

Domain Name Policy

Only a minority of companies have a written domain name policy. In these organizations, employees, managers, and vendors all know the “who, what, when, and how” of domain name management. They’re in a better position to secure, promote, and protect their brands online in a disciplined and accountable way. Using CSC’s seven-step process, you can join the growing ranks of organizations that are in full control of their domains.

A teal pencil icon pointing downwards, positioned above the text.

**Seven steps for
creating a successful
domain policy**

Why do you need a domain name policy?

Because if you have one, the right people are equipped to make the best decisions for your organization. This means you can take advantage of digital opportunities like new gTLDs while cutting administrative costs and reducing the risk of fraud and cyber crime.

1 Establish your policy's goals

Establish your policy's goals

These should be specific and measurable and set by the person managing the policy, together with the three departments that have the biggest vested interests: marketing, legal, and IT. Sample domain policy goals might include: “reduce the cost and effort of domain recovery” or “give all business units online access to relevant domains and data.” The more it reflects the input and consensus view of all stakeholders, the more valuable and relevant a domain policy will be.

2 Set out the day-to-day mechanics

3 Decide and optimize your domain strategy

4 Assign roles and responsibilities

5 Identify a budget

6 Create standards

7 Define the reporting and review process

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Set out the day-to-day mechanics

To save money and avoid risk, pay attention to daily details. For example, we recommend a policy that requires strategic registration of domain names in conjunction with any public filing or expression of intent to apply for a name or brand. This can avoid the problem of domain “front-running,” where opportunists register domains that are being searched for or trialed.

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Decide and optimize your domain strategy

What do you want to achieve in the digital world? Brand protection? Brand promotion? eCommerce? Information distribution? Or a combination of these? Being clear about your domain strategy will enable you to devise a policy that's optimized for your organization.

For example, if your priorities include brand promotion and revenue, it's important to know how people search for your brand online. Domain strategies have to be linked to your SEO program. New gTLDs give this issue extra weight and add a new component to your domain portfolio. Deciding which branded or generic new gTLDs to register or monitor is an unavoidable part of any domain strategy in 2017.

CSC recommends that every organization take the following actions to optimize its domain strategy:

- Audit and streamline your domain name portfolio's DNS and SSL coverage to mitigate security risks and optimize website resolution.
- Ensure your digital IP is centrally managed, resolves to relevant content, and is measured to quantify impact. This should cover the full spread of online properties, from domains, social media usernames, and email addresses to mobile apps and QR codes.
- Release domains that have no value and explore divesting non-core generic domains that do.
- Identify and register available "high impact/high risk" domains and social media usernames (including new gTLDs); i.e., properties with high potential for traffic and infringement.
- Audit and monitor the name space to identify high-impact infringing cases in mobile apps, social media, search, domain name, affiliate, and email channels.
- Prioritize and enforce your brand rights with mechanisms such as cease and desist letters, UDRP, and the DMCA—and then measure impact.

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Assign roles and responsibilities

Who's going to make the policy happen? It's important for your policy to include an organization chart designating a leader and a series of clearly identified roles like administration and security. Depending on how much you rely on external support, your organization chart may well include vendor companies.

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Identify a budget

Aspects of your domain policy, like registration, monitoring, and enforcement, will cost money. You'll need to decide where budget can be sourced from different departments and where you might need additional funding. If extra funding is necessary, a good domain policy can present a sound business case.

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Create standards

Standards make your domain policy sustainable and scalable. Start by defining WHOIS templates for all domain names owned by the company and its various business units. This will ensure that no individual has the ability to hijack company domain names or hold them hostage when they leave the company. By creating and publicizing distribution lists for requests or for notices from your registrar, registries, DRP agencies, and other vendors, you can ensure there is no single point of failure in the communications chain. And a central repository for specialized resources such as WHOIS lookups, trace routes, and domain name forms will help you handle domain name issues consistently and securely.

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By making clear the type and frequency of reports (and who should produce them), you can ensure effective communication among the policy's stakeholders. For example, a typical report could be a quarterly portfolio review outlining upcoming expirations.

Finally, presetting periodic reviews of your domain policy will help keep it on track. Reviews provide a valuable forum for stakeholders to determine whether the policy is working as intended, whether it is strong enough, and whether it needs new provisions.



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