Branding for your Online Store

Branding is one of the most beneficial things your online presence can do for your business, and one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to brand your business online is by registering the right domain name (or names) to effectively establish your credibility to your customers. Registering a domain is the easy part; figuring out the right name can be a more thoughtful process. I went to one of the global leaders in domain names, Verisign, for some advice. For more than 15 years this company has powered the invisible navigation that takes people to where they want to go on the Internet. Here are a few tips that they suggest one should consider when choosing the right domain:

- Use keywords - Your domain name doesn’t have to be your business name. Try using keywords that describe your business, services or brand to help improve search engine ranking.

- Make it memorable - With millions of Web addresses in use, make yours catchy and memorable.

- Pick the right extension - Domain extensions can have specific uses, so make sure to choose one that is aligned with your business, is credible and is widely recognized (e.g., .com, .net, .edu).

- An oft-overlooked key to branding your online store is the address from which you send customer communications, notifications and promotions. Using an email address that incorporates your website domain (e.g. customersupport@yourbusinesss.com) can make potential customers more likely to buy from you because it adds credibility. In a recent Verisign survey, nine out of 10 (92 percent) of the small businesses surveyed that used branded email for their business said they feel it helps make their business look more credible.

Remember, your domain name is going to be the front door to anyone searching for your products and services on the Web. In addition to the above tips consider a few other items.

**Be Creative:** Your domain name should be memorable! Try creating your own word by compounding two whole words (YouTube), blending parts of two words together (Microsoft), tweaking a word (Tumblr) or using a phrase (ImLovinIt). Also, remember you don’t have to use your company name as a domain name, try your slogan or product name!
Know Your Audience: When it comes to choosing a domain name, consider what tone is appropriate and will resonate with your target audience. For instance, will using slang words be advantageous or disadvantageous to your business?

Length: Don’t be afraid to have a longer domain name. In fact, the average domain name is 13 characters long. Descriptive names that are naturally longer in length can be memorable and great for branding. Some businesses even add in location or other words that help to describe their business in their domain names.

Hyphens: Domain names with hyphens can open the possibilities of what is available to you. Though you should take into consideration where you place the hyphen. It is best practice to place them at natural word breaks, as it will make it easier for a user to remember your domain name.

Don’t Forget to Check Trademark Issues: To avoid infringing on a trademark, double check the database of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and do an online search of your proposed name to avoid legal issues in the future.

Consider Alternate Spellings: When registering a domain name that has more than one possible spelling, try to register all variations of the word to help ensure your customers can easily find your business online.

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