the different extensions for my domain name?

So you got the domain name you wanted, and it's even has the 'com' extension. The same domain names with the different domain name extensions are still available, should you register those as well?

The answer is probably yes. Once again snagging the '.biz' and '.net' extensions can help your business in one very simple way. By owning and controlling these other extensions you prevent any competitors from using the same domain name. This will force them to change their name and their domain name presence, allowing you to maintain your own unique identity.

7. How much will a domain name registration cost me?

Domain name registration can be done on the web at multiple locations on the web. Prices vary from \$9.95 to \$50 annually. Why exactly do the prices vary so much? Is one service domain name registration service better than another?

The answers to both are simple. An older more established company, such as VeriSign was one of the first companies to offer these services. Their affiliate company, Network Solutions, charges \$34 annually, definitely in the upper range. Another company, DomainDirect.com, charges \$15 annually. And there are many others that you are unlikely to hear about simply because they have very little advertising budget.

Going back to the original question" Why is there such a difference in prices?" It's simply a matter of what perceived value the companies can provide.

All domain names are stored in one central location provided by the ICANN, the International Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers. Each domain names registration company must be accredited through them. At present, there are about 250 companies around the world, so you have a lot of options when choosing a registration company. The good news is that it's a tough financial review process that each company must pass in order to be accredited, so the company is probably financial stable.

The bad news is that not all of these companies will register your company's domain name because some with the "dot extension" used in foreign countries such "co.uk" (country.unitedkingdom) or "co.au" (country.Australia).

8 Should I register the domain name myself, or is it okay to let someone else do this for me?

So you've decided to let someone else actually do the work for you? Many hosting companies will provide the service for free (or for a nominal fee) passing along only the actual domain name registration cost.

But there is a danger here. After the process the complete, verify the name on the actual domain name registration afterwards. If that statement sounds petty, it's not.

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Many hosting companies work with domain registration companies to get volume discounts on domain name registrations. Sometimes this also means that the domain name must be registered in their name (nor yours) to qualify for this volume discount. So buyer beware!

Remember the owner and administrative contact information should always be your name and information! Be sure and check the registration by entering your domain name into the <http://www.whois.com/> Web site.

9 – Managing your domain name. Can I do it? And why do I even want to do it?

In the world of web, this is one of the easiest tasks that you can perform. Once the domain name has been registered you will need to manage the account only when your business information changes or when it's time to renew the name for another year.

Each domain name registration service will provide you with a user id and password to manage the account. Usually the user id is your email address, so that makes it easier for you to remember. They will also provide the capabilities on their website to mail you the password to your email account should you forgot the password as well.

Finally, under a new ruling, all registration services are required to send out an email once a year to the owner of each domain name. The e-mail's purpose is to provide you with the opportunity to review all of your current owners and related contact information. If there are nay errors, now is the time to get them corrected; otherwise no activity on your part is required.

What about the technical or administrative contact listed on a domain name? These are not critical to ownership. However, the technical contact is usually a member of the staff who hosts your website. They will need access to the domain registration information to complete the hosting server information in the "Whois" database. This is an essential part that tells every server on the Web to look for your Hosting Server.

One other tip, keep in mind changes to a domain name registration can take up to 2 days to take affect completely. Because all hosting services must fetch server information from a central location periodically, it also means that changes are not reflected instantaneously.

Some of the on-line registration services will offer you a free under construction hosting page. It's commonly called 'parking a website'. Be sure and look at the example they provide because their free 'under construction' page will be full of ads for their products and services with a brief mention that you domain name site will be coming soon.

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10- I'm not happy with the registration service that I chose. What can I do about it?

Domain names can be transferred from one Registration Service to another usually at no charge. There are no pre-defined charges established by a government or other official agency associated with transfer but that doesn't keep some firms from charging a fee.

If there is a fee, look closely at the 'fee' associated with transferring a domain name. Many times you will find that the new registration service is extending the time period that you own the domain name, usually by an additional year.