

SHIELDING VALUABLE BRANDS USING AN INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC APPROACH

If today you heard of a large global brand falling victim to online brand infringements through speculative domain name registrations, you could be forgiven for thinking that this is hardly surprising.

Bad faith domain name registration and use currently affects known brands worldwide across all industries and sectors ranging from oil firms to hotel chains, prominent film stars, large retailers and internationally-known sports clubs. Yet while the problem is widespread and affecting businesses across all sectors the issues and solutions may differ from case to case.

Leading fashion brand: getting in control of your online brand, one step at a time

When the legal office of one of the world's leading fashion brands contacted us it looked like another example of cybersquatting, and sadly not an uncommon occurrence nowadays. The enquiry we received involved the recovery of a domain name being used by a third party to publish illegitimate content. The illegitimate website was managed from an overseas location and the domain name in question was registered with a country-specific extension.

We quickly identified the perpetrators' country of origin and initiated a procedure to recover the domain name. However, with our client operating an international brand with offices worldwide and a vast product range, it was soon evident that further risks were imminent and action was needed rapidly.

As a leading fashion brand our clients' concerns included the potential impact of brand infringements on a large global network of distributors, retailers and business partners. The risk was spread across multiple country-specific domain extensions and a large product range. Our clients soon realised that no domain extension could be deemed of "no real worth" and our auditing process was started immediately.

The first step we took was to consolidate and rationalise the existing domain name portfolio, transferring all of their domain names to our servers, making sure all renewals were processed on time and registrant details were up to date.

We then took one further step and analysed the company's business and geographic spread. We made sure that all the most important geographic areas were covered and protected and then secured all sensitive domain names and brands in each relevant country.

One of the UK's leading domain name registrars, Namesco Limited, provide an insight into the key issues surrounding domain name and brand protection across different industry sectors.

shielding valuable brands using an industry-specific approach

Once we were satisfied that essential protection was granted and major risks prevented, we were ready to start the next phase. This is what we consider to be the most important step in helping our clients get in control of their domain name portfolio and effectively protecting their brand on the web. We could now develop a truly uniform and proactive online protection strategy that would not only prevent attacks and abuse, but help promote the brand in the online world at the same time.

Deploying an industry-specific approach

Protecting established and developing brands on the internet is a complex challenge requiring access to advanced technology, up-to-date policy information and in-depth industry know-how.

While companies in all industries are affected, what's become evident over the years is that different business sectors are faced with unique challenges that require an industry-specific approach. That's why at Namesco we make sure we take the time to understand the specific challenges facing each of our clients in their particular industry and markets.

When working with our clients to help them protect their brands online we ensure that important issues are discussed including:

- **Geographic spread.** Does the client operate multiple brands internationally and what are the key markets? Geographic presence is one of the key factors in successfully protecting online brands; yet both brand owners and IP professionals frequently overlook this element.
- **Product range.** Does the client operate a single product or a diversified range? Domain name and brand protection doesn't stop at securing a company's trading name or a registered trademark.
- **Future market trends.** What are the future product and marketing trends within the industry? The most effective online brand protection strategy is a proactive one. It's essential to try and move ahead of speculators.
- **Strategic approach.** Are there any important strategic decisions affecting the client's online brand in the foreseeable future such as acquisitions etc?
- **Demographic.** What is the client's target market and how does this affect their online brand protection needs? Whether our clients target teenagers or baby boomers it impacts significantly on their domain and brand management strategy.

Namesco's fully managed approach to domain name management

With over 10 years' experience and part of an international organisation (Dada.pro) managing over 1.5 million domain name registrations worldwide, Namesco – one of the UK's

leading domain and internet service providers – is ideally positioned to provide first-class brand protection solutions and services to the major UK brands.

It may come as a surprise to realise that one of the most common causes of losing control of an online brand, is forgetting to renew a domain name. Many companies do not implement a corporate policy to ensure that all the contact details and registrar information are standardised and as employees leave or move, the administration process in place falls down. With a completely managed service, no longer would a business need to worry about their domain name portfolio.

At Namesco we offer a comprehensive domain name management service for large brand owners and intellectual property professionals including:

- **Domain name analysis, review and audit.** We start by checking where our client's brands stand online. We identify the areas where the brand may be at risk and those where protection needs to be strengthened. We make sure all names are transferred under the same account and centralised in the hands of one account manager.
- **Provision of full protection in every available extension.** Registering all sensitive domain names in over 200 extensions worldwide. By preventively protecting domain names we aim to exponentially reduce the risk of someone abusing or infringing upon your brand.
- **Dedicated account management.** Each of our clients is looked after by an experienced account manager whom they will have direct contact with at all times. Our account managers actively look for possible threats and produce regular reports for each client or partner.

Working together to protect brands online

The subjects of domain name management and online brand protection are receiving a growing amount of interest. It is now more important than ever that companies give consideration to protecting themselves online. Many companies are failing to give this area adequate time or investment and they are finding themselves missing out on potential customers, strategic opportunities and essentially profits.

Domain name management and online brand protection are rapidly becoming closely interlinked with intellectual property law and domain name registrars like Namesco can play an increasingly important role in supporting professionals and brand owners looking to develop a sound online brand protection strategy. ■

For additional information, contact Namesco's Online Brand Protection Team on +44 (0)845 363 3630 or visit www.names.co.uk/obp.html