The Issue of Keywords in Domain Names by Pat Boardman

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The modern convenient way to find out information is to send bits of computer magic with two or three details you know about the subject matter, and it will go out into the Web and return with mountains of answers from which to choose. Words running for words sooner or later get you the information you want.

Very few Internet searches are based on one word on its own: a second word normally qualifies the search to information that is common to both and then narrow down the number of things that can be associated with those two words and bring up the web sites where they are most plentiful, Sometimes more words are needed to make the search more specific.

In some industry sectors there are a limited number of key phrases available so some thought should be given to having a certain word as part of a domain name, considering how often a word like "limo" is used as at least one-half of the search term in the limousine rental industry. The fact that an exact match is a possibility in so many searches makes it an important decision when there are many competitors trying to rank for the same words. Identifying the profession can provide some certainty that the web site will rank, with or without back links. Having a trade or product identified in your brand is wise, as it is in the name of your web site.

The domain can therefore include your brand and your major keyword to make clear what you do or where you do it. Thus, "Smithville Plumbers" would come up on top if someone was in Smithville, had a plumbing problem, then went over to the computer and typed those two words, "Smithville" and "plumbers" into a search bar to call for assistance.

Other opportunities exist to include keywords in your message content, without overdoing it (or "keyword stuffing") which can get penalized. Inner page URLs and sub-domains, headers, tags, and anchor text are all spaces that should be filled with identifying terms. Measuring the "keyword density" of the text on each page should be performed by the SEO consultant to make sure there are a maximum of 3% keywords within the content.

More important is the factor of "quality" of the web site. Keywords can't be ignored when selecting domain names or developing brands but once the search engines consider a page high-quality entity on the Web with a clear purpose and message then it will rank higher in searches. The days of temporary takeovers are over, it is not as easy to displace an established site as it once was.

If the decision is to use keywords when purchasing the domain name, you have the option of putting in dashes to make the words stand out separately, both to humans and the search engines. Two dashes maximum should be used. The search engines can still usually read the words if there are no dashes unless a different word exists by chance from consecutive letters in different words. Domain name registration forms will offer both choices, in order for you to be aware that you can reserve other available domain name combinations as well to prevent others from taking them over.

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