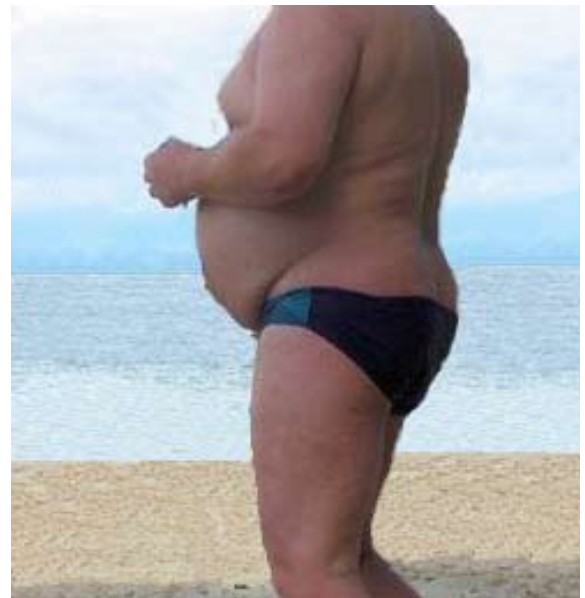


Web 2.0 Naming

Naming your company or product has always been a challenge. In the digital age, the challenge is even greater. Now, in addition to being unique, memorable, and relevant, names need to be searchable, make a good URL, and most of all, they be available as a dotcom. Below are some important points to consider as you search for a company or brand name in our Web 2.0 world.

1. Availability is the first hurdle.

Availability in the old days used to be relatively easy. Consider Delta. Many companies could trademark that name because they sold different products and services. As of this writing, the U.S. Patent and Trademark 318 registrations for “Delta” in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office database. Delta Airlines, Delta Faucets, and Delta Force could all register Delta as a trademark. URLs don’t work that way. Only one www.Delta.com is available with 318 Delta trademarks chasing it. Delta Airlines won that “pure” dotcom. Delta Faucets had to settle for www.deltafaucets.com. Your biggest challenge will be to find an available dotcom. You are better off choosing a name that you can clearly own than you are coming up with variations. If you can’t own www.Acme.com, don’t be tempted to choose www.MyAcme.com or www.AcmePlus.com. Similarly, hyphens and plural versions won’t provide enough differentiation. If you were to choose www.general-motors.com with a hyphen, you won’t be establishing a differentiated brand and you will probably get into trademark trouble. And don’t be tempted to go for .tv, .net, .info or any other exotic top level domain names if your .com is taken. No one will remember that you are .net while your competitor is .com.



Uh-Oh! The art directors at Speed of Art made a classic Web naming mistake. What do you see when you look at their URL? www.SpeedoFart.com

2. Is Shorter is better?

Many people advise a short name. They offer less chance for misspelling and they aren’t such a chore to type. But don’t trade meaning for length. You are better off with www.FarmFreshEggs.com than you are with www.FFE.com. And the shorter your name, the less likely a URL will be available.



Web 2.0 Naming

Continued

3. Spelling is important.

Your name needs to be easy to spell. People searching for Informatics frequently type Informatic instead. Don't go for intentional misspellings—people are unlikely to correctly remember your variation when they go to find you on the Web. That said, it makes sense to buy variant spellings of your brand to redirect mistaken searchers to your correct site. Be sure to buy singular and plural versions of your URL, too.

4. Descriptive names are a double edged sword.

A name that appeals to search engines can make sense, but often these names are too generic to ever be brands. The www.CNN.com URL is more valuable than the generic www.news.com (which doesn't even show up in the first three pages of a Google search on “news”). And Tiger Direct will always be a stronger brand than Cheap Computers. That said, once you choose your brand name and register that URL, it makes sense to own relevant generic URLs and point them to your main site. Acme Brick owns both www.acmebrick.com and www.brick.com.

5. Make it searchable.

If people enter your brand into search engines like Google, will your Web page appear first—or at least in the top five results? If not, reconsider your name. Even giant Fortune 500 companies can get it wrong. When Computer Associates shortened their name to simply “CA”, they made their brand unsearchable. Type CA into Google, and you'll get thousands of listings for California. To make it to the top of results, CA has had to over-invest in search engine optimization.

6. Look at how it looks.

Perfectly nice sounding names can morph in unintended ways as URLs. Some more famous examples include Therapist Finder, which becomes www.TheRapistFinder.com, the travel site Choose Spain can be read as www.ChoosesPain.com. The Via Graphix Web site www.ViagraFix.com seems to be selling male performance drugs. My personal favorite is Speed of Art with a Web site www.SpeedoFarts.com that makes me think of tiny bubbles in the swimming pool. Also avoid long strings of vowels—too easy to misspell. AAA Envelopes makes a bad URL: www.aaaenvelopes.com.

7. Grab it; ask questions later.

If you find a URL that might work, buy it. Good names will go fast. I've seen great names disappear over night as clients debate their choices. It is better to buy the URL and not use it than to miss out. The \$9 to \$35 it costs to reserve a set of URLs is a small price to pay to ensure availability once you settle on a name.

