



## Optimizing Search Engine Presence With Domain Name Portfolios

Alex Tajirian

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A large number of companies depend heavily on search engines for their traffic. Yet, they have left themselves vulnerable to unexpected changes in ranking. I propose a solution using domain name portfolios to enhance their presence by increasing traffic and reducing idiosyncratic risk.<sup>1</sup>

Sources of search engine rank risk that are beyond the company's control include:

1. **Search engine ranking fluctuations** as a result of changes in search engine ranking algorithms, new entrants in the keyword space, and content modifications by keyword-result competitors.
2. **Browser-specific.** For the same keyword entered in the browser's URL box, Explorer and Firefox, for example, default to different search results. Thus, shifts in the popularity of a browser can produce significant swings in traffic.
3. **Browser Tool Bar.** When a searcher adds or modifies the browser's tool bar, the default search engine may change.

The combination of these idiosyncratic effects can be devastating to a company. Moreover, although (1) can be detected, changes in (2) and (3) are unobservable by the company, and thus, any resulting changes in traffic volume may not be easily accounted for.

One of the roles of corporate domain names is to provide targeted traffic to a website through the use of domain names with **complementary** keywords.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Alex Tajirian, "[Domain Name Protection: A Risk-Analytic Framework](#)." A long-term solution to avoid unnecessary extreme consequences requires cooperation between the search engines and the companies. See Alex Tajirian, "[Google can't do it Alone!](#)," DomainMart.

<sup>2</sup> See Alex Tajirian, "[Roles of Corporate Domain Names](#)," DomainMart.

However, domain names as a source of **substitute** traffic have been ignored. Moreover, keyword advertising cannot duplicate the latter role of domain names.

To reduce the above idiosyncratic risk factors and to enhance traffic, I recommend using the following **supplements**:

1. Hyphenated domain names of a company's brands.
2. Various signal neutral extensions, such as “.cc”, “.ws.”<sup>3</sup>

The motivation behind a portfolio approach is that when the ranking of one of the domain names drops unexpectedly, others in the company's portfolio may end up with a higher ranking. Thus, reducing the risk of putting all the eggs in one basket.

To increase the likelihood of search engine listing and reduce the potential of search engine spamming, a website's content should be divided among the above recommended domain names.

Thus, besides using domain names from complementary traffic, a company should also register substitute domain names to reduce search engine rank risk. However, instead of forwarding them to the main website, the company should spread content across the substitutes to increase search engine ranking and reduce search engine spamming. ■

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<sup>3</sup> For the importance of signaling in domain name selection, see Alex Tajirian, “[Branding Strategy: The TLD Dimension](#)” and “[Branding Hierarchy and Premiums Among gTLDs](#),” DomainMart.