

# Everything a business manager needs to know about Domain Name Security

By Stuart Fuller

Stuart is the Group Commercial Director at CentralNic Group and has more than 10 years' experience in the Domain Name Industry.



## Summary

How important are the primary domains to your business? Do you as a Business Manager understand what the primary domain names are for the organization? What are the consequences if they were offline for a period of time and who would be held responsible? This is a tricky concept to introduce to clients, but when they understand the “insurance” a Registry Lock can offer, it is one of the fundamentals of a protected domain name strategy.

*Today's digital world is full of opportunities, but also inherent risks, some of which are hidden to brand holders.*

Domain Locks are an essential “insurance policy” for an organizations critical digital assets. It is becoming headline news within our industry every time there is a high-profile security issue and in the past few years a number of high-profile organisations and global registrars have been hit by attempted domain hijacking or DNS poisoning. Whilst Domain Locks are relatively manual to set up and administer, they are almost 100% effective.

In the past, high-profile domain names have been targeted for hijacking by political activists rather than criminals. Gone are the days when domain names would be transferred away for gain, such as the infamous case of sex.com during the 1990s. Today, politically motivated groups look to promote their causes through DNS changes on very high-profile names where there is existing traffic and where the “hacked” domain name will be headline news.

The consequences of losing control of a critical domain name can be serious and can include:

Damage to brand image and reputation

Loss of customer confidence in the integrity of the organisation's infrastructure

Loss of revenue from customers and potentially reparation of physical damage

Loss of business-critical information, which may contravene data protection laws

## Introduction

Do you as a Business Manager understand what the primary domain names are for the business? Locking domain names is a must-have for the ‘crown jewels’ in the portfolio. People often forget that a successful (and even global) online business is reliant on a domain name that often costs just a few pounds every year. These critical digital assets must be protected. It's the most basic insurance policy that a company can take out.

Registrar Locks do not protect against changes being made at the registry levels and would only be recommended for domains that are non-core. The Registrar Lock provides a basic level of protection, preventing accidental deletion, for instance.

You cannot talk about domain name security or, more importantly, trust, without also underlining the importance of SSLs. Secure Sockets Layer is a protocol developed by Netscape for transmitting private documents via the Internet. SSL uses a cryptographic

system that uses two keys to encrypt data – a public key known to everyone and a private/secret key known only to the recipient of the message. Put simply, if a client captures customers' data on a website (logins, email addresses and, of course, e-commerce applications) then they would be foolhardy not to have some level of the protection that SSL offers. Whilst only a small percentage of end-users understand the concept of SSL, we have all grown accustomed to seeing the padlock or green browser bar when using secure sites. The rise of Internet commerce has been built on trust and this is why SSLs are so important to clients who need to ensure positive engagement with their end-customers. Please read our Business Manager's guide to SSLs for more details.



## Why do organizations need to have a Domain Name Security Policy?

Domain names are digital assets of a business. An asset is defined as a resource with economic value that an individual or corporation owns or controls with the expectation that it will provide a future benefit. By using a domain name, an organization creates not only an online presence but also in many instances a revenue stream. Think about the cost of registering Amazon.com or Apple.com? Now think about how much revenue either of those two domain names produces on a day/hour/minute/second basis. A domain name may only have a monetary value of a few pounds

A Registry Lock (available on key TLDs including .com, .net and .co.uk) stops any registry level changes (transfer away, change of ownership, change of delegation and deletion) without two-factor authorisation and authentication at the registrar and registry level. This means that the possibility of making changes by mistake are almost completely eliminated. It also means that if someone maliciously gains access to a customer portal and tries to place re-delegation orders, they will fail once they reach the registry. Any changes to registry-locked domain names are submitted to the registry via one of a small handful of authorised individuals. The registry will then contact the requestor via the telephone number they have on record and ask for the authorisation password. Once this has been confirmed, the changes will be made and confirmed to the requestor via the email held on record.

Therefore, if a critical domain name stops resolving, or even worse, is diverted to a third party, the consequences can be catastrophic.

