Domain Name Broker

Secrets

UNDERSTANDING WHY YOUR DOMAIN NAME IS THE BIGGEST RISK AND OPPORTUNITY TO SCALING

CHRIS ZUIKER

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About the Author

Chris Zuiker is a Senior Domain Broker with Media Options, an industry-leading domain brokerage firm. Chris' extensive background in sales and negotiation laid the foundation for his domain brokerage skills, while providing him key insights into what national brands value.

As a little background, Media Options works with the world's top brands to help them acquire their online branding. Some of our clients include Amazon, Hearst, IAC, Tribune, etc. We have a flawless reputation.

We have completed over $600M in domain sales.

Chris negotiated and managed business units with annual revenue of over $100M. He had full responsibility for the sales cycle at mass retailers including Walmart, Target, Sam's Club and respective online accounts in the US and Mexico.

Chris has long been a student of consumer behavior, creating a competitive advantage for national brands.

Via domain name brokerage, Chris applies his knowledge and skills by helping companies increase conversion and dominate their competition - specifically in their branding and domain strategies.

Chris has over 400,000 contact points selling domain names. He has contacted over 15,000 companies since starting on his domain name journey. The concepts of this book were discovered over the last eight years of acquiring and selling domain names.

Introduction

This book will provide several key insights and tools for companies, startups and entrepreneurs looking to create a competitive advantage with their domain name strategies.

Choosing the perfect domain will only increase in complexity because over 1,000 new extensions are now available.

An extension is what comes after the (.). Examples of new extensions are: .game, .realestate, and .fishing

Despite all these new extensions, the set of catchy keywords that appeal to humans is still bound by how we process language.

Branding and domain strategies intersect so closely they are inseparable. Your domain name is your brand and impacts your brand equity.

A good name domain should reinforce what your company offers. It should give the consumer a reason to click on your domain and engage with your brand. A premium domain makes the online experience effortless from the first interaction.

A brand's domain name has now become the biggest risk and opportunity to scaling and owning its message online. The book is divided into seven ways a domain name impacts your brand. I call this the "Seven Dimensions."

Examples of brands/startups we have helped to acquire domain names:

DOMAIN	
Alloy.com	LA.COM
Arcadia.com	Lighthouse.com
Badger.com	MedicarePlans.com
Beacon.com	Nebula.com
BlackTie.com	Neighbor.com
Bloom.com	NFT.com
Bodega.com	OD.com
CDP.com	OnlineCounseling.com
Clara.com	Podcast.com
CLI.com	Podcasting.com
Coverage.com	Prodigy.com
Crypto.org	Rain.com
CT.com	Relief.com
Deco.com	Republic.com
DX.com	RH.com
Exodus.com	Sleep.org
Gala.com	Soapbox.com
Galaxy.com	Swan.com
Gorillas.com	Swish.com
Holman.com	Testing.com
Hospitality.com	Trees.com
HVAC.com	WallStreet.com
Identity.com	Win.com
ISP.com	Wise.com
	Yellow.com
	Yolo.com
	Zeal.com

CHAPTER 1

My journey into discovering why domain names are important

It was four weeks into my domain name journey when I met my first real challenge. I was marketing the domain name LifeInsurance.net.

This domain was in an industry that I was super passionate about, and I was prepared to do whatever it took to sell this domain name.

My initial outreach had fantastic feedback, with over a 30% response rate to my first contact.

Today was the day I thought to myself. I knew the domain name was going to sell. I decided to call the top 20 insurance companies to sell *LifeInsurance.net*.

I dialed the number of a top digital marketing executive for a leading life insurance brand. The company was based out of the east coast, but its marketing team was in the heart of the digital world in San Francisco.

This was going to be an easy sell because they had to understand the power of domain names to their branding, marketing, and ability to convert.

Ring…ring…ring…

Her assistant answered the phone on the third ring. I was expecting resistance because I was calling a top digital marketing executive.

But, without hesitating, I was transferred to the VP of digital marketing. We quickly made the usual pleasantries and introductions. I could not believe my luck.

Then I got right to the heart of why I called. I presented a logical and a well thought reason why her company needed to acquire LifeInsurance.net.

A large part of their business was Life Insurance, so how could they not understand the value?

She listened for a while and then said:

“Domain names are not important anymore. We are focusing only on SEO (search engine optimization.)”

What?

Did I hear you correctly?

How could a leading digital marketer not understand the power of domain names?

I was left speechless because I knew this was incorrect, but I did not have the data or ability to prove her wrong at that time.

I composed myself and quickly responded.

We would like to buy all the domain names in your portfolio for pennies on the dollar. Domain names are worthless, right?

They had an amazing portfolio of one-word domain names.

She was even quicker to tell me they were not for sale.

This lead me on a journey of discovery.

Getting an education on domain names

After this conversation, I knew I needed to understand domain names more deeply.

It was my assumption that domain names were an integral part of branding, digital marketing, communicating leadership, conversion and profit, but I just did not know how to explain this.

When I first started into the domain name space, I devoured all the information on domainsherpa.com from all the leading experts, including Andrew Rosener, the CEO of Media Options.

I signed up to sites like domaining.com and read all of the industry blogs that were out there.

I went to blogs and read articles from James Isles (jamesnames.com) with interviews of founders who had purchased domain names. He does a fantastic job of getting first-hand quotes from founders on why they acquired their domain name.

Most of the information on domain names focused on the domain wholesaler or the domain investor.

Many digital marketing and branding agencies still didn't understand the power of domain names for branding and marketing (I'll discuss this later in later chapters).

I knew domain names were important.

Media Options had sold over $400 million in domain names at this time, and we worked with the top SEO companies in the world.

