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Guarding Your Domain (And your Corporate Identity)

What happens when your Domain Name expires? The best case is nothing: you took the proper steps for renewal, and life goes on as usual. Unfortunately things do not always go as they should. If you have if you have ignored those pesky renewal notices until it is too late, we have two real-life examples of what may happen.

About a year ago, the Domain Name to our Web Page was up for renewal. Some of our customers may remember our www.brucemeyerassociates.com name. Due to a slight miscommunication between us and our ISP, we let our domain name lapse. You won't believe what happened next! All of a sudden when you visited www.brucemeyerandassociates.com, you were directed to a site offering to sell you the domain name for the asking price of \$10,000!!

We were actually quite lucky. We were just establishing our web presence, and didn't have much invested in the name itself: we were not using the any domain email, and had no literature, business cards, printed product information, etc. It was just easier to change to a new name (and the original was too long a domain name, anyway.)

Our second real-life example is of an ISP we know. They had a domain name registered, which was being used as a personalized start page for their customers. This site was not their main page, just an added service, and they decided not to renew the name. The original thinking was that the customers would get "404: page not found" and would just reset the home page. They did not plan that the domain name would be immediately purchased, and within days be used for a **VERY** graphic pornography site. As a result they lost about 30% of their business.

Imagine what it would be like for you to have your customers visit your site and get that "This domain name is available" page. They may think you have gone out of business. If private body parts started popping up on their screen when they went to your site, you may never get their business back, no matter how much you tried to explain.

Now imagine the logistics of having to deal with lost orders, email, web page redesign, lost search engine or advertising links, and the reprinting of **ALL** your business cards, stationary, and marketing or sales material.

Domain names are generally available for under \$10.00 per year, and renewals can be done for anywhere from 1 – 10 years. Most domain registrars will also allow automatic renewal, as long as you have a valid credit card on file.

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Most domain registrars are quite reputable however other companies have been sending very official looking renewal documents, via fax, mail or emails. These state that you need to renew, and they provide instructions on how, along with web-links. Some are BOGUS, some are just plain expensive. (One of the most notorious is American Domain Registry.) They are really providing instructions on how to SWITCH and renew your Domain Name with their service, usually at a premium. So you will need to keep track of your Domain Name Registrar much like you track your long distance provider.

Moral of the story: When your Domain Name comes up for renewal, make SURE you take care of it.

Thanks,

Bruce Meyer

NOTE: As of the writing of this article (08/2004), and just as a footnote, our registrar of choice these days has been www.godaddy.com. Their costs (under \$10.00 per year) are quite reasonable, they do have automatic renewals, and more important: despite the fact that they do not have a toll-free support number, anytime we have called them for support, we have been able to speak to a "real person" and have our question answered or problem resolved within 5 or 10 minutes.

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