

Understanding Web Domain Names

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INTRODUCTION. Having the rights to your company's domain name on the Web is an important business asset. Current domain name suffixes available to businesses are **.com**, **.biz**, **.net** and **.pro**. However, many businesses have had problems getting a domain name since almost all of the short, easy-to-remember ones have been taken. One new domain name is registered on the average of every five seconds. As of this writing, there are over 30 million registered domain names.

Your domain name is your brand on the Web. Many small, minority- and women-owned businesses have registered the dot-com version of their businesses. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) assigns all domain names.

DOMAIN NAMES TYPES. Below is a summary of the types of domain names that small, minority- and women-owned businesses can use.

- **.com.** Suffix for businesses such as www.yourcompany.com. This is the most popular dot-com domain name suffix.
- **.biz.** Suffix for businesses such as www.yourcompany.biz. This is an updated version of the very popular .com domain name suffix.
- **.net.** Suffix for businesses such as www.yourcompany.net. Technically this is for companies that provide Internet services. However, many businesses also use this suffix.
- **.pro.** Suffix for professionals such as www.perrymason.law.pro. Documented proof is required in order to use the dot-pro suffix.
- **.org.** Suffix for non-profit organizations.
- **.edu.** Suffix for educational institutions such as colleges and universities.
- **.name.** Suffix for individual Web site names such as www.richard.hernandez.name.
- **.aero.** Suffix for the aviation area such as airports and airlines.
- **.museum.** Suffix for accredited museums worldwide such as www.smithsonian.museum.
- **.coop.** Suffix for business cooperatives such as credit unions.
- **.info.** Suffix for online information sources.

USE TIPS. As a practical matter, most small and minority-owned businesses will only be concerned about the .biz, .com., .net and .pro suffixes. Some practical suggestions are:

1. If you can afford it, try and “bracket” your company’s domain name. For example if you own **www.abc-services.com** you may also want to buy:

www.abc-services.biz
www.abc-services.net

Bracketing your domain name helps prevent copy-cats and competitors from trying to confuse potential customers.

2. Use a short, easy-to-remember domain name such as **www.yourcompany.biz**.
3. Make sure you have the trademark rights to your company’s name. This will protect you in case there is a conflict between the domain name (if owned by someone else) and your trademark. The trademark holder usually wins. You can find free information on how trademark your company name at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Web site at: www.uspto.gov The site also provides the trademark application forms and contact information.
4. Reserve your .com, .biz, .net or .pro domain name early. This prevents “cybersquatters” from taking your domain name and then trying to sell it back to you at outlandish prices.
5. Contact www.networksolutions.com and/or www.register.com to get the latest information on how you can reserve a domain name.

Another important thing to remember is to protect your domain name in all its forms. You can do this by registering your corporate/Business/Entity name(s) with as many dot (.xxx) possibilities such as .com, .net, .org and .biz because of the attack or possible headache from “cybersquatters”. A good example of this is the difference between **www.northwestern.com** and **www.northwestern.net** and **www.northwestern.org**.

Always stay current with your domain name renewals, otherwise others could harm you by snatching your site, your reputation, and your brand.

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