

Keep Your Online Identity Safe

Protect your domain name by taking these precautions.

By Lauren Dingus

One important, and often overlooked, aspect of any organization is maintaining your domain name. Well known businesses and nonprofits have found themselves in trouble when they have let their domains expire. Big name brands like Google, Microsoft, and the Dallas Cowboys have all let their domains expire, and a mistake like that can be very costly for any organization.

What happens when your domain expires?

If you forget to renew your domain, you'll lose access to it. Domain registrars, like GoDaddy, will give you a certain period of time to buy it back, sometimes with a penalty attached. Once that grace period has ended, your domain will be auctioned off or awarded to someone who has it backordered. If no one has bid on or backordered your domain, it becomes available for anyone to register.

You may think that a temporary lapse in your website being available is no big deal, but letting your domain expire can cause serious hardship. For example:

- You and your employees will have no access to your organizational e-mail. All electronic communications between you, your staff, and your customers will be lost.
- You can lose customers if they're searching for your organization online and can't access your website.
- Your competitor can purchase your domain and redirect it to their own website.
- An individual or business can purchase your domain and require you to pay a premium price, sometimes thousands of dollars, to get it back.

How can you protect your domain name?

It's easy to forget about renewing your domain. Logging into your registrar isn't something you need to do during normal day-to-day operations. However, ensuring that your domain doesn't expire is essential for your brand image. Follow these steps to safeguard your good name:




Renew your domain name for multiple years in advance.

Registrars will often allow you to pay for more than one year, sometimes up to 10 years. It's a good idea to renew your domain for as many years as you can. Note the expiration date in your calendar so you can renew again before your domain expires.

Set your domain registration to auto renew.

Pay attention to e-mails and renewal notices from your domain registrar so you know when you should expect a charge. Also, log in to your account periodically to make sure all your information is up to date. All too often, organizations lose their domain because the credit card on file expired.

Make sure you're in control.

If you have someone else managing your website, make sure that your domain name is registered under your name and that you have all the log-in credentials. Remember, your domain name is an extension of your organization. It plays a major role in your online reputation with your customers and search engines. If you follow the advice above, you can save yourself the frustration and expense of trying to recover a lost domain name. 

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