



Generic Domain Names Bolster Your Brands

Alex Tajirian

February 6, 2008

Generic domain names can enhance brand equity. Ignoring this valuable feature understates domain name values and marketing ROI.

Generic domain names have been associated with type-in traffic as doorways (e.g. loans.com) and as brand names in their own right (e.g. wine.com).¹

Domainers' traditional sales pitches to companies have stressed that generics provide type-in traffic and exclude the acquirer's competition from such traffic. Thus, the emphasis is on traffic, not branding benefits.

What is missing from the sales pitch is the branding effect, i.e., highlighting effectiveness in "above the line" marketing. For example, the use of loans.com by Bank of America goes beyond providing visitors with a doorway to the bank's Web site. Type-in visitors to loans.com start associating the idea of loans with Bank of America.

However, the brand association is not necessarily value creating. If the association is diffused, the consumer may decouple the association between the brand name and the acquiring firm's other products. Any benefits of the single generic name get cannibalized. For example, if computers are a small portion of the acquiring company's product scope, it should stay away from the use of computer.com alone. Thus, a diversified company should own a portfolio of generic names for its various product lines, both vertical and horizontal. By portfolio, I mean a collection that was assembled with a strategy in mind instead of piecemeal.

What generic domain-name strategy should a start-up follow? Companies at that stage have an advantage, of sorts. Established companies find that using generics can be value destroying. But a start-up in emerging technologies and services faces no branding cannibalization, and the company can register new names and/or acquire existing domain names before prices rise with the success of the company's venture. A start-up should own a portfolio of vertical domain names representing areas it might expand in, while giving the impression of strong market presence.

Hence, generic domain names, in addition to being a "below the line" marketing vehicle, can reinforce brand names. Ignoring the branding effect understates the values of domain names and underestimates the ROI through marketing with domain names. ■

¹ For an outline of other roles, see Alex Tajirian, "[Roles of Corporate Domain Names](#)," DomainMart.