Everything a business manager needs to know about a Domain Name Policy

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

Domain names can no longer be considered as mere internet addresses. They not only reflect business names and trademarks but can encapsulate the essence of a business on the internet. The value of domain names to a business has undoubtedly increased over time. In fact, they are often referred to corporate digital assets and can be recorded on the balance sheet.

The intrinsic value of a domain name, which could underpin a multi-billion dollar online business model, has also increased their importance. This has led to them being targeted by cyber criminals for the purposes of domain name fraud, hi-jacking and cyber-squatting. As the internet goes through its biggest change since domain names were first released over thirty years ago, the need for having a clear policy for domain name portfolio management has never been more important.

Introduction

Domain names are not simply labels to carve out address space on the internet. Rather, they have a similar function to trademarks and play an important role in daily IT, marketing and communication processes for any business. They enable organisations to operate in any geographical market without the need for a physical presence. Domain names are an effective marketing tool with hidden potential and value, defined as follows:

- Domain Names send a branded message to customers, employees and other stakeholders, delivering security and trust.
Domain names help to reinforce marketing and communication efforts through other media as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and advertisements, translating complex messaging into simple, meaningful and memorable internet addresses.

Unlike trademarks, domain names are unique. No two identical domain names can ever exist (there is only one www.nike.com). Therefore an organisation can create brand value which can then be leveraged exclusively to distinguish themselves from competitors.

Since the liberalisation of the domain name space in 2012, it has never been so important to create a single, unified view of how corporate digital assets such as domain name should be used across a business.

Domain names are at least as important as any other strategic Intellectual Property assets such as Trademarks, Copyrights and Patents. Crucially, since domain names are unique, they provide a measure of protection to the brand online.

They represent an organization’s vision, values, objectives and brand messages online. They enable the organization to operate in any geographical market without the need for any physical presence and be present 24 x 7.

Domain name portfolio owners should:

- Understand how many domain names the organization actually owns

`https://www.mydesigns.art`

`https://www.myvideos.blog`

Ensure that all domain names resolve and are being fully utilized

Be confident that the portfolio is right-sized

The short article below explains everything that a domain name manager needs to know about creating a domain name policy.

If you don’t have time to read the entire article you can contact our team of domain experts (sales@brandsheild.com) for a free, domain name health check, the first step in creating an organization-wide domain name policy.

**Everything a domain name manager needs to know about a domain name policy**

 Whilst the importance of establishing and maintaining an online presence is now well understood to be vital for any ambitious organization, the individuals involved in managing a portfolio of domain names are faced with ongoing challenges presented by the ever-expanding digital landscape. The new gTLD program brought a whole new wave of opportunities but also brought a whole new wave of threats for brand holders. With a second round of the program being devised, there has never been a more important time for a business to create a single policy that defines what its online presence should look like.

Within most companies, many different individuals, groups and departments are involved in domain name management. A centralized domain policy allows a business to have a complete and cohesive view of:

- when and why domains should be registered
- who has responsibility for domain names?
- what parameters should be used to ensure the domain name portfolio remains at the “right-size”
Why do organizations need a domain name policy?

The creation of a domain name policy ensures that all stakeholders within an organization, understand which domain names are already registered, should be registered or renewed with respect to the protection of key brands, geographies and trademarks of the company. In addition, a domain name policy outlines the potential gaps in the current domain name portfolio as well as confirming what actions, other than registrations are required to be undertaken to best protect an organization’s core brand(s) digitally.

The policy should also document who has responsibility for the domain names within the organization and what their individual roles are within the portfolio management process.

The central management of a domain name portfolio is critical for the long-term digital health of the organization. Not only will the policy create an initial snapshot, identifying where the gaps are in the portfolio and remedial action to take but it will also define how future domain names should be handled both in terms of keywords and geographical reach. A domain name policy also determines which domain names are NOT useful or valuable to a business and should not be registered or renewed. This is a crucial aspect in managing the overall cost efficiency of a domain portfolio. With the current new gTLD program unlikely to be a one off, the additional layer of complexity into the management of domain names means having a process documented in policy form is essential to ensure that there is no confusion in the way potential new registrations should be handled today or in the future.

