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## Getting Your Name on the Net

Establishing a presence for your business on the web is an important step in growing and advertising your business. Customers, potential customers and business partners enjoy the convenience and speed of the web offers in their efforts to find out about you, your business and the products and/or services you offer. And, a web presence can save you a ton of time returning phone calls, distributing brochures and marketing information and even selling goods and services making you more productive and your business more profitable.

But for the uninitiated, establishing a web presence can be a complex endeavor. We thought we'd outline the first—and most basic step—you'll need to take to get your business on the "net" - establishing a Domain Name.

### What is a Domain Name Anyway?

Simply put, a domain name is your company's address on the Internet. It points to a specific IP (Internet) address on a host server (which you will establish later with your web hosting provider). So yourcompany.com would point to an IP address that might be something like 200.0.0.2. The "com" portion of the domain name is the "second level" domain name illustrates the purpose of the organization of entity on the net—com = commercial, org = non-profit organization, net = network, biz = business, gov = government, edu = educational, etc. All domain names must be unique and must be registered through ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) accredited registrars.

### How Do I Get a Domain Name?

Before you attempt to establish a domain name, think about what you want users to type in to reach your business. If your business is Mary's Multimedia, you might want marysmmedia.com or marysmmedia.biz or marysmmultimedia.com or marysmm.com. After you've thought about what you want your domain name to be, you'll have to check to ensure that the name hasn't already been taken by someone else. You can usually do this through web hosting providers (like Hostway, Verio, Microsoft bCentral, and many others) as well as VeriSign. All of these companies include a page on their web site where you can type in the domain name you desire and check to see if the name is available. If it's not, many of the web sites will suggest alternative names that are available.

Once you've come up with an available Domain Name, you'll have to register it. You can do this again, through the web hosting providers and VeriSign. Pricing for Domain Name varies widely as and is also dependent upon the term of the registration (1 to 10 years) and the additional services you decide to include with the registration, but you should expect to pay anywhere from \$6.95 per year up to \$59.95. (Additional services can include email boxes and the ability to keep the personal/business information you entered when you registered your domain name private.)

Once you've decided on the term and services you want to include, you simply fill out the registration form on the web site, hand over your credit card information and you're the owner. Most registrars will include a "park" or "under construction" page with your registration, so that folks who try to find you and your business on the web will get a web page letting them know that your web site is "on the way".

You'll then receive confirmation from the registrar and the information you and your web hosting provider will need later when you establish your web site.

You've established your Domain Name—and you're ready for the next step—constructing your web site! We'll take a brief look at your options next month!

The screenshot shows the Hostway website interface for domain registration. At the top, the Hostway logo is on the left, and the contact information "Order Online or Call Toll Free: 866 467 8929" is on the right. Below the logo is a navigation menu with "Domain Name", "Web Hosting", and "Email" options, and an "ORDER NOW" button. A breadcrumb trail reads "Home > Personal > Domain Name".

The main content area is titled "Domain Name". It features a search box with ".com" entered and a "Check Domain" button. Below the search box, it says "DOMAIN NAMES FOR ONLY \$6.95" and includes a "CHAT WITH SALES" button. To the right, there is a promotional banner for ".COM .NET .ORG .INFO & .BIZ DOMAIN NAMES FOR ONLY \$6.95!".

Below the banner, the text reads: "Hostway's fully featured domain names allow you to establish your online identity for a great value! A reliable Web hosting leader, Hostway is also a trusted and versatile registrar. We offer a number of domain extensions, including .com, .net, .org, .info and .biz, so you can easily differentiate your company or organization. Plus, for added convenience, you have the choice of registration periods from one to ten years." Below this, it says "Register up to 25 .info domain names FREE for one year! Hurry, offer ends 12/31/04.\*"

Underneath, there is a "Domain Name Registration" section with another search box and "Check Domain" button. Below this, it lists "Domain name features include:" with a bulleted list: "Ad-free park page", "Free domain forwarding", "Domain locking", and "Web-based control panel, SiteControl".

Finally, there is an "Easy ad-ons:" section with two options: "InstantSite" (Build a customizable site in minutes with InstantSite!) and "whois PROTECTOR" (Protect your personal information on the Whois database.).