

# DS | THE DOMAIN STANDARD

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Innovation and Technology

**COLLISION IS NOT THE PROBLEM, UNINTENTIONAL RESOLUTION IS**

Paolo Domenighetti

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The Voice of The Quarter

**OWNING THE NAME, OWNING THE FUTURE**

An Interview  
with Sven Echternach



CAUTION: BLIND SPOTS  
IN YOUR LONG-TERM STRATEGY

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Who's Who

**BUILDERS, BROKERS,  
AND INNOVATORS**

# DOMAIN STRATEGY

The Blind Spot Compounding at Machine Speed  
by Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau

# DS | THE DOMAIN STANDARD

## From Web2 Roots to Web3 Frontiers

*The Domain Standard* is the voice of a new era in digital identity and investment. Bridging the worlds of Web2 and Web3, each issue explores the evolving role of domain names as strategic assets, financial instruments, and cultural signifiers in the decentralized internet. With original reporting, market analysis, and expert insight, we track the forces reshaping how domains are owned, traded, and understood, from blockchain-based infrastructure to AI-driven valuation. Whether you're a seasoned investor, a curious builder, or simply navigating the naming layer of the digital world, *The Domain Standard* offers a clear lens on where the internet is going and who gets to name it.

*Editorial Manager*  
**Matteo Stettler**

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# From Ownership to Opportunity: Navigating Domains Inside and Out

This issue brings together three perspectives that, at first glance, approach the domain space from different angles, but ultimately converge on a shared reality: the importance of naming infrastructure is rising, while its ownership inside organizations remains unclear.

Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau's Quarterly Focus Article examines domain strategy not as a branding detail, but as an operational blind spot. Her analysis of more than 92,000 companies does not argue ideology, but observes behavior. At scale, companies converge toward clarity, control, and alignment in their namespace. The question her work raises is not whether domains matter, but why they are so often left without clear ownership until the cost of that absence becomes visible.

In contrast, our Voice of the Quarter, Sven Echternach, offers a long-view perspective shaped by decades of experience across digital business, finance, and domain investment. His story traces the evolution of domains from early technical utility to scarce, high-value digital assets. What emerges is a perspective grounded not in theory, but in practice: domains sit at the intersection of identity, independence, and economic value, and their strategic importance only becomes more evident over time.

Where the Quarterly focus article addresses internal governance, and the interview highlights asset value, Paolo Domenighetti's contribution in Innovation & Tech shifts attention to the external environment domains now operate within. As DNS and blockchain-based naming systems increasingly coexist, the challenge is no longer ownership alone, but predictability. In a multi-layered naming landscape, collision is not

the exception, but the condition. The real task is designing systems where outcomes remain intentional, understandable, and secure.

Beyond these core contributions, this issue reflects the breadth of the domain ecosystem today. Our Who's Who section brings together professionals from across registry innovation, platforms, brokerage, branding, and Web3 identity. From Yotam Katznelson and Doron Vermaat to James Williams, Jeffrey Gabriel, Grant Polachek, and Theo Develegas, their profiles reflect the range of expertise driving the industry forward. In News from the Market, the Q4 2025 Aftermarket and Registrations Reports provide a snapshot of activity and momentum, enriched by commentary from Jeffrey M. Gabriel (Founder of Saw.com). Finally, our Calendar Events section captures the industry in motion: from a synthesis of Consensus Hong Kong (by Habeba Elmahy, Social Media Lead at Freename) to insights from Domain Summit Africa in Nairobi (by Theo May, Business Development Associate at Freename), alongside a forward look at the events shaping the months ahead.

Taken together, these perspectives do not point to a single conclusion, but they do highlight a shift. Domains are no longer peripheral. They are embedded in how companies are discovered, trusted, and transacted with, by both humans and machines.

And yet, inside many organizations, responsibility for this layer remains undefined.

That tension between rising importance and diffuse ownership is where this issue begins its exploration!

*The Editorial Team*

**The Domain Standard**

## Introducing freename

Freename is a leading Web3 company pioneering the future of digital identity through blockchain-based domain names. With a vision to decentralize internet naming infrastructure, Freename empowers individuals, brands, and communities to register, own, and control their domains without reliance on centralized authorities.

Freename's platform allows users not only to mint and trade top-level and second-level domains (TLDs and SLDs) on-chain, but also to integrate them across Web3 ecosystems for use in wallets, websites, applications, and beyond. Built on open standards and designed for interoperability, Freename domains are fully owned by their holders, bringing transparency, permanence, and user sovereignty to the naming layer of the internet.

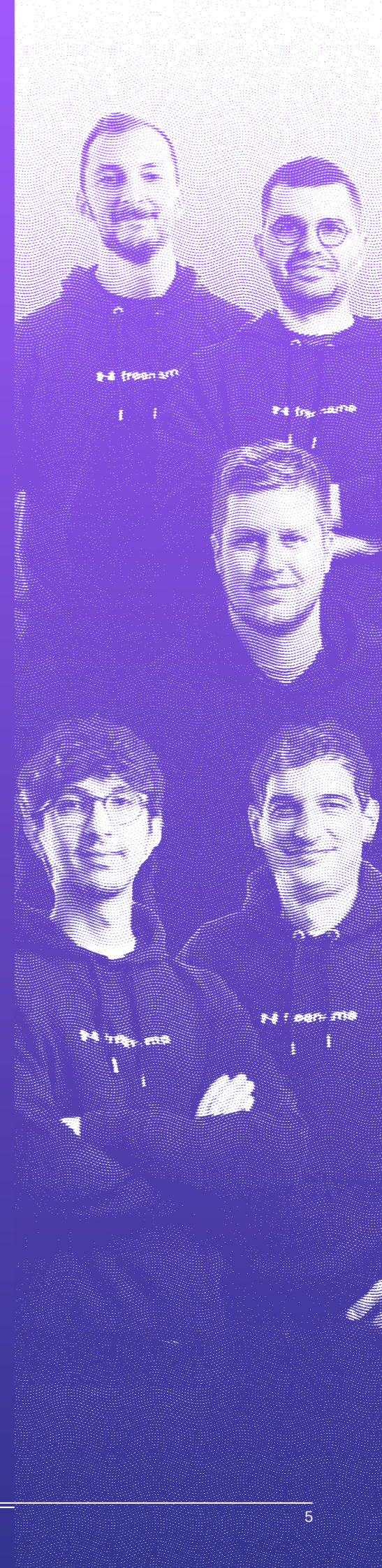
Founded with the belief that domains are more than digital addresses, Freename supports a growing global community of creators, developers, and investors exploring the potential of Web3-native naming systems.

**“Founded with the belief that domains are more than digital addresses, Freename supports a growing global community of creators, developers, and investors exploring the potential of Web3-native naming systems.”**

To learn more, visit [freename.com](https://freename.com) and explore how you can own your digital identity, one domain at a time.

*The Freename Team*

Nicolas Maggi | Head of Product  
Davide Vicini | CEO and Co-Founder  
Gherardo Varani | Head of Business Development  
Mattia Martone | COO and Co-Founder  
Paolo Domenighetti | CTO



# Domain Strategy: The Blind Spot

Compounding at Machine Speed by Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau



**Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau**

MarkUpgrade.com  
SmartBranding.com  
Grails.com

Founder-focused domain strategist helping entrepreneurs secure strategic-grade .com domain names that match their ambition. With 20 years in marketing and digital strategy, she works with high-growth founders to move from compromise domains to category-defining brand assets. Based in Kyiv, Ukraine, Tatiana is also an ultra runner, mother of four, and builder at heart, balancing strategic negotiations with long-distance miles.

## The Domain Ownership Problem

“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” – Alice

In every serious company, the things that matter have an owner. Finance has a CFO who knows exactly what is owned, what is owed, what can be spent, and what must be protected. Sales has quotas, pipelines, territories, forecasts, and someone whose job it is to care deeply about it all. Marketing owns brand guidelines, messaging, channels, budgets, and performance. Product has roadmaps, backlogs, life-cycle decisions, and clear authority over what ships and what does not. Legal owns IP, contracts, trademarks, risk. HR owns hiring, culture, retention, and the cost of getting it wrong.

Even assets that are invisible to customers - servers, data, customer lists, patents, supplier relationships, have explicit owners, processes, reviews, audits, and KPIs. They are discussed in board meetings, fought over in budget cycles, acquired deliberately, sold strategically, and defended when threat-

**Ownership creates care.  
Care creates strategy.  
And strategy creates compounding value.**

Now ask yourself a simple question. Where do domain names sit in that structure? Usually, they don't.

They were registered during incorporation by whoever was around. The founder. The developer. An agency. Or a friend with a credit card. The login sits in an inbox nobody monitors. Renewal notices go to an employee who left last year. DNS is with one vendor. Email with another. Hosting somewhere else.

Marketing assumes IT owns it. IT assumes marketing chose it. Legal thinks trademarks are enough. Finance sees a \$12 annual line item and moves on.