Inherently, I understood domain names were super important, but how do I explain that?

How do I get to the heart of why a company needs to own a domain name?

How do I get to the heart of why a brand not owning their domain is the most significant risk they have to scale, marketing and conversion?

Most examples explaining domains in the forums and in domain Sherpa centered around how domain names were like real estate. You need to own your best property on Broadway, right?

These examples centered on how a great domain name is like owning a building and having your storefront on the main street, and yet this analogy just didn't work.

I tried this approach. I explained this to founders, to startups, to CEOs, and it didn't move the needle.

What I found is that they understood that domain names are like real estate, but this did not translate to their brand.

It did not translate to the true impact a domain name has on brand's success or ability to scale online.

The real estate analogy did not explain the risk and downside when another company controlled the message for their brand.

The information in the industry was not enough.

This led me on a journey of discovery to truly understand and explain why a domain name is fundamental for a company to scale, grow, convert and ultimately impact its brand equity.

The" ***Seven Dimensions to how a domain name impact's a brand"*** was born from this research.

CHAPTER 2

The SEVEN dimensions to how a domain name impacts a brand

It was a typical Tuesday afternoon when I signed into my LinkedIn account to check on the status of my recent video.

On any given day, I receive dozens of messages from people looking to sell or acquire a domain name.

I noticed that I had several unread messages, but that would have to wait until I responded to comments on a video that was uploaded that day.

After thirty minutes, I rolled the mouse to the message button, which at this point had increased to 14 unread messages.

There was one message that immediately caught my eye.

It was from a marketing executive that was not a first-level connection. They were in the eyeglass industry.

He wanted to talk to me urgently about his situation with a domain name.

Like most companies, their domain portfolio included hundreds of domain names. This included branded domains, sub-brand domains, marketing campaigns, and defensive domain names.

But…

One of them was different.

This specific domain name had an increase of 25,000 unique visitors a day. At first, they had no idea why the traffic had increased.

Then it started.

Several customers were asking about orders they placed and wanted refunds. But the only problem was they had not placed an order with them. So, why were they calling and emailing them?

After further research, they found the problem.

This specific marketing domain name was only several letters off from their competitor's marketing domain name. The competition had just launched a nationwide TV marketing campaign driving traffic to their domain.

Their competitor had created massive confusion with their domain name.

My contact wanted to know what they should do with the traffic and domain name.

Should they try and sell it to their competition or hold it and leverage the traffic for their brand?

What would you do?

I hear this same problem over and over again, every week.

This story helps to explain the real-world impact to profit, conversion and trust when a company creates confusion with its domain name strategies.

When money is on the line, it gets serious quickly.

I have over 450,000 contact points (in the last seven years) for selling, acquiring, marketing, and negotiating domain names.

I have worked with the best and worst marketers in the world.

Many of these top startup founders have successful exits, with some raising billions of dollars in funding.

Why do they insist on owning their branded domain name in the raw, unfiltered version?

What do they know and understand that the average startup does not know?

This was a question I asked multiple times a day. I spent thousands of hours researching the topics of branding, marketing, and digital marketing to understand the impact of domain names on a company's success.

I had to look outside the domain industry to gather this information.

My focus was on understanding why a company would spend $100,000 or even $5,000,000 to control its brand.

If I could understand this process, it would help make me a better domain investor.

The seven dimensions were created as my framework to explain why scenarios like the above eyeglass company happen.

IMPORTANT

This could be the most important section of this book.

Before I explain the seven dimensions, it is important to understand the foundational elements underlining them.

The core of my philosophy is summed up in these statements:

<u>My Core Philosophy:</u>

- **Domain Name = Brand = Brand Equity**
- **Every brand needs to create a simple and effortless path for its customers.**
- **Consumers reward simplicity with trust; trust is rewarded with conversion, profit, and loyalty. These are the ingredients of brand equity.**
- **Confusion will always cost money.**
- **Not owning the raw unfiltered version of your brand's domain name is the most significant risk to its ability to scale and grow.**

I will explain each of these core elements with stories in the sections below.

The challenge was how do I explain these core elements in a way that shows the impact on a brand.

I needed to demonstrate how this translates into metrics and the real world.

What I found were seven major areas of impact.

Like a matrix, each dimension will impact a brand differently, but every domain name I market will impact a company in one of these seven dimensions.

The more points of impact, the greater the risk a brand has not owning their brand's domain in the raw unfiltered, and simplest format (ex: Quilt.com versus GetQuilt.com).

This framework lets me quickly explain the pain and possibility of selling a domain name.

THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS:

1. Global positioning
2. Industry positioning
3. Branding
4. Marketing
5. SEO
6. Email Security
7. Scaling and pivoting

CHAPTER 3

Global Positioning

Who controls the messaging and communication for your brand online?

Only ONE company can control the GLOBAL position for every keyword brand.

The definition of global positioning is how your brand is positioned relative to all the other brands in the marketplace that call themselves the same brand, or call themselves the same keyword.

For example, who owns the brand Kraken?

One of the best stories I have to explain global positioning is the story of KrakenRum.com and Kraken.com (the crypto exchange).

Kraken Rum exchange launched in 2010 with over $10 million invested in advertising in 2013 alone.

(https://www.shankennewsdaily.com/index.php/2013/11/20/7280/proximo-backs-the-kraken-rum-with-new-10-million-ad-campaign/)

Now, that's not invested in the structure, empoyees,e branding, labeling, or bottling.

That investment is purely in marketing alone.

And yet they launched on the domain name KrakenRum.com. The Kraken crypto exchange acquired the domain name Kraken.com.

I don't know if Kraken Rum had the opportunity to acquire Kraken.com. But we know they left this window open for another brand to dominate the GLOBAL POSITION for the keyword Kraken.

