

Should My Domain Name be the same as my Company Name?

A domain name is the address on the Internet where your business website can be found. It is a unique name that is used to establish your company's presence online as well as for your clients and potential clients to find you on the Internet.

In Internet parlance, a domain name is also known as a URL or Uniform Resource Locator. Typically, a domain name will look like this: <http://www.yourcompanyname.com.au>.

Obtaining a domain name is your first step to conducting your business online. By having a website, you have a vehicle through which you can buy or sell products to anyone connected to the Internet, anywhere in the world. It is now becoming expected for businesses to have a domain name and a website.

It is a good idea to have at least a small website in your company name if only to guard its integrity. It's not enough to just obtain the domain name, as a challenger to the name can point to the fact that it not being used in an attempt to wrestle its ownership from you. Whether you register several other domain names, one for each area of your business, or for each of your 'brand' names, is optional, but recommended for the same reason. Grab the names before someone else does.

An important feature of owning a domain name that is the same, or as close as possible, to your company name is the ability to use that domain name as part of your company email address/addresses. This contributes greatly to the professional and business image of your company, projecting it in a credible light.

You should be careful with the choice of a company name (if choosing a new one) and its corresponding domain name. Over the years, legal disputes have arisen out of the use of domain names and company names that are identical to existing registered trademarks or company names.

What's more, names that could be the subject of an infringement action need not be ones that are locally registered here in Australia. Most world famous names and marks have international protection against intellectual property infringement that may be enforced against anyone in almost every country.

ASIC (Australian Securities and Investment Commission) recommends that your choice of a domain name is not identical, similar or confusingly similar to an existing business name, company name, reserved company name or registered trademark.

You can avoid legal conflict by conducting a domain name search on the Internet and a name search on an Australian domain registration website prior to reserving a company name for your business. If, after conducting a thorough search, the proposed name for your company is free for use, then go ahead and apply for it as your company name.

Should you have an existing business and find that its name has already been used by someone else for their website, it will be necessary to look for an alternative that either modifies the business name, or successfully interprets the nature of your business.

There are a number of providers on the Internet who offer domain name registration services for a fee such as Companies Now, they have an extensive website which is at www.companiesnow.com.au. Sign up with any one of these providers and make sure that you renew your domain name registration regularly so as not to lose your rights over it. Once you register your domain name, no one else can hold or use the same Internet address simultaneously.