

## ***Introduction:***

Over 30 million domain names have already been registered and it seems that almost every business has a website. In fact, a website can be one of your most powerful marketing tools if you do it right. However, even if you are a savvy Internet user, gathering all the information you need and making the necessary decisions concerning your company website can be very challenging.

One of the most commonly mistakes I encounter is that website owners underestimate the planning time and effort that is needed to create a successful website. Regardless whether you plan on designing the website yourself, or hire a web designer, a website can only be effective if you carefully do your homework and follow up with re-evaluating your decisions. This step-by-step workbook is designed for the novice as well as the experienced website owner. While new website owners will appreciate the easy to understand explanations that guide him/her through the whole set-up process, the more experienced reader can jump right into the chapters that are most interesting to him/her.

As the title says, this is a workbook. I thought you may want to apply the things you read immediately to your own website project. For this purpose, I provided space for your own notes so that you can work along as we go.

Finally, don't forget, a website is always a work in progress. Nothing is more annoying for visitors than finding outdated material on websites. Furthermore, your company and services may have changed over time or you will find that some things worked better than others for your kind of business. Therefore, it is a good idea to review your decisions concerning your website once a year. At that time, this workbook will come in very handy. As you read it again, your notes will remind you on what assumptions you based your decisions. Do you find that they still hold or do you need to adjust your website in certain areas?

## ***Costs of Doing Business on the Internet:***

The question how much it costs to do business on the Internet depends on the extents of your website. Some businesses, usually service oriented companies, need only a 3-5 page website, while others need a more extensive listing of their products or they also provide educational

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content and support to their customers. Step 3 in the workbook will provide you with a questionnaire to help you assess your website needs.

However, the costs can be broken down into the following categories:

1. Domain name registration fee = **yearly**
2. Hosting service = **monthly or yearly**
3. Initial design and set-up of website = **1 time**
4. Updating and maintaining the content of the website = **ongoing**, depending on the frequency of the updates
5. Major redesign of website after business needs change = **from time to time**

In addition, there may be costs for other services like a security certificate, shopping cart program, or web statistics program.

## ***Your Domain Name***

The Internet keeps track of all computers on the Internet by assigning a unique number, called IP (Internet Protocol) address. Because IP addresses are long and hard to remember for humans, domain names were introduced. Domain Name Servers (DNS) are the “phone book” of the Internet: they map the IP address to the domain name. So in order to be easily found on the Internet, your website needs a domain name.

Domain names consist of several parts, separated by periods. Reading from the end, the last part is the Top Level Domain (TLP), also called extension. Besides the well-known TLPs .com, .org etc., there are also two-letter country codes. .us for the United States, for example or .de for Germany.

The actual name is the Second Level Domain. For example: *myverycoolcompany.com*.

Where ‘. com’ is the Top Level Domain and ‘myverycoolcompany’ is the Second Level Domain.

The name part can consist of up to 256 characters, with a combination of letters, numbers, and dashes. Other special characters are not allowed.

However, in order to be useful and effective, your domain name should be short, easy to remember, and refer to your business, product or service. With so many domain names already taken, finding a good domain name is becoming more and more difficult.

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Depending on your situation, you may want to consider using other extensions than the most commonly used .com.

The following TLDs can be registered by the public. Although some TLD's have an intended purpose, they are not restricted to other users. (With the exception of .biz, see below)

- .com    Intended for commercial use
- .org    Intended for use by Not-for-Profit organizations
- .net    Intended for use by Internet Service Providers
- .info   Intended for websites containing information but is not restricted
- .biz    The .BIZ domain can only be used for a "bona fide business or commercial use".  
A bona fide business use is one of the following:
  - a) To exchange goods, services, or property of any kind;
  - b) In the ordinary course of trade or business; or
  - c) To facilitate (i) the exchange of goods, services, information, or property of any kind; or, (ii) the ordinary course of trade or business.

For more details on the .biz TLD go to <http://www.neulevel.biz/>

Since every domain name must be unique, we need an organization that keeps a global record of all registered domain names. This job is assumed by the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a non-profit organization.

For a more detailed explanation about the domain name system go to <http://www.internic.com/faqs/authoritative-dns.html>

Some businesses register all possible extensions to prevent competitors from registering them. Imagine that you have the domain name mycompany.biz and your competitor has mycompany.com. What are the chances that someone ends up at your competitor's site although he wanted to go to your site? Some people register knowingly names that are similar to competitor's names hoping to get some accidental extra business.

## ***Domain Name Registrars***

The company that registers your domain name with ICANN is called the "Registrar". You cannot go directly to ICANN and register your domain name yourself.

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Networksolutions.com is probably the most well known but not the only available registrar. Go to <http://www.internic.com/regist.html> to find the official list of all accredited registrars. It is a good idea to read the fine print of the registrar's contract or to ask friends about their experience. Some registrars make it very difficult for you to switch to another registrar. The prices for domain names vary widely from "free" to over \$35/year. Free domain names are not really free. Companies bundle this offer with other services that are usually overpriced. Some registrars also work with resellers. You are usually dealing with a reseller when you register your domain name with a hosting company. This is not necessarily a disadvantage. However, if you want to make any changes to your domain name profile, you have to go to the "real" registrar's website.

## ***Step 1: Domain Name Research***

Many sites offer tools to assist you with your domain name research. Networksolutions <http://www.networksolutions.com> offers a tool to help you brainstorm different domain names. You can fill out a form with keywords and the tool suggests possible combinations. Another useful feature is that they list alternative extensions if your preferred one is already taken.

Unless you have a very unique company name, more often than not your favorite name is already taken.

**List a couple alternatives and start researching:**

## **Step 2: Registering a Domain Name**

Once you decided on your domain name and which registrar to use, fill out the online registration form on your registrar's website. Make sure to fill in your name and address in the "Registrant" field. The "**Registrant**" is the person or company who legally owns the domain name. If you are not named as the registrant it may be very difficult later to make a change. The "**Administrative Contact**" is usually the person that maintains the domain name registration records, probably you or your web designer.

**Note: Make sure that you can trust your administrative contact to act on your behalf.**

Registrars usually send a request of confirmation per e-mail to the administrative contact when you make changes to the account.

The "**Technical Contact**" is usually the hosting company.

After you have registered your domain name you can make changes by accessing your account from the registrar's website. Keep good records of your username and password! It can be very tedious to recover this information.

**Note: Make sure that you always have a working e-mail address on file with your registrar.** If you ever need to retrieve your account information, or want to change your registrar, the correspondence is being sent to the e-mail address that is on file with the registrar. If your e-mail address is outdated, the process of making any changes can be taunting.

**Document your actions here:**

Registered Domain Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Registrar: \_\_\_\_\_

Date registered \_\_\_\_\_

For \_\_\_\_\_ years.

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Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address provided: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Technical Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to write down your username and password, code it in a way that an unauthorized person cannot retrieve it.

## Glossary

**Domain Name** In order to be easily found on the Internet, your website needs a domain name.

**DNS** Domain Name Servers are the “phone book” of the Internet.

**ICANN** Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers

**IP address** see Domain Name

**TLD** Top Level Domain

**Registrant** Owner of a domain name

**Registrar** A company accredited by ICANN to register domain names.