Based on my experience with the liquor industry, I'm going to assume that if they had the opportunity to acquire Kraken.com, they most likely passed on it.

When you fast forward seven years later and look at the global positioning for the keyword Kraken, the crypto exchange dominates the communication with kraken.com.

Kraken.com owns the messaging and the communication for everything around Kraken.

And yet, at this point, over the last ten years, Kraken Rum has most likely put anywhere from $50 to $70 million into marketing their brand Kraken Rum.

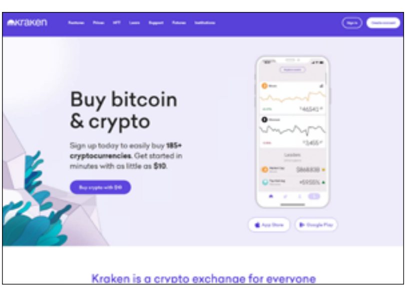
They most likely looked at Kraken.com and never thought this little crypto exchange company would be anything. Crypto tokens were not on anyone's radar at that time.

They were very wrong.

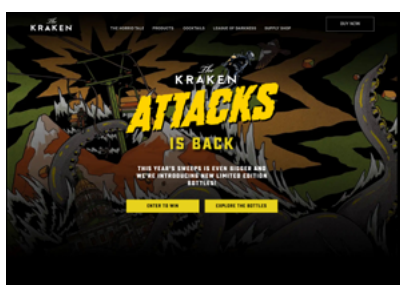
If they could go back, would they acquire the domain name Kraken.com for $200,000 or even for $1 million? Well of course, they would because they missed out on owning the global positioning for Kraken.

The Kraken Crypto Exchange controls the global positioning for the keyword and brand Kraken.

Here are pictures of their websites.



Kraken.com



KrakenRum.com

Another one of my favorite examples is Hive.com.

There are fourteen different companies that have the keyword Hive in their brand and have raised over $1,000,000 in funding.

Only one company owns the clarity and simplicity of Hive.com.

		Total Funding
fcbox.com (hive box)	$	706,303,366
hiveblockchain.com	$	91,444,020
thehive.ai	$	20,200,000
siliconhive.com	$	17,000,000
hive.com	$	16,000,000
honeyflow.com	$	12,489,213
hive-project.net	$	8,949,421
hivemedia.com	$	7,850,000
bhive.net	$	7,500,000
hivelearning.com	$	4,949,808
hiveonline.co.uk	$	3,612,721
hivesocial.com	$	3,000,000
hive.hr	$	2,060,502
hivemedia.tv	$	1,500,000

Each company has raised over a million dollars in funding, and yet only one company has the simplicity of owning hive.com.

How many companies can a consumer handle with the same brand?

In this case 14 brands call themselves Hive.

Who owns the Brand?

How many brands use your keyword and call themselves the same brand?

Who is controlling your brand online?

WHY GLOBAL POSITIONING IS IMPORTANT

Global positioning is important because it positions and pre-frames your interactions with your customers, employees, and the world.

When you don't own your brand, you will forever have to present yourself in a negative light.

For example, we are Hive but don't go to Hive.com. We are at HiveLearnng.com or HiveBlockchain.com.

Your customers will need to do mental gymnastics to remember not to go to Hive.com.

This confusion and lack of simplicity degrades trust with your customer.

More importantly, it creates confusion and subtracts from your leadership position.

In the case of Dave.com the owner felt that adding words to their brand created trust issues and inferior positioning of their brand.

"...People are trusting us with their finances and TryDave just didn't seem to give me the same confidence as Dave.com. The team loves it too. Everyone loves wearing a Dave.com hat, t-shirt, sticker, etc.

Additionally, when people ask where we work or when we answer our phones, we always say Dave.com. It's easy to say and share. The trouble with some of the new companies using human-type names for their startups is they sound awkward unless you own the .com."

Not owning the raw version of your brand will have an impact.

The impact will vary depending upon the amount of competition and the strength of your marketing.

But…

It will have an impact.

In my experience, this is the most significant risk a startup has to scaling its brand, marketing, and positioning.

You must own your global positioning and keep out as much noise for your brand as possible.

Remember, there are forty five different trademark classes and many use cases for every domain.

This is also an excellent opportunity for a startup to capture the moment from other brands by acquiring the raw version domain name. They will forever send you traffic because of their confusion.

Any company with a (.co) domain as their brand will see the biggest risk because of how we naturally add the (.com) to the domain name and email.

The Story Of WorkForce.com

This has to be one of the clearest examples of global positioning.

Workforce is a generic term meaning:
The people engaged in or available for work, either in a country or area or in a particular company or industry.

For decades WorkForce.com was used by Workforce Magazine as a human resource magazine.

Workforce Software was founded in 1999 using the domain name WorkforceSoftware.com.

But…

They still did not own the effortless path to their brand.

Not owning Workforce.com was the biggest risk they had to be able to scale effortlessly and without confusion.

Workforce Software was able to get by for 20 years using WorkforceSoftware.com. They paid the price, but the confusion was minimal because workforce.com was being used as a magazine.

This was about to change.

In 2019 a competitor to Workforce Software acquired the publisher of Workforce Magazine.

They rebranded Workforce.com from the human resource magazine to their workforce related product.

Overnight they dominate the global and industry positioning for workforce related software.

Take a look at the logos and both of these sites online.

On first glance, it is almost impossible to tell the difference between the two companies.

Who owns the Global Positioning?

Workforce.com will forever hold the power position and be the leader.

WorkforceSoftware.com will forever have to over communicate to tell their customers NOT to go to Workforce.com.

