

Protecting Your Online Assets

Corporations can save significant resources and provide better protection for their brand names online by using a (mathematical risk management approach) for domain name management

Corporate legal departments have well-developed systems in place to manage brand name protection, and will strike quickly at the first signs of infringement. Online brand name portfolios have not always gotten the same attention, however, and corporations are now discovering that scattershot approaches to registering domain names are costing them a lot of money and still leaving them exposed to name infringement.

Up to now, domain name registration has largely been a matter of volume for registrars that use a shortsighted approach that has encouraged massive registration with little planning or follow-up. Many corporations have typically registered their major brands in most of the top-level domains (TLDs), which has led to juggling thousands of registered names.

“A number of domain name registrars have spun off divisions or departments for corporate clients, but at the end of the day, it is a true volume game for these companies,” says David Saias, Vice President and General Manager at CSC Corporate Domains. “The service and expertise of managing large

portfolios, that is valued by large corporations, doesn't come into play with these registrars.”

It's here that CSC Corporate Domains differs from the other players, Saias says. The company, created by CSC following the acquisition of leading industry registrars eBrandsecure and the Corporate Services Division of Register.com, is now the largest corporate registrar in the world, Saias explains, and uniquely equipped to assist large corporations in developing sophisticated, data-driven domain name management policies.

“CSC Corporate Domains leverages the best practices of the three companies, i.e., CSC's focus on customer service, accountability, continuous process improvement, and stability; Register.com's consultative approach, its ability to manage large portfolios, and its leading-edge technology; and eBrandsecure's extensive country-code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) experience, to offer a corporation-wide domain name policy that is executable and enforceable.”

Using years of industry experience, proprietary technology and client input, CSC Corporate Domains works with corporations to calculate the risk to

their brands and the impact of infringement. “It’s a question of risk management,” Saias explains. “It’s similar to when a pediatrician vaccinates a patient. She doesn’t give the child dozens of shots to prevent every possible disease, because that would be too costly and too traumatic for the child. Instead, she vaccinates against the diseases the child is most likely to be exposed to, and against the ones that would have the most negative impact to the child’s health in the less likely event of exposure.”

It’s the same with domain names. Corporations simply can’t protect all of their brands against infringement in each of the more than 740 extensions currently available; the costs and maintenance of such portfolios would be prohibitive. Thus, they need to determine which brands are in the greatest danger of being infringed upon, and which infringements would be most damaging to the company.

CSC Corporate Domains provides the data and process to take the guesswork out of such decisions. The company’s patent pending cutting-edge technology computes a risk score against every domain name extension, and then uses revenue and cost threat analysis to determine the potential impact of infringement.

“We amass industry data acquired over a number of years to assess a risk index for each of the available extensions,” Saias explains. “Based on their tolerance for risk and their budget, customers can then decide which brands have zero tolerance for infringement. We allow them to make data-driven decisions, rather than emotional or arbitrary

ones, about which brands to register, which brands to monitor, and which brands to take no action.”

In addition, experienced account executives provide on-going support and consultation services, to assist customers in establishing, maintaining and executing on their policy.

IDNs: Buy the Vowels!

According to Saias, an area of growing concern in corporate domain name management is that of Internationalized Domain Name infringement. He explains that IDNs are domain names containing letters and characters not used in the English alphabet, such as *bücher.de* or *도메인.kr*.

“There are many foreign characters that look confusingly similar to English alphabet characters, for example the Turkish dotless “ı”, which can easily be confused with the letter “i,” Saias explains. “Infringers typically register well-known brand names with one or more characters replaced with a similar IDN character. This creates a domain name which looks almost identical but leads to a different website.”

In order to detect and combat such cases of infringement, CSC Corporate Domains has developed the IDN Spinner tool, which can check for possible IDN variations one character at a time. Availability searches can then be conducted for each variation, and data for names registered to Third Parties can be retrieved where available.

The company recently used the application to

determine the scope of IDN infringements of well-known brands in the .com domain. “We discovered that 22 percent of the Top 100 Brands were found to be infringed upon by Third Parties, while only 6 percent of Top 100 Brands had registered any IDNs themselves,” Saias says. Nine Top 100 Brands were affected by multiple infringements (up to 11 infringements per brand were found).

Curiously, the research also revealed that nearly all the IDN infringements involved variations of vowels. For example, the vowels “o,” “a” and “e” were most likely to be varied with accented ver-

sions such as “é,” “à” and “ö.” “We would therefore recommend that a company make registrations of vowel variations a priority,” Saias points out.

But the first step will be for companies to commit to a sophisticated and systematic approach to domain name awareness, Saias says. “Awareness of the infringement risks is still low amongst the trademark owners, whereas the infringers have already registered variations of major brand names.”

To learn more about CSC Corporate Domains comprehensive solutions visit www.corpdom.com or contact your account executive.