No one models upgrade timing. No one audits defensive registrations. No one stress-tests namespace risk. No one presents domain strategy at a board meeting. Until something breaks. A missed renewal throws the company into havoc. A rebrand is forced because a competitor acquired the name

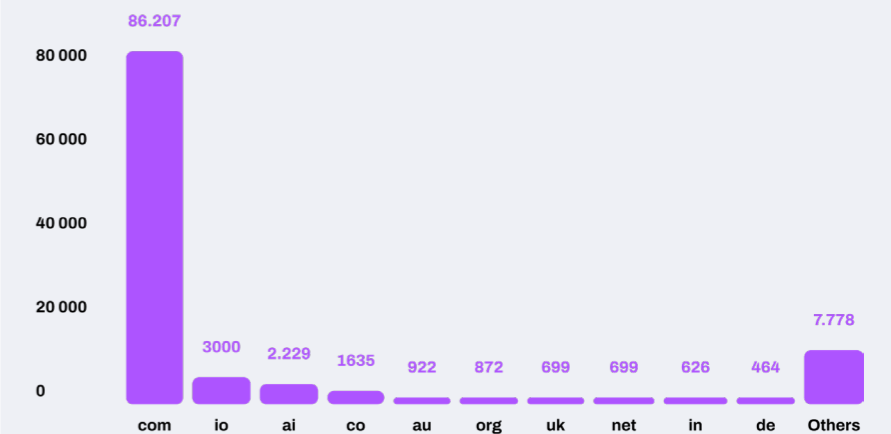
you assumed didn't matter. An investor asks why you don't own the exact brand match .com or your customers simply keep landing somewhere else. Then all of a sudden everyone cares about the asset no one was assigned to own. Shouldn't we know better by now?

## What 92,459 Companies Reveal

Between 2021 and the end of 2024 - a period that spans post-pandemic acceleration, funding expansion and contraction cycles, and the early AI adoption wave - we conducted a multi-year analysis of 92,459 companies across more than 200 industries and multiple geographies. This window matters. It captures one of the fastest periods of digital transformation in modern business history across companies that had

already achieved scale, capital access, or formal recognition. If namespace behaviour were going to fragment under new technology and alternative extensions, it would have happened here. Instead, we observed convergence. 87,207 of the 92,459 companies operate on .com. That is 82.1%. The next closest extension, .io, appears 3,000 times. .ai appears 2,229 times. .co appears 1,635 times.

Graph 1  
Top 10 Domain Extensions by Count (with Others)



Stankova, M. (2025). The domain name advantage: What 90,000+ companies' choices mean for your business. Smartbranding.com

**One of three things could be true:**

- 1. .com is simply historical inertia**  
It was first, became default and companies copied what existed.
- 2. Success leads to .com acquisition**  
Companies become successful first, then upgrade to .com as a signal of maturity.

**3. .com contributes to success**

Users and investors trust .com more, that trust improves conversion, conversion improves traction and traction improves funding outcomes. The dataset does not claim direct causation. But it does show that companies with capital and maturity behave as if namespace clarity matters. Capital rarely clusters randomly.

# Exact Brand Match: Expectation Is an Asset

**27.7%**

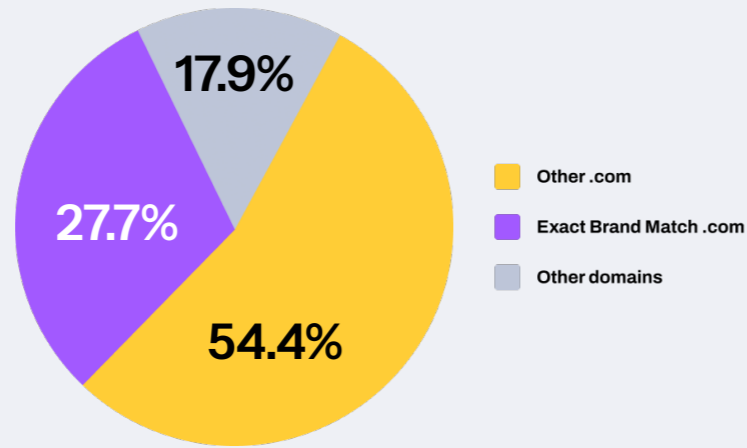
of the companies analysed use an Exact Brand Match .com

If the brand is "Example," the natural assumption is Example.com. Expectation alignment reduces friction. This does not mean every company must start there. Many begin with modifiers or alternative extensions because of cost, availability, or stage.

But the pattern is consistent: as companies scale, as capital increases, as brand risk grows they converge toward exact-match control. Ambiguity is expensive.

Graph 2

Distribution of .com Domains vs Others (Including Exact Brand Match .com)



Stankova, M. (2025). The domain name advantage: What 90,000+ companies' choices mean for your business. Smartbranding.com

# Funding Concentration With Context

Graph 3

Total Funding Raised per Domain Extension for Selected Extensions



Stankova, M. (2025). The domain name advantage: What 90,000+ companies' choices mean for your business. Smartbranding.com

Among 34,442 funded companies in the dataset:

- 24,010 use .com
- 2,068 use .io
- 1,488 use .ai
- 1,004 use .co

Total funding raised:

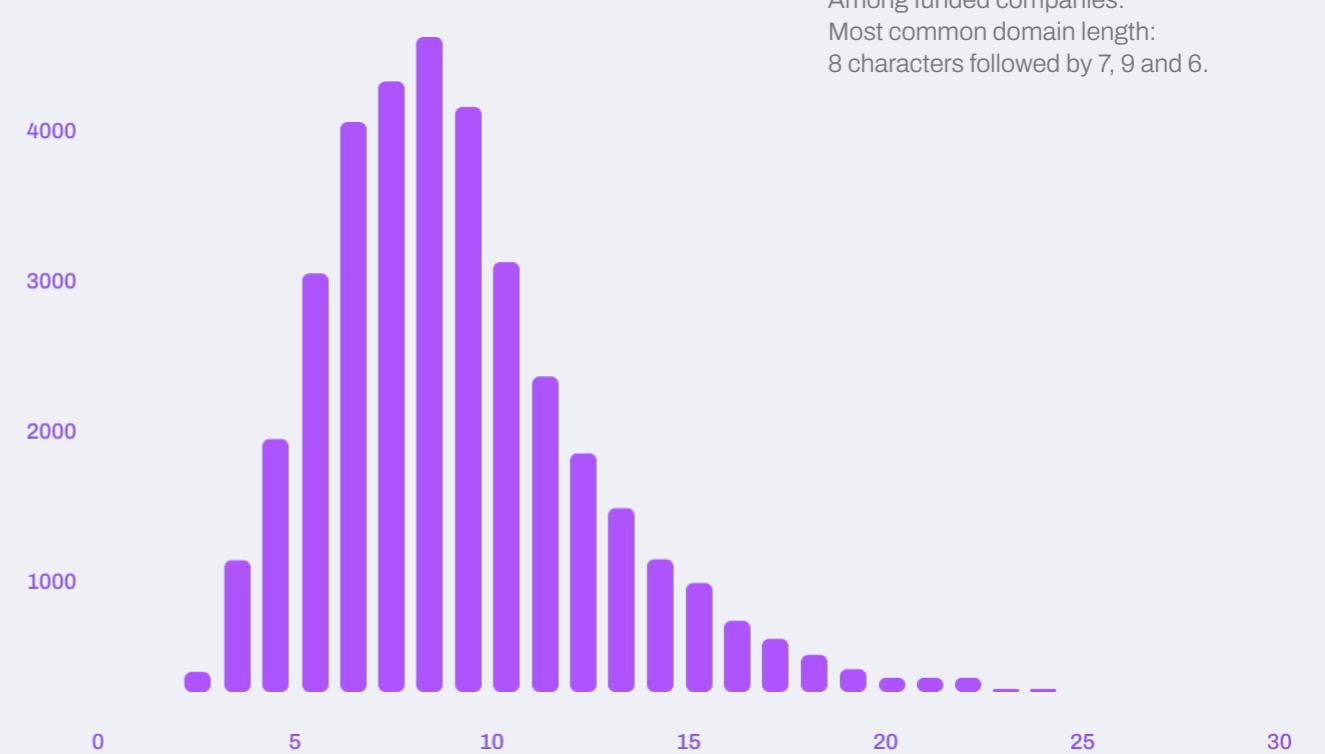
- .com: \$4.34 trillion
- .ai: \$53 billion
- .io: \$48.3 billion
- .co: \$23.4 billion

.com has more companies in the dataset, so aggregate funding dominance is partly explained by representation. This does not prove owning a .com causes funding. But capital clusters around namespace clarity. Even when normalised per company, funding density remains heavier in .com environments. And capital rarely clusters randomly.

# Length: Brandability Is Not an Accident

Graph 4

Character Length Distribution for Funded Domains



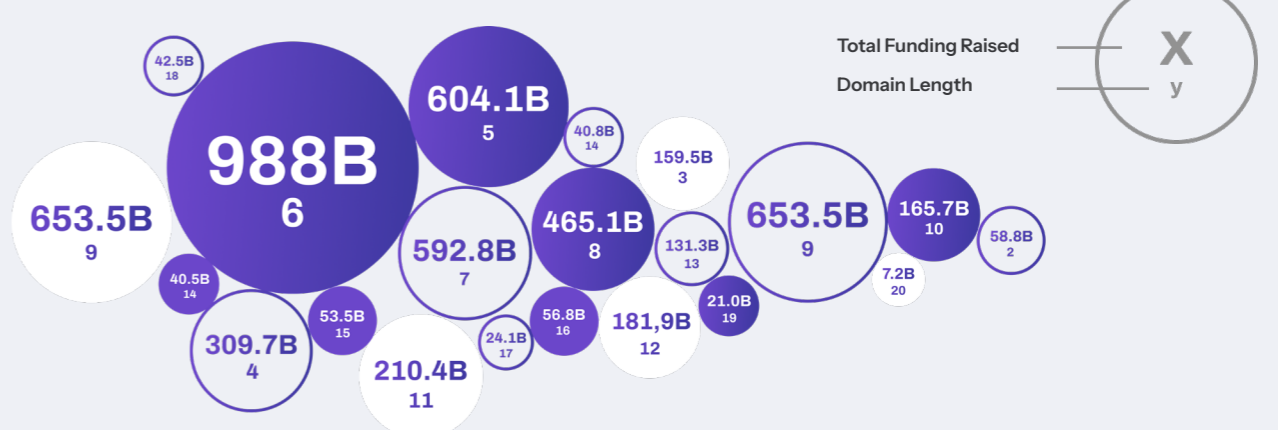
Stankova, M. (2025). The domain name advantage: What 90,000+ companies' choices mean for your business. Smartbranding.com

Funding concentration:

- \$988B 6-letter domains
- \$653.5B 9-letter domains
- \$604.1B 5-letter domains
- \$592.8B 7-letter domains

Graph 5

Total Funding by Domain Length for Funded Domains



Stankova, M. (2025). The domain name advantage: What 90,000+ companies' choices mean for your business. Smartbranding.com

Funded companies disproportionately operate in short, brandable ranges. Shorter names reduce cognitive load. Reduced cognitive load improves recall.

