Choosing a web address

As an entrepreneur, you'll spend a lot of time thinking about how to market your business online. But before you get caught up in colour schemes, flash animation and font styles, consider something more basic: your web address.

The right URL can go a long way towards making you and your product more visible on the Internet. When choosing the domain name that will represent your company, consider the following:

Length

Should your domain name be short or long? Opinions on this issue are strongly divided because there are convincing arguments for both cases.

Shorter domain names are quicker and easier to type, making them less prone to mistakes. However, longer domain names are usually easier to remember, and give you the opportunity to include your website's keywords. Domain names that contain keywords fare better in rankings for a number of search engines.

If you opt for a short domain name, make sure it's a meaningful combination of characters that is pronounceable, even if it isn't an actual word. If you choose a longer domain name, limit the length to two to three words at most. Extremely long domain names can be arduous to type, not to mention difficult to fit on marketing material.

Multiple domain names

You might wish to register more than one domain name; one for your company and another for your product, for example. Point the various domain names to different pages on your website. They shouldn't all point to the same page as this could hurt your search engine rankings.

Keywords

Think of words that people might enter into a search engine when looking for your product and use them in your domain name. Tools like WordTracker (www.wordtracker.com) can show you what people are looking for on the Internet at any given time. Simply type in the word or phrase you are looking for and you will see instantly which phrases are most popular,

Extension: .org, .com or .eu?

Having the right domain name is good, but it's not everything. Equally important is what you decide to have at the end, after the dot.

Your market will get different signals depending on which domain you choose. So you need to think about the message you want to send. What does your company do? Where is it based? How do you see your company's future and what kind customers do you hope to attract?

Answering these questions will help you decide which domain ending is best for you. Whatever extension you decide on, make sure that when you advertise your site, you include the extension as well. Otherwise people might assume that your web address ends in .com or .something-else, and end up on another website.

Why not .eu?

The right web address is useful: it allows you to broadcast your interest in the market you intend to reach, and that can easily be across borders. With .eu, you can show 500 million people in 31 countries that you are interested in doing business with them.

More than 3.6 million .eu domain names have been registered since .eu launched in 2006.

Every day, new .eu domain names are registered. If the name you like is available, register it soon. .com is a well known domain that has been around for decades. Many interesting domain names have already been taken. With .eu, the chances of your first choice of name still being available are much better. Search engines find .eu addresses easily and they are frequently listed high in rankings.

When starting a business, you are in it for the long term so it makes sense to register a domain name that can grow with your business.

Three steps are all it takes to get a .eu domain name:

- Check that the name you'd like is available at whois.eu
- Choose a registrar that meets your needs. You can search a list of accredited registrars at www.eurid.eu
- Contact your registrar and register your name. You can also buy other services if necessary, such as webhosting, email, site design, DNSSEC, etc

Your company's web address will be the centre of its online identity, so coming up with the right name is crucial. Choose a domain name that gives your business a flying start and supports future growth. The .eu extension might be the perfect choice.