The key aspects of a BrandShelter domain name policy

The BrandShelter policy creation process comprises four key elements, which provide levels of visibility on the domain name portfolio that may not be currently understood by the organization. By combining these views, prepared by BrandShelter’s domain name experts and using proprietary technology, recommendations can be made that will shape a domain name policy for the organization.

The four key elements that make up the foundations of a BrandShelter domain name policy are:

Portfolio Right-sizing Report
Using in-house technology, BrandShelter will review the organization’s existing portfolio and create a report on domains that should be considered for cancellation, based on the fact that are not providing any return on investment to the organization, or are simply “off-policy.” In addition, BrandShelter will make recommendations on specific actions that need to be undertaken by the organization to “right-size” the portfolio.

Portfolio Integrity Model Report
BrandShelter’s Portfolio Integrity Model (PIM), takes a forensic look at the domain names registered, examining owner consistency, domain and DNS settings, expiry policies and whether there are any registrations that sit outside of any existing guidelines set by the business. BrandShelter’s PIM works on a traffic light basis, flagging major risks and providing mitigating actions that can be taken to improve the health and integrity of the domain name portfolio and policy. In addition, a summary report can be provided on SSL usage across the portfolio.

Keyword and TLD Gap Analysis
Taking the results of the PIM output, BrandShelter will produce a report based on the key terms used within the domain name portfolio to show graphically:

- any gaps in registration coverage;
- where domains are registered by third-parties;
- recommendations on actions that could be taken

These data can be used to ensure full coverage on the most critical terms to the organization.

Third Party Ownership and Risk Report
As well as providing an overview of organization-owned domain names that are held outside of the main portfolio, BrandShelter will provide a global view of all domain names that match key brand terms and trademarks that are registered by third-parties. The report will determine what risk these registrations may pose to the business. As part of this step, a domain-based, brand protection strategy can be created and implemented.
Creating the Domain Name Policy

BrandShelter will take the results of the analysis and output from the four key elements detailed above to help it create an up-to-date Domain Name Policy. By understanding the current management processes for managing domain names, BrandShelter will create a clear and structured policy that can be used by all stakeholders to manage the domain portfolio effectively and cost-efficiently. This will include:

- Robust processes for the management of the portfolio
- Governance and approval processes
- Recommendations for on and off policy registrations
- Identifying and handling actionable infringements

Next steps

Whether you are an existing BrandShelter customer or not, if you are interested in obtaining a free, impartial snapshot of your current domain coverage and online brand risk, with expert recommendations and practical advice, get in touch with BrandShelter.

Why use BrandShelter?

For over a decade, BrandShelter has been working with some of the most recognizable brands on the planet, to deliver domain name solutions, provide advice, and create effective and risk mitigating policies.

The BrandShelter team works with an organization’s stakeholders to create a governance framework for domain management. It works hand-in-hand to develop a domain name policy that is aligned with the core objectives of the organization.

BrandShelter’s unique 360 degree review of a business’ domain portfolio identifies procedures that need to be created, existing policies that need to be reviewed and risks that currently exist outside of its current view and control that need to be mitigated, to ensure that organizations are ready for the challenges the emerging digital landscape presents.

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 organisations.

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@key-systems.net

Andreas Soll  
Product Manager  
Key-Systems GmbH, Germany  
Im Oberen Werk 1, D-66386 St. Ingbert  
Tel.: +49 (0) 6894 9396 930  
Email: asoll@key-systems.net

Web:  
www.key-systems.net  
www.RRPproxy.net  
www.brandshelter.com  
www.RRPproxy.net  
www.domaindiscount24.com  
www.BrandShelter.com