Improved recall strengthens direct navigation. Brand architecture and namespace architecture are not separate disciplines.

## The Governance Failure

The data does not tell us whether those companies started caring about their naming choices intentionally, reactively, or forced by circumstance. We cannot see the internal decision process.

What we can see is the outcome: at scale, namespace clarity becomes the norm.

If that outcome appears consistently across industries and funding stages, the question is not whether it was deliberate. So why do most companies still leave it undesigned? Who models namespace risk in your company?

**We cannot see the internal decision process.**  
**What we can see is the outcome: at scale, namespace clarity becomes the norm.**

**Who tracks:**

Upgrade timing?

Defensive registration coverage?

Country-code vulnerabilities?

Email misrouting exposure?

AI-resolution ambiguity?

DNS security posture?

Web3 namespace claims and decentralised identity exposure?

Wallet-linked brand impersonation risks?

Usually, no one. That is not because domains are unimportant, rather because they were historically treated as technical detail. But they are not - they are Infrastructure. And infrastructure without governance becomes a liability.

## Digital Acceleration...Except at the Root

During the Covid pandemic in 2020 we saw business leaders acting a lot quicker than usual in response to changes in order to survive. Big and small companies managed to organise work remotely; figure out how to deliver their services and goods online and where their customers were; adopt new technologies; improve their online security and much more. All that happened literally over

weeks, sometimes days. According to a McKinsey study, when asked what is the reason for not implementing those changes before the pandemic, over half of the executives cited « it wasn't a priority », followed by « the required changes represented too big a shock to established ways of working » and « IT infrastructure was insufficient ». This proved that most strategic "constraints"

were never technical, they were cultural. Once survival was on the line, companies discovered they could move faster, adapt smarter, and modernise years of inertia in a matter of weeks. Domain strategy sits in the same bucket - deferred until something forces urgency. Do you want your wake-up moment to be strategic, or forced and accidental?

## Machine-Speed Competition

In 2026, domains are machine-readable trust anchors in an ecosystem where AI agents browse, summarise, recommend, and transact on behalf of users. But just as digital transformation didn't start with the pandemic - it just forced those who were lagging behind - this shift did not start with AI. Before AI, credibility was built primarily through repetition. Advertising, PR, search visibility, partnerships. If you had a weak domain name, whether you know it or not, you would compensate with cash. Show up consistently enough and customers eventually will get where to find you. Yes, at much higher CAC rates and still

with risks. But doable. AI changes the mechanics of discovery by compressing choices. It intermediates navigation and summarises markets in seconds. In that environment, there is less room for ambiguity. Fewer chances to invest more time and money to clarify that your brand is actually on a different extension or has an added word. Fewer opportunities to correct confusion created by similar names. Machines do not "figure it out" or ask you to clarify. They rank signals. When agents transact, they resolve to what appears authoritative. Clean namespace alignment becomes a structural advantage. Fragmented

namespace becomes a structural tax. This is where authenticity becomes measurable. Owning your exact brand match domain name. Securing defensive registrations. Protecting country codes aligned with expansion. In a machine-speed economy, coherence matters. The companies that treated their domain as infrastructure all this time were not just being aesthetic. They were reducing entropy. And entropy compounds faster when machines are involved.

## Identity Across Layers

Web3 adds another layer to this conversation. Not as a replacement of the traditional web, but because it expands the surface area of identity. Wallet addresses become usernames. Domains resolve to smart contracts. Brand names can be claimed in decentralised name-

spaces by anyone who moves first. Most companies are not thinking about this yet, just as most were not thinking seriously about their primary domain fifteen years ago (and sadly, some still don't). But the principle is the same. If your brand exists in public, it will ex-

ist across layers. The only question is whether you control it. In an AI-mediated economy, identity consistency is no longer just a branding choice. It is infrastructure. And infrastructure failures do not stay cosmetic for long.

## When Should Domain Strategy Be Reviewed?

This is not an argument that every startup must immediately acquire a seven-figure domain name. It is an argument that namespace governance across Web2 and Web3 should be modeled deliberately. In an AI-mediated economy, identity consistency is no longer just a branding choice. It is infrastructure. And infrastructure failures do not stay cosmetic for long.

**Trigger points include:**

Seed-to-Series A transition

International expansion

Increased offline marketing

Rising brand search volume

Competitive namespace risk

M&A positioning

Entry into Web3 ecosystems (wallet integrations, token launches, smart contract deployments)

Growth in brand visibility that increases decentralised name-claim risk

**In an AI-mediated economy, identity consistency is no longer just a branding choice. It is infrastructure.**

Once your brand becomes economically meaningful, it becomes claimable across layers. Upgrade and defensive decisions should be evaluated like capital allocation decisions. Not reactively and emotionally, not after the problem surfaces. Because by the time identity fragmentation is visible it has already become a governance failure with financial consequences.

## This Is Not About Domains

**...and it is not about extension ideology. It is about behaviour at scale during one of the fastest periods of digital acceleration in modern history.**

When companies mature, raise capital, and manage risk deliberately, they converge on namespace clarity. Inside most organisations, domain strategy remains unassigned. Assets without owners do not remain neutral - they compound unmanaged. In a machine-speed econ-

omy, unmanaged compounding becomes expensive. The question is not whether domain names matter. The question is whether someone in your organisation is accountable for them. And if not - when will that change?

*Based on SmartBranding's proprietary multi-year dataset (2021-2024, continuously updated), aggregating publicly available lists of leading companies — including Fortune 500 firms, funded startups, accelerator cohorts (including Y Combinator), unicorn rankings, and sector- and country-level top company publications. The analysis reflects observed behavioral patterns among ranked, capitalized, and high-performing companies and does not assert direct causation.*

# Owning the Name, Owning the Future.

## An Interview with Sven Echternach

The Voice of the Quarter is a regular feature of *The Domain Standard* dedicated to in-depth conversations with people who shape the domain name industry. In each issue, we invite a prominent investor, entrepreneur, broker, or industry leader to share their perspective on current developments, long-term trends, and the evolving role of domain names in the digital economy. The section aims to provide readers with insights drawn from real experience, while also highlighting the ideas and initiatives that influence the future of the global domain market.

### In This Issue

In the digital economy, domain names are often treated as a technical necessity, just a line of text required to make a website work. Yet within the domain industry, they are understood very differently: as scarce digital assets, as brand-defining identifiers, and as a form of online real estate that can shape the success or failure of an entire project. As online business models evolve and new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain-based ownership, and alternative financing platforms emerge, the role of domains is expanding once again. What once served primarily as an address has become a strategic instrument for positioning, credibility, and independence on the Internet.

Few people have observed this transformation from as many angles as Sven Echternach, Co-Founder and Chairman of EWBCD GmbH, a Frankfurt-based company active across digital assets, consulting, and IT. Over the course of decades working at the intersection of technology, finance, and international business, he has seen how the perception of domain names has shifted: from early technical curiosity to recognized investment class. Today, his work focuses on domain investment, brokerage, and industry initiatives aimed at strengthening the ecosystem, particularly in Europe, where the strategic importance of premium domains is still often underestimated.

In this conversation, Sven shares how he evaluates domains as business assets, why scarcity and control remain their defining characteristics, and how developments such as AI, fractional ownership, and new valuation standards could reshape the market in the years ahead. He also reflects on the cultural differences in how domains are viewed around the world, and why collaboration within the industry will be essential for its next stage of growth.



## Sven Echternach

Co-Founder and Chairman, EWBCD

Sven Echternach is Co-Founder and Chairman of EWBCD GmbH, a Frankfurt-based firm operating across digital assets, consulting, and IT. With over 30 years of experience in digital business, he has worked at the intersection of technology, finance, and international markets throughout his career.

After studying computer science at TU Munich, Sven held senior positions at a leading German bank, where he was responsible for international projects, marketing cooperations, and strategic startup investments. Projects brought him across Asia and America. Today, Sven focuses on premium domain name investment and business building through EWBCD and its brands. He is a member of the Internet Commerce Association (ICA), engaged at ICANN, and actively works to strengthen the European domain industry through initiatives such as the Domain Investor Alliance (domainia.org), the Domain Valuation Network (DVNW.com), and the domain brokerage platform DBN.NET. His international experience spans more than 50 countries, with deep expertise across IT, business processes, finance, and the Internet. He is based in Frankfurt, Germany.

**“To me, a domain is three things at once. It is the essence and nucleus of a business idea, distilled down to a few characters.”**

**Sven, many thanks for agreeing to this. It’s a pleasure featuring you on the pages of *The Domain Standard*. You have more than 30 years of experience across digital business, finance, and international markets. Take us back to the beginning: How did you originally become interested in domain names, and at what point did you recognize their strategic value?**

Thank you for the invitation – it’s a pleasure to be featured in *The Domain Standard*. My journey with domains began at TU Munich in the early 1990s, where I was studying computer science and had early access to the Internet – years before the World Wide Web truly took off. I spent a lot of time with email and IRC (Internet Relay Chat) and quickly understood what a domain was and why it mattered. I was running a small IT side business at the time, assembling PCs and selling modems, and I needed a professional email address that people could remember – my previous email address wasn’t suitable. So I registered my first domain, a three-letter .DE. A few years later, I hand-registered Sven.com by filling out a paper form and paying 70 US dollars for two years of registration. That domain is still my personal email today.

