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The Age of Discovery

Get descriptive with your brand's domain—more people will find you

Despite the grim economic outlook, online marketing growth is expected to expand in 2009. In light of this, as you plan your online marketing strategies for this year, maximize your Web presence by spending some time thinking like a consumer typing away on his or her computer at work or home.

For instance, to complement your branded Web address, you might consider registering a series of descriptive domain names to drive more traffic to your main site and, ultimately, acquire new customers.

'For its ... whoppervirgins.com Web site, Burger King failed to also register the nonplural whoppervirgin.com. As a result, it's missing out on a ton of Web traffic.'

Let's look at descriptive domain names such as [Vodka.com](#) and [Seniors.com](#) and how they can draw new customers to your site. Descriptive, almost search-oriented domains like these have not traditionally been purchased by established companies because they didn't see much benefit in going beyond company or brand names. However, in recent years this has changed as companies have interwoven creative online campaigns and have used important keywords to drive traffic online. [Vodka.com](#), for example, was purchased in 2006 and is now being used for a teaser campaign by Russia's largest vodka company.

There are a number of good reasons for tapping into direct navigation traffic by obtaining the descriptive domain names of the product or service sold and redirecting the traffic directly to your main Web site. For one, using a key word in the domain name can help you drive traffic through direct navigation.

A good example of this again would be with [Vodka.com](#). A Web surfer interested in vodka may bypass a search engine and use direct navigation by typing the Web address [www.vodka.com](#) directly into a browser. This vodka company now has the direct attention of an interested vodka buyer on its Web site. You may also be familiar with high-profile examples, including Calvin Klein ([www.underwear.com](#)), H&R Block ([www.taxcut.com](#)) and Johnson & Johnson ([www.baby.com](#)).

Because marketing campaigns are scrutinized for results these days, the independent, descriptive site allows for easy tracking of traffic resulting explicitly from the marketing campaign. This growing interest in acquiring additional domain names has also been encouraged by newer and easier methods of attaining them.

In the past, the process of obtaining a premium domain name would often deter companies from achieving their

branding goals, as companies were left to haggle for a fair price and execute risky transactions with private parties typically located in offshore destinations. Now, with the support of domain marketplaces, organizations can find and obtain the name they desire—even if the name is already owned. In addition, domain marketplaces can support the negotiation of a fair price and can provide secure escrow services for the safe transfer of domain ownership.

This effective online marketing strategy is not only being employed by large brands. Small and medium-size companies, such as Bice's Florist and Bobbleheads, are also jumping on the bandwagon. Bice's, a Fort Worth, Texas-based flower shop, leveraged a domain-name acquisition strategy to increase company sales by \$1.5 million and reduce operational expenses—all while closing four brick-and-mortar locations.

Bice's, which has been in business for more than 30 years, purchased approximately 20 related domain names, including [eflowersite.com](#), [nationalfloraldelivery.com](#) and [blossom-link.com](#). Keith Riewe, owner of Bice's, says that since he's able to track the hits from each domain, he can understand which are performing and which aren't. Riewe says Web site traffic is up 47 percent as a result of his domain portfolio.

Georgia-based entrepreneur Warren Royal also saw immediate benefits from owning both the [bobbleheads.com](#) and [bobblehead.com](#) domain names when launching his Bobbleheads business. Royal purchased these domains from the owners, paying \$29,112 for [bobbleheads.com](#) and \$36,000 for [bobblehead.com](#). Outside of any significant online advertising, after only five months of being "live," the company was averaging nearly \$6,000 in gross sales due in large part to the domain's natural traffic. With the generic names consistently providing Web traffic, Royal only needs to spend a few hours

a week on the site, with the traffic practically selling the bobbleheads themselves.

Large companies can and should take a page from the playbook of these small and medium-size companies. In fact, we've seen a recent example of how failing

to acquire your brand-related descriptive domains can be a costly missed opportunity. For its "Whopper virgins" campaign and [whoppervirgins.com](#) Web site, Burger King failed to also register the nonplural [whoppervirgin.com](#). As a result, it's missing out on a ton of Web traffic—a mistake Web-savvy small and medium-size companies are less likely to make.

Burger King's whopper of a mistake is a great proof point and underscores the need to register variations of your domain name. It's time to get descriptive with your brand's domain name and think like a Web surfer.

More customers will find you.

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