The simple act of telling people NOT to go to Workforce.com will actually drive traffic to Workforc.com

It is no-win situation for their ability to scale, grow and keep their current revenue and customers.

This confusion is real and will significantly impact growth, marketing, and conversion.

WorkforceSoftware.com filed a UDRP to have the domain (workforce.com) transferred to them, but this was rejected. They are now in a law suit with the company.

As a last note, look how hard I had to overcommunicate to tell you this story. What domain do you remember?

Global positioning is the biggest for your brand's ability to scale.

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders of Olive.com and their acquisiton of this domain name.

Olive.com

By having olive.com, it really adds a level of credibility to our brand and helps to drive name recognition as we do more TV and Connected TV ads.

Our previous domain www.GoGetOlive.com worked great on digital advertising, however, it wasn't as effective as we opened up our marketing to sports sponsorships and TV where you only have a few seconds for prospects to see your brand. Olive.com is easy and memorable.

It will make our brand stronger as it will be easier to remember and we will be known as THE "Olive" nationwide.

Our top competitors have .com domain names that are very easy to remember and are supported by strong marketing efforts. Being a strong competitor, we needed to have an easy domain name to find and remember.

- Paul Sherman from Olive.com

If you want more information on selling or buying a domain, don't hesitate to email me at: Chris@MediaOptions.com

CHAPTER 4

Industry Positioning

How is your brand positioned against the competition?

Industry position is defined as how your brand is viewed and positioned within your industry.

The first interaction with most brands is online and in search. Your brand is no longer viewed in a vacuum. The internet has made it easy for consumers to quickly search and see the top companies for any given product and vertical.

For example, you search for a product and immediately see the ten companies on the first page.

Consumers must make quick, split-second decisions on which of these ten companies are relevant.

How do they do this in a category that could be unfamiliar to them?

They rank the brands based on the trust level of their domain name, sometimes without even going to their site.

Even if you are ranked on the first page of Google, does your brand stand out and connect with the consumer's intent? This will have an impact on your conversion.

Many times, a major differentiator on the search page is your brand and domain.

How can new companies cut through the competition to stand out?

Your domain name or brand is now a quick way to differentiate and move up the brand ladder

We are saturated with marketing messages today. Our brain needs to simplify these messages and is forced to make quick decisions.

Your domain, brand, and product name impact how consumers rank you against the competition.

The good news is that the digital age has allowed small companies to take the big guys head-on.

Technology advances have made it easy for smaller startups to look like category leaders.

I am often amazed at how similar brands look when I visit websites in my marketing outreach.

Most even use the same sitemap and similar copy. If you just looked at the top sites without brands, it would be almost impossible to differentiate companies in some verticals.

Does your domain name elevate you over your competition or make you look out of place?

Your brand is ranked against your competition.

It is NOT about owning the category-defining domain but owning an effortless path that connects your brand at some level with your product, mission, and industry.

Here is an example of the industry positioning for the online mattress vertical.

- Purple.com
- Casper.com
- TN.com
- NectarSleep.com
- Leesa.com
- HelixSleep.com
- Saavta.com
- Lull.com
- AvocadoGreenMattress.com
- GhostBed.com
- Tulo.com
- Laylasleep.com
- brooklynbedding.com

Based on this example, who owns the leadership position?

How would you rank these brands, and which one would you buy?

Do the simpler domains stand out or, the longer domains?

How you show up against your competition will impact your ability to convert, grow and survive.

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Caretaker.com

When people are considering using us I think it sounds to them like something that already exists and is established, so there is less fear around adopting something new. This means that we have been able to acquire both traditional early adopter customers and customers who don't fit that mold at all.

- Susannah Vila, founder of Caretaker.com

Placement.com

I think it's easier to establish trust with customers. Our name proves that we are a serious company with serious resources. Any random person on the internet can't just get placement.com.

- co-founder Sean Linehan

Tune.com

The most important thing about a brand name is recall. How easy is it to remember? A name like TUNE stands out, especially in the B2B space, and the simplicity speaks to our professionalism and how easy we are to do business with.

- Brian Marcus, Tune's VP of Global Marketing

CHAPTER 5

Branding

What is your brand name?

Now…

What do your customers think is your brand name?

Remember my thesis:

Domain Name = Brand = Brand Equity

The story of Carrot.com is a great example of this in action. It is also a great example of why a company should use a domain broker like Media Options.

This story was shared on DomainNameWire.com and via the founder's YouTube channel.

Here are the highlights of the story.

The founder Trevor chose Carrot as his brand because it gave him multiple options to scale beyond just the lead generation for real estate investors.

Carrot.com was registered, so he went with OnCarrot.com.

The interview mentions how Trevor was tired of having to explain that his brand was Carrot and not OnCarrot.

He was in for a big gut check.

Here is what happened at one conference.

"50% of the people that were [at the conference] came up to us and said, 'We love Oncarrot. We absolutely love OnCarrot.'"

The only place customers saw OnCarrot was via their domain name – OnCarrot.com. Everything on their site was branded Carrot.

And yet 50% of the customers thought their brand was OnCarrot.

Trevor realized at this point he had a significant branding problem.

He had tried to acquire Carrot over the years without success. At one point, Carrot.com was acquired by a venture backed company.

This next part sounds like a soap opera, but it is essential to understand the final comment.

This company went under, and Trevor reached out to buy Carrot.com for $100,000 only to be told they owed $250,000 on the domain.

After several unfortunate events, Trevor finally secured Carrot.com for a little under $600,000.

He now owned his brand Carrot.com

His final quote:

"*A good learning lesson is that you engage the experts*," he said. "*The same way that we tell our clients, they engage us as the experts. You should be engaging people that do this every single day as the experts. It would have saved me hundreds of thousands of dollars*."