The turning point came when people started approaching me, wanting to

buy my domains. That’s when I realized these short strings of characters carried real value. I also noticed that the pool of quality domains was shrinking fast, which motivated me to discover the hidden pearls before others did.

But beyond the investment angle, what truly drew me in was the idea of digital independence and freedom. Think about the platforms that dominated the early web – Geocities, MySpace, Orkut – they have all disappeared. With your own domain name, you are the platform. You control your identity, you choose your hosting provider, and nobody can take that away from you. I recognized that independence as something strategically powerful.

**We talk a lot about domain names as assets on the pages of this magazine. Now, you’ve worked with everything from banking and payments to media and cybersecurity. From that broad perspective, what do you think makes domain names so special compared to other digital assets?**

Having worked across different industries, I’ve encountered many types of digital assets. Domains are fundamentally different. To me, a domain is three things at once. It is the essence and nucleus of a business idea, distilled down to a few characters. It is a work of art, where linguistics become brand.

Monopoly – one of my favorite games alongside chess and poker – the address determines the value. What makes domains truly unique is the combination of scarcity, identity, and control. There is only one exact match for any given domain. A strong domain immediately influences credibility, memorability, market positioning, and authority. And unlike relying on third-party platforms that change or disappear, owning your domain provides a stable digital anchor and independence. Then there is the transactional side, which is remarkable: a domain sale and transfer can be completed within minutes at virtually zero transactional cost. Compare that to the slow, expensive processes of real estate or M&A transactions. And the margins can be extraordinary – it is not uncommon to register a domain for under ten dollars and sell it for thousands shortly thereafter. Domains are also endlessly dynamic: from one moment to the next, you can build a new product, pivot to a different concept, or sell.

**How do you evaluate domain names from a business and investment standpoint? Is there a magic formula you use?**

Ha – I have been looking for that magic formula for years!

When I assess a domain, I look at multiple

dimensions: linguistic quality, market relevance, liquidity potential, and strategic optionality. Quality means length, clarity, memorability, and linguistic strength. Relevance means alignment with high-growth sectors – AI, cybersecurity, fintech, health. Liquidity is about how easily a domain can be converted into cash, using comparable sales and market depth as indicators. And optionality is often underestimated: a premium domain can be sold, developed, leased, or used to back a loan – offering multiple pathways to value creation.

A major challenge right now is the absence of a trusted universal valuation standard. Many registrars have built their own tools, but the results differ widely. Many lack local understanding – no linguistic insight into languages other than English, and limited knowledge of regional search volume. They also rarely distinguish between a recommended listing price, a wholesale portfolio price, and what a domain is worth as loan collateral. Context matters enormously.

A promising approach would be consolidating pricing data from multiple platforms – marketplace sales, listings, aftermarket transactions – and processing it with machine learning algorithms. A trusted third party, perhaps one of the Big Four, with whom I have been in touch about this, could ensure the integrity of the data provided. This is precisely the vision behind the Domain Valuation Network at DVNW.com, and anyone interested in participating or staying informed is welcome to register there.

And last but not least, the gut feeling matters. I regularly look at lists of expiring domains, identify names where I see potential, and feed them into a catching tool I have built – trying to register these domains in the exact second they drop. Sometimes the best investments come from human recognition that no algorithm has captured yet.

Liquidity is about how easily a domain can be converted into cash, using comparable sales and market depth as indicators. And optionality is often underestimated: a premium domain can be sold, developed, leased, or used to back a loan – offering multiple pathways to value creation.

**When it comes to domains themselves, everyone has preferences. Are there specific types of domains or extensions that you find particularly interesting right now, and why?**

Absolutely – and each category has its own character.

.COM remains king. All its three- and four-letter domains are taken, and they are among the most liquid assets in the aftermarket, despite some irritating registration price increases. For global reach and instant recognition, nothing matches .COM.

.DE is my personal number one. With over 17 million registrations, it is the third-largest extension globally, managed by a great team at DENIC who genuinely listen to their registrars and delivers a very stable technical platform with excellent value for money. After a policy change, registrants worldwide may now hold .DE domains.

.CH represents everything Switzerland stands for – stability, neutrality, and trust. It serves as a safe harbor for investments, and as a bonus, the letters “CH” can also be read as an unofficial abbreviation for China, giving these domains cross-cultural appeal and opportunity.

.EU is, in my view, significantly undervalued. With a population approaching 500 million, the European Union represents arguably the world’s most important single market. I expect .EU to gain more recognition over time.

.CC is a hidden gem – the only country-code TLD operated by Verisign, the same top registry behind .COM. It offers better value for money and still has plenty of attractive names available that are long taken in other extensions.

.NG, Nigeria’s extension, has become very interesting since pricing dropped below .COM levels. Nigeria has one of Africa’s highest internet populations, and .NG domains are excellent for domain hacks – think JOINI.NG, WEARI.NG, or STI.NG.

.AT, Austria’s extension, also works well for English-language domain hacks like Classes.at. It is another well-managed and innovative TLD, which makes it easy to become its registrar.

NET and ORG remain classic choices, especially for three-letter and single-keyword domains.

Among the newer gTLDs, I find generic ones like .XYZ, .CLUB, .PLUS, .TOP, and .ONLINE particularly appealing.

## .COM

The king, the most liquid assets in the aftermarket

## .DE

Stable, global, 17M domains.

## .CH

Symbolizes Swiss stability and trust, with cross-cultural appeal.

## .EU

Undervalued despite serving a 500-million-person market.

## .CC

Verisign-run, great names.

## .NG

Grows as prices drop; great for creative domain hacks.

## .AT

Enables clever domain hacks and has an innovative registry.

## NET and ORG

Stay classic

## Newer gTLDs

.XYZ, .CLUB, .PLUS, .TOP, and .ONLINE are appealing.

A special niche I find fascinating is ultra-short domains. Not just three-letter domains, but single-letter country-code domains like C.PN, M.KE, R.LS, L.GL, or V.CR. Only a handful of ccTLDs allow single-letter registrations, and no gTLD has an extension of only two letters, making these the shortest possible domains in the Web 2 world. These latter ultra-short domains are also what I call “devocalized domain hacks” – removing the vowels from a keyword to create a brandable name that the extension completes. C.PN becomes Coupon, M.KE becomes Make or Mike, R.LS becomes Release, L.GL becomes Legal. Two more examples from our portfolio: VLNTNS.COM, which I built out recently, and FNDNG.COM, which can mean Funding, Finding, or Founding. Thematic verticals I find particularly rewarding include finance, crypto, travel (I once founded a travel company), health, food, technology, gaming, media, real estate, AI, legal, and politics — to name just a few. With the high margins domains can provide, diversification is key. If one category suddenly faces issues – you can shift focus to another. That is a principle I have carried over from financial markets.

**What differences do you see globally when it comes to how businesses and investors use domain names?**

Having experience with more than 50 countries, I can say that domain culture varies considerably by region.

In Europe, domains tend to be treated pragmatically – as functional digital infrastructure. Companies focus on brands, keyword relevance, and security. European investors often view domains as part of a broader digital strategy rather than as stand-alone investment vehicles. Institutional investors in Europe still tend to underestimate the liquidity and return potential of premium domains, which I believe will change. In Asia, the picture is quite different. Especially in China and parts of Southeast Asia, domains are viewed more dynamically – there is a strong culture of trading and investing. Domains are treated not just as branding tools, but as digital commodities and alternative investment assets. One particularly interesting aspect is the importance of numeric domains in Asian markets. Numbers can be understood without any language barrier, and in Chinese culture, certain number combinations carry strong positive associations – 8 signifies prosperity, 6 means smooth sailing. This makes numeric domains a truly international asset class, and it is an area we focus on as well.

Decision-making styles also differ. European companies tend to prioritize long-term consistency and thorough due diligence. Asian and American companies, particularly in fast-growth environments, often act more quickly and opportunistically when acquiring digital assets that create immediate competitive advantage. That said, I see growing convergence globally. As digital transformation accelerates, domain names are increasingly recognized everywhere as strategic digital real estate. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for structuring transactions effectively and bridging expectations between buyers and sellers across regions.

**How important are security, regulation, and trust in the domain industry today, and where are improvements still needed?**

These factors are not peripheral – they are foundational. Domains sit at the en-

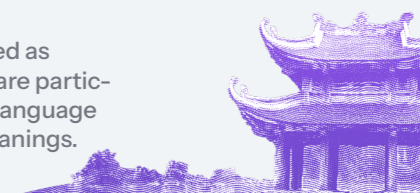
## Europe

Domains are treated as practical digital infrastructure within a broader brand and security strategy. Many institutional investors underestimate the liquidity and return potential of premium domains.



## Asia

Domains are actively traded and viewed as investment assets. Numeric domains are particularly valued because numbers cross language barriers and carry positive cultural meanings.



These factors are not peripheral – they are foundational. Domains sit at the entry point of the digital economy, directly connected to identity, communication, payments, and data. When something goes wrong at the domain level, the consequences can be severe. Trust is the currency of this industry. It is essential for domain owners to trust their registrar and the broader ecosystem of service providers. When buying or selling domains from a stranger, using a domain escrow service is strongly advisable – similar to a notary in real estate transactions. The ICA (Internet Commerce Association) has been doing important work here, establishing guidelines for domain brokers and pushing back against unjustified price increases by TLD registries. EWBCD has also joined the Business Constituency within ICANN, giving us the opportunity to work on tomorrow’s policies, e.g. regarding transfer policies or WHOIS data.