These include:

Damage to the brand's image and reputation

Loss of customer confidence in the integrity of the organisation's security, stability and data

Loss of revenue from customers, both in the short and long-term

Potential breach of data protection laws, which are now much more stringently controlled since GDPR was introduced

Because of the nature of the Domain Name System (DNS) it may also be the case that an exploited domain name cannot be re-delegated back to its rightful address in the short-term either, meaning the reputation and revenues of an organization may continue to be damaged after a lost domain name has been recovered.

## The key aspects of a BrandShelter Domain Name Security Policy

BrandShelter understands the importance of domain name security for all of its customers, which is why we offer a full range of registry and registrar locking products as well as SSL certificates that can be ordered from without the customer portal. The BrandShelter approach is to look at Domain Name Security as part of an overall strategy for the management of the domain name portfolio. BrandShelter will work with your organization to identify those critical domain names and then understand what levels of "insurance" can be applied to them.

*It is therefore essential that an organisation first understands which of its domain names are critical to the business, in terms of revenue, reputation and traffic and then which of those can be locked.*

## There are two types of domain name lock that can be applied to certain domain names:

Registrar Lock (aka Domain Lock) – Prevents any modifications of the domain name, including requests to transfer or delete the domain. The lock will also prevent the modification of any of the domain contact details, including the administration, technical and billing contacts. Changes to the domain can still be requested

through the Platinum Portal and will be verified by the Customer Services team prior to any amendments being made. Registrar Lock is available on a wide range of TLDs and can be implemented quickly.

Registry Lock (aka Domain Super Lock) – The ultimate protection for a domain name. A Registry Lock prevents any modifications of the domain name at the registry level, including requests to transfer, update or delete the domain. It also prevents modifications to any of the contact details. Basically, nobody can make ANY changes to the domain name unless it has been requested to and then subsequently authorised by one of the BrandShelter advisors. There is a two-factor authentication process that has to be followed for any lock or unlock request. Registry Lock is available on all Verisign TLDs (.com, .net or .TV), most of the CentralNic TLDs as well as on certain ccTLDs such as .UK and .FR.

You can easily check to see which lock is being used on a particular domain name. If you go to <https://www.centralnicdomains.com/services/whoisSearchPage> and type a domain name in the search box you can view the Domain Status field. This shows whether a domain name has a Registry. If a domain has a status code starting with the word “Server” then it is protected by a Registry Lock.

## Why use BrandShelter?

For over a decade, BrandShelter has been working with some of the most recognisable brands on the planet, to deliver domain name, security and brand protection solutions, advice, and create effective and risk mitigating policies. Our priority is to help our clients meet their digital and business objectives, using our industry expertise and knowledgeable staff to craft solutions that deliver.

## About the Author

Stuart has been working in the domain name industry for over a decade, providing guidance and advice on domain name policy and brand protection strategies for some of the world’s largest organizations.

## About BrandShelter

BrandShelter manages hundreds of thousands of domain names for organizations across the world, providing expert guidance and a range of value-added products including SSL, Registry Locks and Brand Protection services. With global customer support desks, enterprise and premium DNS solutions and flexible billing options, BrandShelter is the natural choice for ambitious brands wanting to secure their online presence whilst taking advantage of the opportunities the global digital economy brings.

### To find out more, contact:

**Bonnie Wittenburg**

Executive Vice President

Key-Systems USA, Inc.,  
885 Harrison St. SE, Leesburg, VA 20175

Tel.: +1 703 297 8151

Email: [bwittenburg@brandshelter.com](mailto:bwittenburg@brandshelter.com)

**Andreas Soll**

Business Unit Manager

Key-Systems GmbH, Germany  
Im Oberen Werk 1, D-66386 St. Ingbert

Tel.: +49 (0) 6894 9396 930

Email: [asoll@brandshelter.com](mailto:asoll@brandshelter.com)

Web: [www.BrandShelter.com](http://www.BrandShelter.com)

[www.key-systems.net](http://www.key-systems.net)

Social: [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#)