Having the opportunity to acquire your raw, unfiltered brand is super rare.

What most companies don't understand is that we are in a global marketplace, and great brands are becoming harder to find.

Here is where it gets interesting.

How many brands call themselves Carrot?

- Get-Carrot.com – raised $39M
- Carrot.co – raised $31M
- PurpleCarrot.com – raised $10M
- CarrotMedical.com – raised $3.8M
- CarrotWellness.com – raised $400,000
- There are 100's of companies in LinkedIn that also call themselves Carrot.

These brands will never have the opportunity to control the effortless path for their customers.

They will always have to say we are Get-Carrot.com or Carrot.co, but please don't go to Carrot.com.

They will never own their brand.

This will impact their ability to scale because the more they spend, the greater the halo effect to Carrot.com.

I can guarantee that several companies would have paid double the amount if they could go back in time.

Unfortunately, this domain is off the market forever.

The story of Ring.com

This is one of my favorite domain name and branding stories.

Jamie initially launched his company using the domain GetDoorBot.com. He was featured in Shark Tank, where several investors offered him money. He turned them down.

But the momentum from Shark Tank propelled demand and recognition for his products.

Jamie realized that to grow, and he needed to rebrand. He did not want to just go to DoorBot.com. He wanted to rebrand to something that was the best.

He decided on Ring.com.

This domain was taken but available for acquisition.

Jamie reached out and locked in the domain name via a lease option for $1M.

Here is the catch.

He did not tell his investors. When they found out, they were shocked at first but quickly understood.

With the current business projections and growth, they could easily pay this off within five years based on ring.com having a 1% increase in sales.

Here were his thoughts on the price:

"I bought it because I think my sales could go up by X percentage by having a better domain. I know what sales I do. I can multiply that out by five years off the margin and say this is what I can pay. So, it has nothing to do with what the domain is worth. It has to do with what it is going to do for me." Jamie

Ring.com went on to be a success and paid off within a year based on the increase in sales.

When Jamie sold his business to Amazon for $1B, he was quoted as saying the domain alone was worth $40M. This is not including the impact to brand equity.

You can see the entire interview on DomainSherpa.com.

Your domain name is critical for your brand.

Domain Name = Brand = Brand Equity

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Pulley.com

I think if you're able to get a good domain and a good brand name, the benefit that you get there is instant credibility.

… immediately think of the company as more reputable as well.

The other thing I'd also add is if you think about it from an SEO perspective, you want a name that it's possible for you to get onto the first page of the search results much faster than other names.

For us to accelerate the branding of this, because there wasn't a strong competitor, I think was, was one very strong reason for why we wanted to go with Pulley.

You see a lot of companies that have very generic names because it's easier for them to also brand the name and own it as theirs.

- founder, Yin Wu

Scan.com

...we want them not to be Googling us, we want them to be typing our name in. If you type in Scan.com into your Google Chrome browser. It will take you straight to our website.

We removed the possibility of losing people to other websites, whether it's by mistake or not. By virtue of typing Scan.com into your browser, you should reach us without going to a search engine.

A strong domain name is really important on the front……

- co-founder, Charlie Bullock

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Extend.com

There is only one Extend.com. That's our name, and the domain is so perfect for us, so it was very difficult to think of a reason not to do the deal," Levin explained during our interview.

The domain name added a level of trust to Extend's consumer-facing business, and ultimately Extend.com is the domain name that customers expect the company to own. Levin explains,

"If we're not on Extend.com, it will materially, negatively affect a customer's perception of the business and their experience, and we can't have that."

- Woody Levin, co-founder and CEO

The Teamwork.com Story

Teamwork software was launched in 2007 using the domain name "Teamworkpm.net". The company took several years to develop and ramp up to a point where the founders could work on it full time.

The company hit a $1M ARR fifty months after it launched.

They decided it was time to grow up.

In 2013 they purchased Teamwork.com for $675,000.

"The single best business move we ever made was reaching out to the dude who owned Teamwork.com and over the course of a few years hassling him until he gave us a realistic price."

"*You can clearly see the inflection point when we launched Teamwork.com. It was the best business move of my life.*

Teamwork.com being a one word domain gave us instant credibility and we started getting bigger customers, more referrals, and being written about more.

Everything accelerated and our vision for Teamwork.com changed because we now had a brand identify that we could build several products under." Peter Coppinger CEO/Founder

I highly recommend you go to his blog and read the full story. It is inspiring and educational.

https://blog.teamwork.com/peter-coppinger-developerceo-role-microconf/

Here is the impact of their rebranding efforts.

Did it make a difference?

CHAPTER 6

Marketing

How much traffic are you driving to another brand?

When I first defined the seven dimensions, I was going to leave out marketing because of how it touches the other six dimensions.

The first story I shared about the eyeglass company was a great example of how a marketing domain actually sent thousands of potential customers to their competitors.

Remember, this company received up to 25,000 unique visitors a week during their competitor's TV advertising.

The more I learned about direct response marketing versus traditional marketing I felt this had to be addressed.

Every brand needs marketing at some point to scale.

How your brand is positioned globally and within your industry will have an impact on your marketing.

I realized that many marketers were only focused on the impact of direct response marketing. Their ability to place an ad and get a return justifies placing more ads.

What this leaves out is the compounding impact to a brands ability to control their message outside the direct response marketing loop.

Does your brand or marketing campaign domain name create an effortless path?

Will your customers be able to find you AFTER your campaign, or will they be lost and sent to a competitor?

If your domain name impacts conversion and click thru by 10% or even 5% of your marketing spend what would it be worth?

Here are a couple of points to consider.