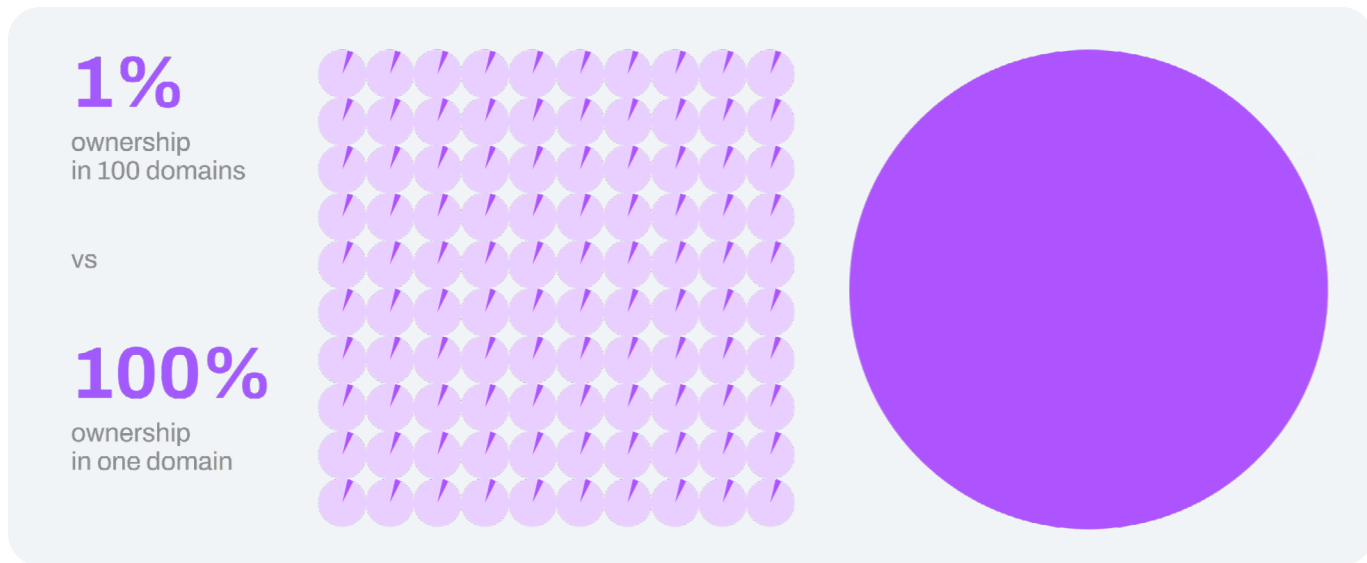
Ownership transparency is another key area. Tracking who owns what is fundamental to establishing trust, and newer Web3 companies have an advantage here by recording ownership information on the blockchain.

Where I see the most room for improvement is in valuation standards. Trusted valuations are important not only for negotiations, but especially when using domains as collateral for loans. Domain lending companies already exist in the US and Asia. With increasing financial regulation in Europe making traditional bank lending more complex, alternative private lending and credit platforms that accept digital assets as collateral could become an important part of the ecosystem – our motivation to develop PRILEN.

**The digital landscape is changing fast with AI, new fractionalization platforms (take the recently launched Domora, for example), and alternative ways to reach customers. In that context, how do you see the future of domain monetization and domain sales evolving?**

This is an important topic, and I think the outlook is very promising.

Let’s start with what is changing: traditional domain parking is essentially over, due to Google’s recent changes to how ads are displayed on its network. This primarily affects traffic domains, but less so the brandable names we focus on. The alternatives emerging are far more interesting. First, AI is transforming what is possible. Developers are using AI to build out domains in creative and unique ways, increasing the attractiveness of domains and the Internet in general. With the AI revolution and the support of agentic AI teams, a single entrepreneur can now be 10 to 20 times more productive. For example, adding multilingual support of 30 languages to our new domain brokerage network DBN.NET took me less than two hours with AI support – something that would have taken weeks before. I expect the number of new online businesses and domain sales to multiply well beyond the surge we saw during the pandemic, when people stayed home and started their own ventures. Second, fractionalization is opening new doors. Platforms like Domora allow investors to co-own domains through blockchain-based fractional ownership. Instead of investing all your capital in a single domain and owning 100% of it, you can spread it across 100 domains and own 1% of each. If just one takes off and becomes



a breakout success, the entire investment has paid for itself. This diversification and risk management approach is very promising. Co-investors also each bring something unique to the table – expertise, industry knowledge, connections. Some years ago, I co-invested in a health-related domain alongside Page and a few other domain veterans, all agreeing during a Clubhouse voice chat. The exchange and collaboration since then has been invaluable. Fractional ownership also democratizes investment, allowing everyone to own a share of a premium domain – similar to what the stock market does for companies.

Third, there will always be a human element. While I see enormous potential in new technologies like AI and Web3, communicating with customers still requires personal engagement. That was the motivation behind our latest platform, DBN.NET – a domain brokerage network designed to support brokers with innovative tools and our large inventory, while preserving their independence. Third parties can also use our network to market their domains, backed by trustworthy brand guidelines facing the buyer and increasing confidence. It is a model that benefits everyone involved.

**You're closely involved with the domain community. Can you tell us about the initiatives you're currently focused on to support and strengthen the domain industry, especially in Europe?**

Thank you for giving me this opportunity – this is something I am deeply committed to. At EWBCD and through our domain-related brands like DNC.DE and Sigmaname, we see ourselves as

system, not just portfolio holders. In the domain world, competition is inherently limited on the sales side – every domain is unique, and everyone holds different names – which makes collaboration a natural fit. We have started building a Domain Investor Alliance with a European focus. We have organized two domain investor roundtables along Frankfurt's Main river, discussing topics such as domain valuation, fractional ownership, AI tools, and industry development. Anyone interested in joining can register at domainia.org. Through the Domain Valuation Network at DVNW.com, we are connecting marketplaces, registrars, and brokers to establish a new valuation standard that accounts for European specifics – local languages, regional ads, and search volume data that current tools largely ignore. We invite everyone to register their interest there.

*“In the domain world, competition is inherently limited on the sales side – every domain is unique, and everyone holds different names – which makes collaboration a natural fit.”*

IDN support is another area of focus. Here in Germany, we use characters like ä, ö, ü, and ß daily, and many other countries have similar needs with their own special characters. Internationalized Domain Names and symbol domains deserve much better support from registrars and registries. I have developed a tool at domlic.com (Domain List Checker) that quickly converts between IDN and ACE-encoded ASCII domains, extracts all kinds of domains including IDNs from unstructured text, and provides addition-

With increasing regulation of financial institutions in Europe making traditional bank loans more complex, we have built PRILEN.com, a private credit platform that accepts domain names as security collateral – bridging the gap between domain portfolios and access to capital.

Our latest initiative DBN.NET, Domain Brokerage Network, is meant to guide and support independent domain brokers, and provide them with useful tools and portfolios.

Across all of these initiatives, the common thread is strengthening the European domain market through collaboration, better tools, and greater transparency.

#### Current initiatives

##### Domain Investor Alliance

European domain investor collaboration network

##### Domain Valuation Network (DVNW.COM)

European-focused domain valuation standard.

##### Domain List Checker (Domlic.com)

IDN conversion and domain extraction tool.

##### PRILEN.com

Domain-backed private credit platform.

##### DBN.NET

Tools and support for brokers.

To wrap things up, a question we ask to every interviewee for the Voice of the Quarter: what advice would you give to the readers of The Domain Standard who may be underestimating the strategic value of the right domain name?

Just look at the recent sale of AI.com for 70 million US dollars. That single transaction speaks volumes about the strategic value a category-defining domain can carry.

But you do not need a 70-million-dollar domain to benefit from this insight. Never confuse simplicity with insignificance. A domain may look like a short

line of text, but strategically it represents identity, positioning, and control in the digital economy.

Many companies invest heavily in technology, marketing, and expansion, yet hesitate when it comes to securing the right digital identity. In reality, the right domain can accelerate market entry, reduce customer acquisition friction, and signal long-term ambition.

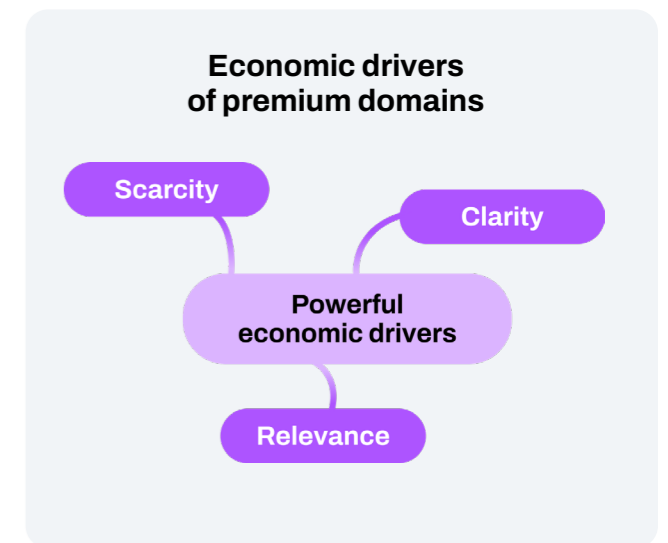
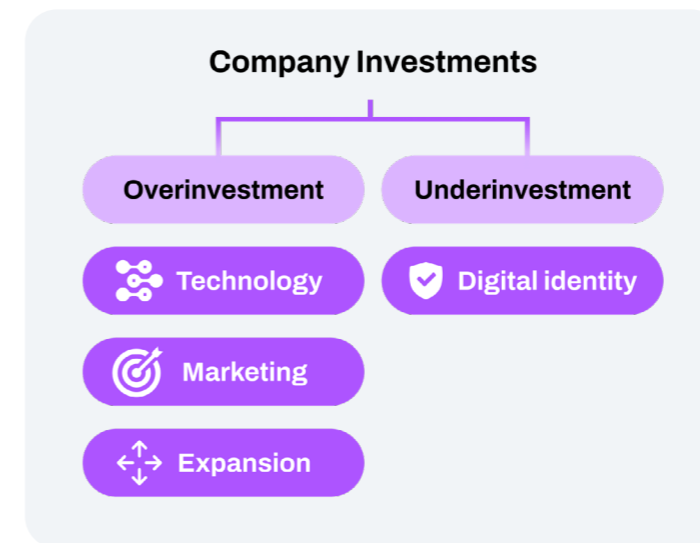
For investors, the lesson is similar: value does not always lie in complexity. Scarcity, clarity, and relevance are powerful economic drivers, and a premium domain combines all three. Domains also offer something rare – low carrying

costs with high optionality. You can sell, develop, lease, or hold, and nobody can dilute your ownership.

