

Make a name for yourself on the Internet

by Bruce A. Love

If you really want to leave your mark on the world, consider creating a web page to establish a “permanent” presence on the World Wide Web. The first step to take in establishing your web presence is to register a domain name. This can be done even before you are ready to build your web site.

The domain name is the text-based address used to reach specific web pages. Domain names generally have several sections that are separated by periods. To reach the Altoona Mirror web site, for example, we enter www.altoonamirror.com in the address box of your web browser. The last section of this domain name is referred to as the extension, or top level domain (TLD). Available TLDs include: .com, .net, .org, .edu, .biz, etc. TLDs indicate what type of organization is represented by the web site. For example, the extension “.biz” is reserved for commercial enterprises, while non-profits typically use “.org,” and educational institutions use “.edu.” Although “.com” was originally set up for commercial use, its use has evolved to become the TLD of choice by a variety of web sites. When selecting a domain name, you will want to keep these things in mind.

Once you decide on the perfect name for your web site, check to see if it is available. There are a number of places you can do this. Originally set up by the U. S. Department of Commerce to register and manage domain names, InterNIC now serves as an informational resource on issues relating to domain names. You can search for available names on their web site, www.internic.net/whois.html. The InterNIC web site also lists all accredited ICANNs (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) which now have responsibility for many of the functions previously performed by InterNIC, including name registration.

Before using a domain name, it must be registered with an authorized ICANN. By doing so, the name is entered into a directory containing all the domain names, and the addresses of the computers on which they reside. If you are willing and able to do a little administrative work yourself, you can reserve a name for under \$10.00/year. One of the most popular and least expensive domain registration services is GoDaddy.com. Once you sign up with a registrar like GoDaddy, you have the option of listing the domain name as “for sale” or “coming soon.” If you are ready to build a web site now, and want your host service provider to take care of all the “details” for you, expect to pay about \$20 to \$30 for the service. You can save on the annual registration cost by reserving the name for several years at a time.

Registering a name is a fairly simple process. You will have to provide basic contact information such as name, address, e-mail, and a phone number. This information will be made publicly available on the Internet. Name registrars will list your new name on special computers called Domain Name Servers (DNS). These communicate with all other DNSs worldwide so that each knows where to direct Internet traffic when browsers request specific domain names. If you build your web site on a different host computer, you will have to change a setting on the DNS to point to your new host.

Domain names, like business names, can be valuable assets. You can even make a bundle selling the right name. Recently, Domain Name Journal reported that the name “www.men.com” sold for \$1.32 million. The highest amount ever paid for a domain name was \$7.5 million (www.business.com). Hmmm ... I wonder how much LoveConsulting.com is worth!

Love Consulting
600 Oakmont Place
Roaring Spring, PA 16673
814-224-2651

articles@loveconsulting.com

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