

New Internet domain suffixes seen as benefit

June 14 2011, By Alexander Macinnes

Small businesses trying to find new ways to market themselves online may soon tap new branding opportunities, if the organization that regulates Internet domain names expands its offering beyond the traditional dot-com suffix.

The Internet Corporation for Names and Numbers (ICANN), a non-profit group that controls the Internet's naming system - also known as the domain name system - will meet in Singapore later this month to decide whether to allow companies or organizations to create unique domain suffixes.

If passed, a new wave of "dot-anything" [domain names](#) could help large companies better brand their online presence and smaller businesses specialize their marketing efforts to local customers. Local online marketing firms are now considering how these new domain names will benefit their clients.

"There's some truth in companies trying to open their suffix usage," said Chris Ingis, a Web designer for Saddle Brook, N.J.-based Prestige Web Designs.

Under the proposed plan, businesses could register a domain name under a specific geography, such as "dot-nyc" for New York City, or under the "dot-music" for a company selling in the music industry - examples to better catch customers using different search terms.

Estimates on the number of new suffixes, also called "generic top-level

domains," are difficult to come by. But Michele Jourdan, communications manager for ICANN's new domain program, said it could range from 300 to 1,000.

For a company that wants its own domain, "dot-pepsi" for example, the cost will be about \$185,000 Jourdan said.

[Small businesses](#) will likely register under a specific group, which will cost less.

"The cool thing about this is we still don't know all the benefits that will come out of it," Jourdan said. "End users will have way more choice."

While some online market officials believe the new domain could help give small businesses a boost with customers, others think a new URL will not be a magic bullet for increased sales.

The companies are "still going to require online marketing," said Chris Mulvaney, president of CMDS, a Middletown, N.J.-based marketing firm.

"It still requires content development and good optimization. One search phrase is not going to bring you enough business to run a medium-size company."

Many small businesses already use online marketers and Web design firms to drive customers to their sites by using key phrases, a practice called search engine optimization.

Regardless of a new online domain suffix, many small businesses are still just trying to find a place with the traditional dot-com world. Kathy Fealy owns the KF Multimedia & Web Inc., a company with two Bergen County, N.J., clients.

Fealy said many of her customers are unable to find a suitable domain name with the dot-com suffix. Instead, they have to register with the lesser-known dot-net suffix.

"I have a couple of clients who have dot-net, because they couldn't get dot.com and they're trying to change their domain name, so they can get dot-com," she said. "My impression is that smaller businesses will look for dot-com, because it makes them look more established."

Mulvaney, who created the website for laboratory service provider Bio-Reference Laboratories Inc., believes part of the lure of a new [domain](#) suffix is that small companies can become more creative with their marketing.

"I believe ICANN is opening this up, because the domains are very, very limited now," he said. "A lot of search names are being taken. It gives small and medium-sized companies a little more creativity with their names."

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