My advice: look beyond the immediate price tag and consider the strategic leverage a domain can provide over years – sometimes decades.

In a world of constant digital noise, owning the right name is not a luxury. It is a competitive must.

*“For investors, the lesson is similar: value does not always lie in complexity.”*



**“My advice: look beyond the immediate price tag and consider the strategic leverage a domain can provide over years – sometimes decades. In a world of constant digital noise, owning the right name is not a luxury. It is a competitive must.”**

Sites and Initiatives References:

Sven.com – Personal email domain

DNC.DE – EWBCD's domain name consulting

Sigmaname.com – EWBCD domain-related umbrella brand

DBN.NET – Domain Brokerage Network – broker platform

domainia.org – Domain Investor Alliance – European investor community

domlic.com – Domain List Checker – IDN conversion, extraction, formatting tool

DVNW.com – Domain Valuation Network – collaborative valuation standard

PRILEN.com – Private credit platform accepting domain collateral

VLNTNS.COM – Built-out devocalized domain hack (Valentines)

FNDNG.COM – Multi-meaning domain – Funding, Finding, Founding

# Collision Is Not the Problem, Unintentional Resolution Is

by Paolo Domenighetti



**Paolo Domenighetti**  
Author  
CTO at Freename

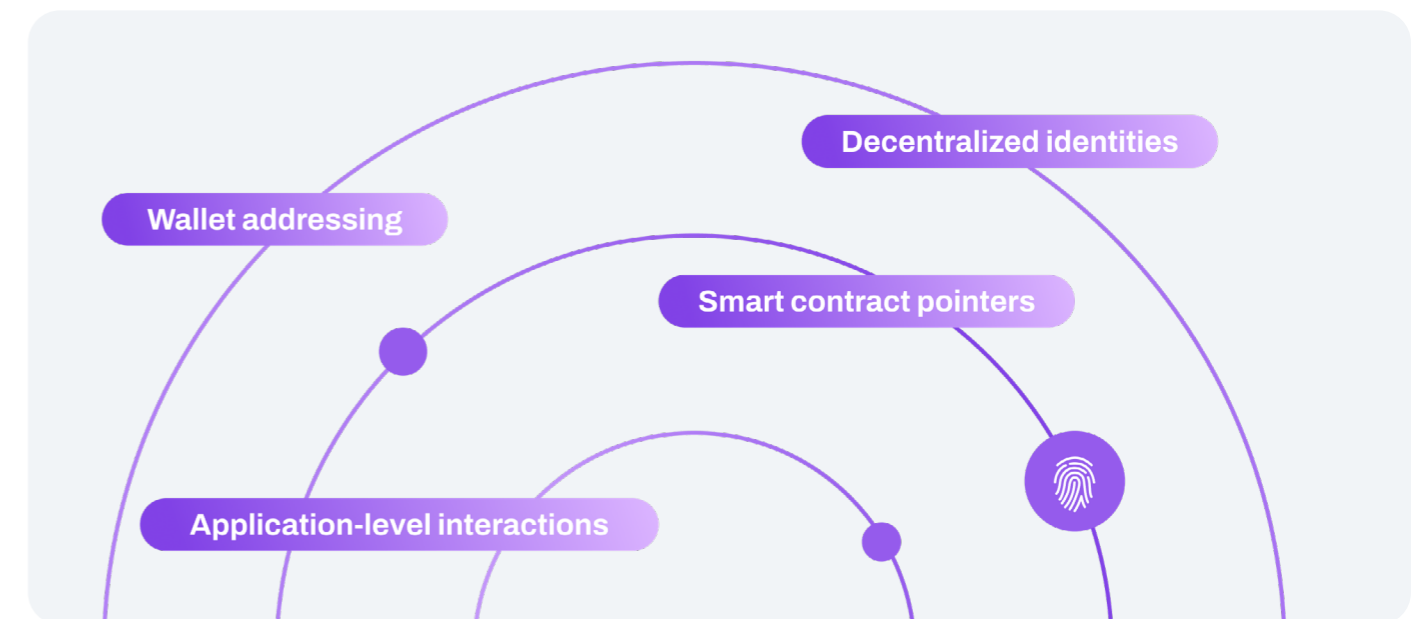
Paolo Domenighetti is CTO of Freename and a system architect focused on the convergence of DNS infrastructure and blockchain-based naming systems. With more than 15 years of experience across software architecture, cybersecurity, enterprise platforms, and internet infrastructure, he works on practical approaches to interoperability, resolution, and coexistence between Web2 and Web3 naming layers.

## The wrong debate

For years, the discussion around blockchain naming has been framed as if the market were headed toward a clean showdown: DNS versus Web3, legacy versus innovation, centralized versus decentralized. That framing is rhetorically convenient, but technically shallow. The internet almost never evolves by replacing a foundational system in one stroke. It evolves by layering new capabilities on top of what already works, and then forcing the industry to decide where each layer belongs. Naming should be understood in exactly those terms. Multiple naming systems already exist. They already produce overlapping strings, overlapping claims, and overlapping expectations. As a result, collision is not a hypothetical future edge case. It is a structural condition of a multi-namespace environment. Once that is admitted, the real question changes. The problem is no longer deciding which ideology should win. The problem is deciding how naming should behave when overlap becomes operationally relevant.

## Why DNS remains the bedrock

DNS remains the bedrock of the internet because it is natively implemented, globally diffused, operationally redundant, and deeply woven into the industry's institutional memory. It is not just a technical protocol. It is part of the internet's bones. That matters because any serious proposal about coexistence has to begin with the infrastructure that is already embedded in browsers, resolvers, registrars, enterprises, security stacks, and operations teams worldwide. This is also why blockchain naming becomes unconvincing the moment it presents itself as a wholesale replacement for DNS. That is not where its strongest value lies. Blockchain naming becomes useful when it solves problems that DNS was never designed to solve elegantly, especially in environments where programmable destinations matter more than traditional website resolution. Wallet addressing, smart contract pointers, decentralized identities, and application-level interactions all fall into that category. In those contexts, machine-readable references and programmable ownership can create practical value without needing to displace the DNS at its core.



## Where both worlds get it wrong

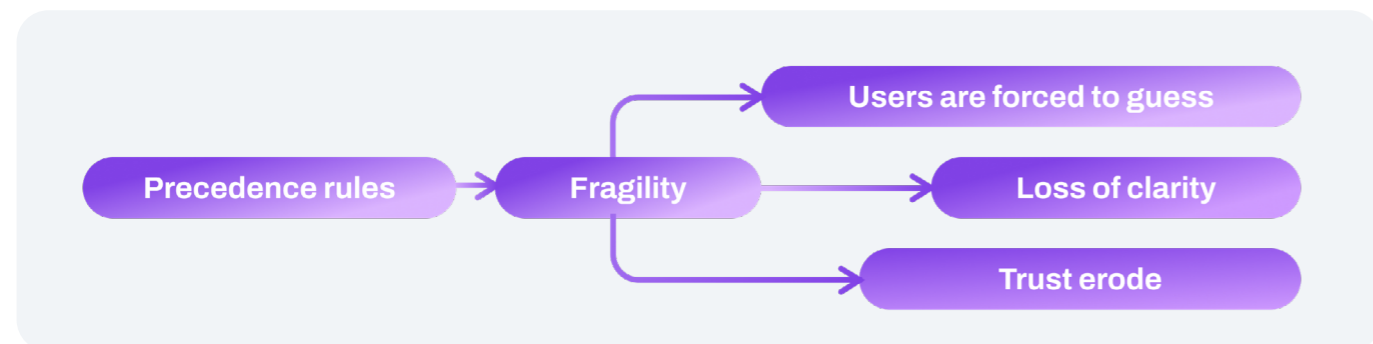
The DNS world has one blind spot, and the Web3 world has another. On the DNS side, meaningful evolution can be painfully slow. Adding or normalizing new behaviors, record conventions, or broader operational changes can take years, sometimes decades, and that pace does not always match the speed at which new naming use cases emerge. On the Web3 side, the recurring mistake is to assume that blockchains themselves can serve as efficient, policy-aware, general-purpose resolvers. They cannot. A blockchain can be an excellent system of record. It can anchor ownership, programmability, provenance, and portable metadata. But none of that automatically turns it into a mature resolution environment for predictable outcomes at internet scale. Resolution is not only about storage. It is also about speed, context, defaults, trust, abuse handling, and operational clarity. The future, in my view, is not DNS versus blockchain. It is a layered coexistence model in which DNS remains the default foundation for traditional internet resolution while blockchain naming adds utility where programmable references actually improve the user experience.