- Does your domain instill TRUST with your marketing?
- Does your domain increase CONVERSION because you appear to be the leader in your industry?
- Does you domain increase TRAFFIC because customers can remember where to find you?

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Neighbor.com

Even though we originally had a different URL, our company has always been called “Neighbor”. This meant that people would naturally type in Neighbor.com assuming we owned the domain. All of that direct traffic was lost. Making the switch eliminated that problem.

We’ve built a brand of trust and a reputation for an excellent product and service. All of this is encompassed in our core value to “be neighborly”. This brand helps new visitors instantly fall in love and feel comfortable using our product.

We now capture 100% of direct traffic. The domain has also allowed us to more confidently put resources behind SEO. And there is certainly a higher degree of user trust. Each of these and more factors compound to increase traffic and decrease acquisition costs.

- Joseph Woodbury, co-founder of Neighbor.com

If you want more information on selling or buying a domain, don’t hesitate to email me at: Chris@MediaOptions.com

CHAPTER 7

SEO

Do people want to share your story?

Getting ranked on the first page of Google for your search term is priceless.

I think you will agree with me when I say that SEO is critical to any company's success online.

So then…SEO is King, right?

Well, sort of….

If you understand these key elements of how your domain name impacts your branding and SEO you could increase your traffic by 40% or see 2x in your click-through rates.

When you deal with the quality of domains and the number of companies we contact, you hear several reoccurring objections.

One common objection we hear is:

"My SEO team says domains do not matter anymore".

SEO has come a long way, and a good SEO team should be able to get your domain ranked above the competition.

This does not mean that branding is dead or domain names don't matter.

It is actually the opposite when you look into the details of what makes SEO successful.

Your brand and domain name impacts every level of your company and culture. It is how you speak of business, introduce yourself, and explain your email.

SEO is a major and crucial element to the success of any online business. The SEO team should help but not be driving significant branding decisions.

The skills of the SEO team and the branding team are different. This is kind of like saying when you are buying a building for your business; my accountant doesn't think location matters anymore for my business. Your accountant is necessary but within their expertise.

If you let pure algorithms determine your branding strategy, you risk building your foundation on a weak brand which impacts conversion, positioning, and product expansion.

For example, Gusto rebranded from ZenPayroll because they needed a brand that would allow them to increase their product offerings.

They also captured the direct brandable domain – Gusto.com. This decision actually hurt their short-term SEO however positioned them for long term growth (more on this later).

A great brand will increase your SEO because of how it captures authority, leadership and reinforces your brand.

Domains Names Impact SEO in several foundational ways.

Here are several of the ways that domains impact SEO in a positive way.

- Branding
- Communicate leadership positioning
- Conversion
- Link building
- Building trust
- Email
- Ease of sharing
- Avoiding confusion with other brands
- Connecting with consumer intent

Why are domains important to SEO?

Domain names impact SEO however, not always in an obvious way.

Too often, SEO experts get stuck on the algorithm side of SEO and forget the human element of SEO and the impact of building a great brand.

Your domain needs to match your brand. The closer your domain is to your brand, the exponential impact it will have on your marketing and positioning. Your domain name communicates power with your marketing. This is because we expect top companies to own exact match, premium, and category defining domains.

What are the key elements of SEO?

Let's look at what a few SEO masters have to say.

Neil Patel

Here is how Neil Patel defines Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

"Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing your online content so that a search engine likes to show it as a top result for searches of a particular keyword." Neil Patel

Here are some of the basic SEO strategies that Neil writes about – (my recap)

- Produce quality content
- Make sure people want your content through keyword research

- Post often to keep the content fresh
- Make sure your content is optimized for the search engines (titles, meta data, etc…)
- Get backlinks, and lots of them

I would recommend checking out Neil Patel if you are interested in SEO basics.

Backlinko

Brian Dean is the master at backlinks and understanding their importance in impacting your site's SEO.

He analyzed over one million Google search results to understand what is the top item impacting SEO.

His key takeaway was that links from diverse domains are vital for SEO. He found the number of domains linking to a page correlated with rankings more than any other factor.

They also found that longer content covering a topic in depth outperformed shallow content.

How your brand/domain connects with your content will play a determining factor in generating backlinks.

Your content needs to be authentic and connect with your audience.

Acquiring backlinks is an important part of every SEO strategy.

Having an authoritative domain and brand will impact your ability to get links.

Links are easier to get when your brand communicates authority and consumer intent. Think how much easier it is to get links with Sand.com versus DebbiesSandCompany.com.

Short, brandable domains are highly valued for this very reason. For example, Fly.com recently sold for $2.8M in April 2017.

It is kind of like when you check your inbox and see an email from someone saying they are from your bank but using a super spammy email address (very creepy). You send this to the spam folder and delete it immediately.

The shorter the domain or closer to your brand the more trust we put into the link. We think this way because there are so many scams and viruses today. It is just how we protect ourselves online.

SEO implies that you have a link to share, and keywords are a major element of ranking and connecting to intent.

SEO supports a great brand by getting the message out to drive traffic. The stronger the brand, authority, and leadership of the company, the easier SEO becomes.

Notice that Neil uses NeilPatel.com, QuickSprout.com, Kissmetrics.com and not MyNeilPatel.com or QuickSproutUSA.com. Also, look at how Moz utilizes MOZ.com for their domain and not MyMoz.com.

I am sure this comment will upset quite a few people, but you lose trust points the longer the domain and further from your brand (outside of category-defining domains).

The .com domain instills the most trust because of how widely used it is today.

This is why .com domains will sell for 90% over other extensions – like the .net TLD.

CHAPTER 8

Email Security

Who is reading your emails?

Email security has to be the most overlooked dimension of how a domain impacts your brand.

