

CHOOSING A BUSINESS NAME

CHECKLIST: Choosing a Domain Name

When you are starting a business, it may be prudent to do so with the Internet in mind, even if the business is not intended to be web-based. The World Wide Web can serve as the best advertising medium for your products or services and has the potential to reach more consumers than any other medium. If your business is entirely web-based, its presence, and therefore its name, on the Internet are of the utmost importance. The following guidelines can help you to choose a business name with an Internet presence in mind.

- Businesses on the web have the potential to reach consumers not just in your neighborhood, but all over the world, so you will need to compare business names in a much greater geographic area to avoid the potential for confusion and trademark infringement.
- When you come up with a few ideas for business names, consider what your domain name—that part of your Internet address that follows “www”—could be. The closer it is to the actual name of your business, products, or services, the more likely your customers will find you.
- Although using your actual business name or some variation thereof will attract existing customers or potential customers who have already heard about your business, using a product or service descriptor, like window-washing.com, may more effectively attract new or potential customers.
- Domain names must be registered using an accredited registration service, which can itself be found on-line using the Internet.
- Domain names cannot be issued to more than one person or business, so if someone else has already registered your idea, you will have to come up with a new one.
- If possible, consider registering both your business name and a product- or service-type designation to attract as many people as possible to the site.
- Consider possible mistakes that potential customers could make when typing in your web address. If mistakes are likely, consider simplifying the name, or

perhaps registering multiple names so that even if a common mistake is made, the user will get to your site.

- Although domain names are available with a variety of suffixes—the letters that follow the period after your chosen name—the one that most people are used to using is “.com,” so it may be best to use those letters, rather than an alternative like “.net,” to attract as many visitors as possible.
- The “.com” suffix can be used for commercial and personal sites; “.net” is recommended for companies involved in Internet infrastructure; and “.org” is recommended for non-profit companies.
 - √ For all of those suffixes, only letters, numbers, and hyphens can be part of the domain name, but the name cannot begin or end with a hyphen.
 - √ Using any of those three suffixes, the name is limited to sixty-three characters not including the suffix, but some web browsers, e-mail programs, and other applications may not support anything over twenty-six characters in length, so it may be best to keep the name short.
- Domain names should follow the same general rules as business names in general. See Dos & Don'ts: Business Names.