# Collision is not the scandal

Once we stop treating coexistence as a culture war, collision becomes easier to describe honestly. In naming, collision is often discussed either as a political embarrassment or as an exotic corner case. It is neither. It is the normal consequence of allowing multiple naming systems to emerge over time without a single shared authority across all of them. In the Web3 ecosystem alone, there are already many apex strings and far more second-level names across different chains and protocols, often with overlapping labels and divergent semantics.

That overlap creates more than technical ambiguity. It creates user confusion, audience diversion, spoofing opportunities, phishing risk, trademark friction, and inconsistent behavior across browsers, wallets, gateways, and client software. This is why collision should be treated first as an engineering and governance problem. The serious issue is not that two layers can reference the same string. The serious issue is whether users and operators can predict what that string will do in a given context. Predictability is the real asset in naming

infrastructure. A system becomes dangerous not simply when labels overlap, but when outcomes stop being intelligible. If a wallet, browser, resolver, or application produces different answers depending on hidden precedence rules or ad hoc client behavior, the result is not innovation. It is fragility. Users are forced to guess. Security teams lose clarity. Trust erodes. Once that happens, the naming layer becomes a liability rather than a convenience.



# A practical coexistence model

A workable model of coexistence starts by protecting what should remain stable. In my view, DNS should continue to be the default foundation for traditional internet resolution. That is not a concession to nostalgia. It is a recognition of how the internet actually functions. Freename's own position has followed that principle closely: respect for the

one-root model, no claim of DNS rights when provisioning Web3 names, and DNS or ICANN precedence by default in classical resolution scenarios when a collision occurs.

At the same time, blockchain-linked names can still perform the functions they were actually meant to perform: wallet resolution, decentralized identity

references, smart contract destinations, and application-layer interactions. That is not contradiction. It is separation of function. The same label can coexist across contexts as long as the industry is honest about which layer is authoritative for which outcome. One root can remain respected while application-specific utility continues to exist elsewhere.

# The pay-to-domain example

The clearest way to understand this is through a practical example. Consider a traditional Web2 domain used by a company or individual as part of a normal DNS presence. Its website, email configuration, and standard DNS records continue to behave exactly as expected. Now imagine that the same name is also associated with Web3-linked metadata that points to a wallet address or a smart contract. In that model, nothing in the DNS is displaced. No classical record is overridden. No claim is made against the root. Yet a wallet client, SDK, or integration layer, such as a MetaMask Snap-like resolver, can still read those Web3-linked records and use the name as a human-readable destination for

payments or application logic. In a pay-to-domain scenario, that matters. Human beings are notoriously bad at handling raw wallet strings. A naming layer that reduces copying errors, transcription failures, and address confusion can create genuine value without interfering with DNS resolution. That is where blockchain naming becomes practical rather than ideological. It solves a user problem while leaving the traditional internet stack intact.

The same example also shows why restraint matters. Not every possible resolution flow is equally desirable. A human-readable payment name may improve safety and usability, but careless reverse resolution or overexposed

identity mapping can weaken privacy instead of strengthening trust. Good naming infrastructure is not defined by how much it can reveal. It is defined by how intentionally it reveals it.

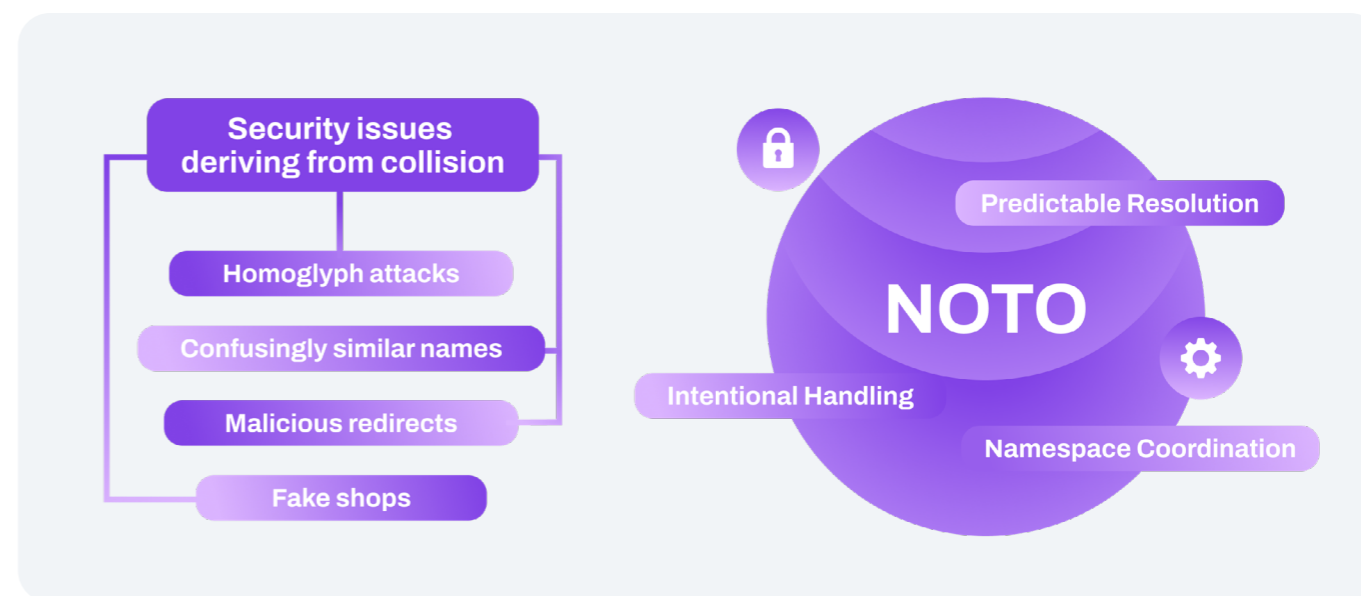
**A naming layer that reduces copying errors, transcription failures, and address confusion can create genuine value without interfering with DNS resolution. That is where blockchain naming becomes practical rather than ideological. It solves a user problem while leaving the traditional internet stack intact.**

# Where NOTO fits

This is where NOTO enters the picture, and it is important to describe it with discipline. The industry does not need another grand theory about replacing internet infrastructure. What it needs is a practical way to improve predictability where overlap, abuse signals, spoofing concerns, or conflicting policies would otherwise produce unstable outcomes.

That is the useful way to understand NOTO. NOTO is Freename's approach to intentional handling in a world where collisions remain non-zero. Its value is not that it declares a new hierarchy. Its value is that it helps preserve predictable behavior across contexts where namespaces, signals, and policies may conflict. The design philosophy is DNS-

first in the classical Web2 sense, while still allowing application-specific behavior to remain configurable where Web3 utility is legitimate. The principle is simple: avoid accidental resolver behavior. If the internet is going to live with multiple naming layers, outcomes should be shaped by explicit logic, not by ambiguity, hidden defaults, or improvisation.



# Why guardrails matter

Collision is never only a naming issue. It is also a security issue. A spoofed payment destination in a wallet context can be dramatically more harmful than a typo in a low-stakes browsing session. The same applies to homoglyph attacks, confusingly similar names, malicious redirects, fake shops, or other

forms of abuse that emerge once names begin carrying financial or identity-related meaning. In those environments, neutrality alone is not a mature posture.

If naming is going to be trusted in payment, contract, and identity flows, it needs signal-aware safeguards and pol-

icy-aware handling. That includes the ability to react to abuse indicators, prioritize safer outcomes, and avoid presenting users with ambiguous or misleading destinations. Coexistence without guardrails is not really coexistence. It is unmanaged exposure.

# A more mature way forward

The broader industry should stop forcing itself into a false binary. DNS is not becoming irrelevant. Blockchain naming is not automatically unserious. Both statements can be true at once. DNS remains the operational and institutional bedrock of the internet because of its native deployment, resilience, and integration. Blockchain naming adds value where machine-readable destinations, programmable ownership, and application-specific interactions create new

utility. The hard part is not choosing one side. The hard part is building the connective tissue that lets both layers coexist without producing confusion, abuse, or false expectations. That, in my view, is the real maturity test for this sector. Not who speaks in the strongest absolutes, but who can preserve trust while accommodating new forms of utility. DNS will remain the bedrock. Blockchain naming will continue to find legitimate uses where it actually improves outcomes.

Collisions will happen. The question is whether we handle them with denial, or with design.

**The hard part is building the connective tissue that lets both layers coexist without producing confusion, abuse, or false expectations. That, in my view, is the real maturity test for this sector.**

# Builders, Brokers, and Innovators

The domain name industry has always been shaped by the people behind it: the builders, operators, policy thinkers, investors, engineers, brokers, and advocates who keep the naming layer of the internet working, evolving, and occasionally arguing with itself. With the 'Who's Who' section, The Domain Standard wants to provide a structured directory of professionals across the global domain ecosystem.

Each profile is designed to be concise, factual, and useful. Rather than long interviews or promotional pieces, the goal is to create a reliable snapshot of who is active in the industry today, where they work, what they specialize in, and what perspective they bring to the space. As the domain ecosystem continues to expand across DNS, Web3 naming, policy, security, brokerage, registry operations, and infrastructure, understanding the people involved becomes just as important as understanding the technology itself. Our Who's Who aims to provide that human map.