Customers, employees, and investors often send emails to another company when your domain name and brand do not match your customers.

This is also true when you do not own your brand's (.com) version and are using another extension such as (.xyz), (.co), (.io), or any of the other thousand extensions.

We are conditioned to send emails to the (.com).

Years ago, we were brokering a domain name that our client owned for over fifteen years. It was a somewhat random four-letter domain name. They had plans to build a company around this domain.

Years later, a startup chose this same brand to launch their company but used the (.io) extension.

The problem was that their top investors and board members kept sending emails to my client on the (.com), thinking they were sending it the (.io). The startup had no idea about the emails because every domain was to my client's (.com) domain name.

The investors kept wondering why they were not responding. These were literally the TOP investors in the world.

They eventually acquired the (.com) domain name because they understood they had a serious problem.

Setting up a catch-all email address can capture every email going to your domain name. It only takes about five minutes to set up hosting for most domain names.

Do you want someone else reading your sensitive emails?

If you talk to most domain owners, they will tell you stories after stories of email security issues.

We have sold many domain names to health companies just because of the privacy concerns of their email address.

Email confusion is real and is a window to more significant issues with branding and marketing.

We get continued requests to cancel credit card transactions from one of the domain names we are brokering. The domain directs to a MediaOptions.com landing page.

There should be zero confusion that this is not the company that processed the credit card, yet their clients still ask us to cancel their accounts and transactions.

I could tell you stories upon stories of security issues when you create confusion with your domain name.

The only way to truly avoid this risk is to own the raw version of your brand in the (.com) domain.

Are your customers sending emails to another company or person?

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Salad.com

We operate within the gaming and crypto spheres, where there are plenty of scammers and nefarious actors.

For Salad to achieve the brand recognition we need to become mainstream, a solid domain is incredibly helpful.

This requires serious credibility to bring to market and achieve significant scale, for this, a premium domain carries clout.

For Salad, this means sticking out, being memorable, and maintaining credibility. A premium domain is key to our digital strategy and maintaining our leadership being recognized as the easiest and most trusted way to share your PC.

In terms of searchability and traffic, we've only seen our metrics go up and to the right since moving to salad.com.

- Bob Miles, Founder of Salad

Troop.com

The simple answer is that the alternative was a .co - and we did a very brief anecdotal market study with a few people who were working at companies that were using .co.

The feedback was incredibly consistent, which is that they wish that their company owners had gone with .com and paid the extra for it or gone with something completely different.

Before we moved from Troop.org to Troop.com, people felt like they'd been tricked with NGO-style language and calls to action on our .org domain, then all of a sudden, the concept of working with hedge funds came up, and I think there was some confusion there. Moving to .com cleared that up for most people.

- Felix Tabary to co-found Troop

CHAPTER 9

Scaling

Not owning the raw version of your brand could be the biggest risk for your company's ability to scale.

The ability to scale is the seventh dimension to how a domain name impacts a brand.

This dimension touches every brand that is using an inferior domain name.

It is also an important reason brands acquire a category defining domain name.

There are three general areas that domain names impact a brand's ability to scale.

1 – Another strong brand controls the leadership position with the (.com) domain name, forcing you to overcommunicate. You end up telling customers don't go over there, go here.

2 – Your domain blocks you from expanding into other categories and products.

3 – A category defining domain name allows your company to control your industry and products messaging. This is a positive reason to own category defining domain names.

For the sake of duplication, I will only give one story in the first area, as this is covered in the global positioning chapter.

We had been hired to acquire a domain name that was currently in use by a company that was downsizing. This company had four locations and was now down to one location. The domain was a great one-word (.com). It was our client's branded domain name in the simplest version (think Quilt.com) with no fillers.

Our timing was perfect, and the current owners were about to sell the domain name to another brand. We had twenty-four hours to agree to a price of roughly $500,000. Our clients passed, thinking it was a bluff. The domain name was sold that week to a brand that moved from a country-code domain name.

Our clients were shocked as they now had massive confusion with this other brand.

Ultimately, they decided to rebrand completely to another brand because of this confusion.

What would it cost you to rebrand?

This next section will explore how a domain name blocks your brand from expanding into other verticals.

Here is one of my favorite examples.

Earlier I mentioned the story of Gusto.com.

The founders initially launched on the domain name ZenPayroll.com.

They knew their brand vision went beyond payroll and that they'd need to overhaul what they had already built years down the line.

Like most companies, focusing on one niche allowed them to gain share and customers.

They knew zenpayroll.com was only temporary.

They launched payroll in 2012, and employee self-onboarding in 2013.

In September 2015, they rebranded to the name Gusto with the matching domain Gusto.com.

They have since launched products in health insurance benefits in 2015, 401(k), in 2016, time-off requests in 2017, and time tracking in 2018, and there's much more to come.

Their original domain name and brand did not communicate the more robust product offers, allowing them to scale.

That is why they had to rebrand to Gusto.com.

Does your domain name allow you to scale and pivot to new verticals?

Here is the link to the full interview with the founders of Gusto.com: https://review.firstround.com/this-is-how-you-design-a-lasting-brand-an-inside-look-at-gustos-reinvention

Bonus interview from *MediaOptions.com/blog* from the founders and their acquisition of this domain name.

Wealth.com

The domain name puts more pressure on us, right? So, you've made this big investment in a market. Then you have to make a sellable product.

I also think the domain brings trust.

Is the domain name important when it comes to people trusting your brand?

One of the main reasons I wanted that domain is because of the trust factor…

The other thing about the name is that it is generic enough that we can go into different areas. We can do a bunch of other things, and we don't need to change the domain.

- Rei Carvalho of Wealth.com

Category defining domain names.

My theory on business is that every company needs to scale.

Category defining domain names offer a unique opportunity for a brand to control the leadership position in their vertical.

Many times just owning the category defining domain (AutoWarranty.com, Wallstreet.com) opens doors for your sales team because of how it elevates your brand to the leadership position.

They are also an effortless path for your brand to scale because of how they connect to your product offering, messaging, and branding.

CHAPTER 10

Methods to Valuing Your Domain Name

Three ways to view the value of a domain name

Hopefully, at this point, you understand the value of a domain name for your brand's ability to own your global/industry positioning and scaling.

Where do you go from here?

The next step is to understand the true value of acquiring your perfect domain.

This is where most companies struggle.

What you want to pay, what you can pay, and the domain name's value are three separate conversations.

Here are three frameworks to view the value of your domain name to your brand.

First, what would the general sales increase be to your revenue because you created a simple journey for your customers?

For example, when Jamie purchased Ring.com for $1M he never told his investors. They almost freaked out when he told them he was rebranding to Ring. But, after they sat down, they all agreed it would have a 1% to 5% impact on overall revenue.

Remember the story? They already had a crazy growth rate. They went on to pay it off in less than a year based on their growth. Amazon acquired Ring for $1B. Jamie (CEO) valued the domain name at $45M.

Secondly, would acquiring your perfect domain produce as much value as one of your employees?

If you look at this over ten years, this investment would be almost nothing.

If you can justify hiring an employee you can justify acquiring your domain name because it is the same value equation (conversion, simplicity, and positioning).

Your domain name impacts every area of your company, especially email security.

Finally, domain names don't sit around for long because they become brands. Most premium domains are going to sell. It is only a matter of time.

If it is available, there is only a small window and opportunity to acquire your domain name.

What is the risk if another stronger brand acquires your domain and drowns out your messaging and positioning?

Take the time and do the work to find the true value of acquiring your domain name.

Remember that domain names are assets and not marketing expenses. There is a robust market for buying and selling domain names. You can always sell your domain if strategies change.

CONCLUSION

It is very rare for your brand to have the opportunity to acquire the raw version of your domain name.

These seven dimensions of how a domain name impacts your brand was developed to understand why the best brands in the world pay serious money to acquire their domain name.

When you don't own your perfect domain, it creates confusion for your customers, employees, and investors.

This confusion limits a company's ability to scale, convert and own the messaging for their brand.

Every brand is impacted by one of these dimensions at some level when they use an inferior domain name.

While you may save money on the front end by adding keywords, you end up paying for it with confusion by sending traffic and customers to another company.

A great domain name allows you also to capture the goodwill that the keyword represents. This means momentum from day one with your branding, marketing, and messaging.

Lastly, domain names are assets that can be sold if plans change. They are not marketing expenses. In my experience, acquiring your domain is the single best investment a brand can make.

Is your domain name available for acquisition?

Media Options specializes in the stealth acquisition of domain names. Even if it appears to be an active site, reach out to us to dig a little deeper to see if it can be acquired. Often, domain name owners are open to selling but need to approached the correct way to get a conversation going. Media Options provides the trust and transparency to start this negotiation.

If you want more information on selling or buying a domain, don't hesitate to email me at: Chris@MediaOptions.com

Are you looking to acquire a domain name?

Since 2007 Media Options has helped hundreds of companies acquire their perfect domain name. We have successfully closed over $600 million dollars in domain name transactions for the world's top brands.

Here is our five-step domain broker process.

I have seen many businesses try to acquire their domain name the wrong way and end up paying two, three and even four times more than what we would consider market value.

The worse thing that can happen is you are told the domain will never be for sale.

There is a way to go about acquiring a domain name that increases your chances for success.

We have a proven five-step domain broker acquisition process built on over 400,000 contact points negotiating domain names.

Identify your domain name.

This is the first step and typically the easiest step in the acquisition process. Most of our clients are upgrading from a different extension like (.co) or (.io). We can also go after several domains at the same time to give our clients options and capture other extensions.

Valuation

What is it going to cost to acquire the domain name? We establish a price range for the domain name using our proprietary domain valuation formula. This ensures your team does not have any surprises and to budget correctly.

Research

The more you know about the owner, the more leverage you have in a negotiation. We determine the type of owner and any relevant history to the domain name. Our domain broker process goes into deep research to give you the upper hand.

Negotiations

We negotiate and get the domain name under contract to lock it in for you. This is where the magic happens, and we provide our value. Negotiating is a perishable skill, and that is all we do every day, all day.

Flawless transfer

Finally, we ensure the domain name is transferred to your account and funds are only released when you have complete control.

If you want more information on selling or buying a domain, don't hesitate to email me at: Chris@MediaOptions.com

Acquire your domain name today using our five-step STEALTH ACQUISITION METHOD.

- **Secure your PERFECT domain name in 2-8 weeks**
  You only have one opportunity to make a first impression in the negotiation process when trying to acquire a domain name.

- **Since 2007 Media Options has helped hundreds of companies acquire their perfect domain name**
  We have successfully closed over $600 million dollars in domain name transactions for the world's top brands.

- **Get quick feedback from owners**
  We have contacted the hardest to find domain owners at the ends of the world (literally) to get a deal across the finish line.

- **Zero risk, no upfront costs, and only pay for success!**
  We are so confident in our process that you only pay for a successful acquisition.

- **100% transparency at every step of the process**
  You will have transparency to the entire process and get in the loop with as much detail as you want. We use the top escrow service in the world, which means total transparency and security.

Contact us for a free consultation.
Receive a free valuation on the domain you want to acquire.

Email: Chris@Mediaoptions.com
Visit our sites: MediaOptions.com & ChrisZuiker.com

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