## In this issue:

The current edition of 'Who's Who' brings together a diverse group of professionals whose work spans the full spectrum of the domain name industry, from registry innovation and aftermarket platforms to brokerage, branding, media, and Web3 identity. Featured in this issue are Yotam Katznelson, Chief Innovation Officer at Freename, with a background in financial and blockchain engineering; Doron Vermaat, Co-founder & COO of Efty, one of the leading SaaS platforms for domain investors; James Williams, CEO of MrConnectivity Ltd., active in Web3 domains and digital identity education; Jeffrey Gabriel, Founder of Saw.com, one of the most recognized brokers in the aftermarket with over half a billion dollars in completed sales, who also contributed in-depth commentary to this issue's 'Quarterly Report' for the Aftermarket (see below); Grant Polachek, Chief Growth Officer at Atom.com, specializing in branding, marketing strategy, and product development; and Theo Develegas, Founder of DomainGang, a long-time domain investor and industry publisher documenting the space for more than two decades. Together, their profiles reflect the range of experience, perspectives, and disciplines that continue to shape the global domain ecosystem.



## Yotam Katznelson

Chief Innovation Officer | Freename

Years in the industry

Software engineer for 16 years.  
Financial engineering for 10.  
Blockchain engineer for 8

Specialization / Focus

Blockchain and traditional financial  
software engineering

Notable Achievement

Founding member of several multi-billion \$ Fintech companies



LinkedIn  
Yotam Katznelson



## James Williams

CEO | MrConnectivity Ltd.

Years in the industry

In the domain space since 2023

Location

United Kingdom

Specialization / Focus

Web3 domains

Fun Fact

Has been playing Halo franchise  
on the Xbox since March 2002

Notable Achievement

Helped set up the first Domain Days Dubai event back in 2023 with Munir Badr and very recently joined Freename as Adviser & Brand Ambassador to help educate the wider market about the importance of securing your Digital Identity on chain now!

Motto

**"Own the Name, Command the Chain"**



LinkedIn  
James Williams



## Doron Vermaat

Co-founder & COO | Efty

Years in the industry  
Since 2012

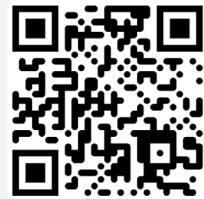
Specialization / Focus  
Aftermarket

### Notable Achievement

Co-founded the leading domain name SaaS investing platform Efty Investor and Efty Pay which makes buying and selling premium domains fast, safe, and effortless.

Location  
Netherlands

Website  
Efty.com



Efty.com



## Jeffrey Gabriel

Founder | Saw.com

Years in the industry  
Since 2010

Specialization / Focus  
Domain Brokerage

### Notable Achievement

Completed over \$550,000,000 in domain sales

### Fun Fact

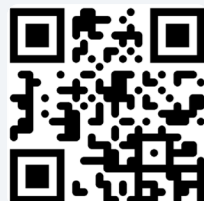
Loves golfing, despite it not loving him.

### Motto

“Hard work always pays off”

Location  
United States

Website  
Saw.com



Saw.com



## Grant Polachek

Chief Growth Officer | Atom.com

Years in the industry  
15+ years

Specialization / Focus  
Innovative marketing strategies, product development, and new initiatives

### Notable Achievement

I have ran market research projects for brands like Dell, Hilton, and Alibaba.

Location  
Chicago, Illinois

Website  
Atom.com



LinkedIn  
Grant Polachek



## Theo Develegas

Founder | DomainGang LLC

Years in the industry  
Domain investor since 2000

Specialization / Focus  
Content creation, domain acquisitions & development.

### Notable Achievement

Sold 100.org to a good cause non-profit led by Hollywood stars.

### Fun Fact

Bought my first computer, a ZX Spectrum 4k in 1985.

### Motto

“Trust your gut feeling”

Location  
Orlando, Florida

Website  
DomainGang.com



LinkedIn  
Theo Develegas

# Quarterly Report Q4 2025: Aftermarket

with commentary  
by Jeffrey M. Gabriel

What a year it's been. We closed out with some excellent sales and meaningful growth across the board. In 2024, we completed just over 430 transactions, and in 2025 that number increased to 506. Throughout 2025, the majority of our sales came from strong .COM domains, followed by .CO.UK, .AI, and .IO, with other gTLDs such as .XYZ and .LINK earning honorable mentions. One notable trend we observed is that buyers are becoming increasingly educated and focused. In many cases, they approach us having already decided on the exact domain they want, along with a clear understanding of budget and pricing expectations. We also saw a segment of buyers actively preferring AI over .COM. On multiple occasions, founders shared that .AI feels more current and, in their view, may even strengthen their positioning with venture capital investors compared to the matching .COM.



**Jeffrey Gabriel**

Founder Saw.com

Jeffrey M. Gabriel is the Founder and CEO of Saw.com and a domain industry veteran with over 15 years of experience, having been involved in more than \$570 million in domain transactions throughout his career, including landmark deals such as Sex.com (\$13M) and Poker.org (\$1M). Prior to founding Saw.com, he held key roles at Uniregistry and Sedo, and under his leadership, Saw.com has surpassed \$100 million in sales, completing major transactions including Diamond.com, AI.com, Media.com, and Data.ai.

## Introduction

Domain sales wrapped up the end of 2025 with a familiar story: a few jaw-dropping seven-figure deals, but real momentum came from the steady stream of sales in the mid-tier. It felt like a market that knows what it wants: buyers weren't chasing hype, but focusing on solid names with clear branding potential. A couple of trends stood out. Premium .coms still pulled in the biggest numbers, especially short, memorable dictionary words. But we also saw real energy around AI-related domains and certain tech-focused ccTLDs. These are all reminders that industry relevance drives a lot of decisions these days. Newer extensions (.ai, .finance, .io, etc.) kept carving out their space, especially in areas like fintech, gaming, and creative projects. They might not hit .com-level prices, but more startups and niche businesses are embracing them as legit, affordable options. Deals flowed through all the usual channels (private brokers, Afternic, Sedo, Atom, and others), which shows the aftermarket's still healthy and fluid. All in all, Q4 felt balanced. Buyers are picky but willing to pay for quality. Sellers have plenty of avenues to connect with them. It's not a wild west anymore. It's a market that's growing up, thoughtfully.

## Top 20 Sales

in Q4 2025

Looking back at the final quarter of 2025, the domain market felt stable and thoughtful. The action was a healthy mix of a few big-ticket sales and consistent activity in the mid-six-figure range. It's clear that buyers still want premium names, but they're taking their time and being more deliberate than in some past frenzies.

The talk of the quarter was the private sale of anything.com for \$2 million. Names of that caliber almost never become available, so when they do, they really set the tone. It's a reminder that simple, powerful dictionary words still sit at the very top of the market; they offer a kind of branding flexibility and security that's hard to match. Another major deal was skins.com at \$1.46 million. This sale highlights the lasting value of a strong commercial keyword. Whether it points to gaming, cosmetics, or digital assets, a word like "skins" carries built-in recognition and demand, which continues to justify high prices.

As expected, artificial intelligence was a major theme. The category was led by wisdom.ai at \$750,000, with strong showings from names like blockchain.ai and leo.ai. What's interesting isn't just the number of AI sales, but the variety. Buyers are snapping up names for everything from tech infrastructure to media brands, focusing on terms that sound established and authoritative rather than just trendy.

**"When I entered the industry over 15 years ago, keyword domains dominated the market and accounted for many of the headline-making sales. Over the past five years, however, brandable domains have taken the lead. One sale that stands out is Skins.com. It represents a massive market opportunity and once again demonstrates the power of a perfect exact-match domain under the right conditions. In the right environment, a category-defining keyword domain can deliver tremendous value to a business. We saw a similar trend in Q4, when a two-word keyword domain sold for \$86,000. Keyword domains continue to represent a significant portion of our transactions; however, they are less frequently commanding the multi-million or high six-figure prices we saw before."**

**Jeffrey Gabriel**

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
<a href="#">anything.com</a>	2,000,000 USD	2025-12-12	Private
<a href="#">skins.com</a>	1,459,450 USD	2025-11-19	QEIP.com
<a href="#">wisdom.ai</a>	750,000 USD	2025-10-13	Grit Brokerage
<a href="#">nolimit.com</a>	723,000 USD	2025-10-14	Sedo
<a href="#">hsm.com</a>	550,000 USD	2025-11-09	K-Ventures
<a href="#">blockchain.ai</a>	405,000 USD	2025-10-12	Namecheap
<a href="#">nickel.com</a>	325,000 USD	2025-11-23	NameExperts
<a href="#">gamefi.com</a>	300,000 USD	2025-12-24	Atom.com
<a href="#">mayan.com</a>	300,000 USD	2025-11-13	Spaceship.com
<a href="#">metawatch.com</a>	289,995 USD	2025-12-18	Afternic
<a href="#">mb.io</a>	220,000 USD	2025-11-23	K-Ventures
<a href="#">ai.tv</a>	200,000 USD	2025-10-16	Saw.com
<a href="#">indiana.com</a>	167,810 USD	2025-11-23	TLDBrokerage.com
<a href="#">veramed.com</a>	167,500 USD	2025-10-15	DomainMarket.com
<a href="#">nova.co</a>	160,000 USD	2025-11-05	NamePros Lander
<a href="#">leo.ai</a>	150,000 USD	2025-12-18	Atom.com
<a href="#">rwa.exchange</a>	135,000 USD	2025-12-19	Spaceship.com
<a href="#">etra.com</a>	132,500 USD	2025-12-29	GoDaddy
<a href="#">diffs.com</a>	131,057 USD	2025-11-30	Sedo
<a href="#">intuitive.ai</a>	125,000 USD	2025-11-15	Afternic

Short, versatile .com domains also continued to attract serious investment. Sales like nolimit.com at \$723,000 and hsm.com at \$550,000 prove that concise, memorable names hold their value, especially when they fit real business needs. The same goes for nickel.com at \$325,000, a short, familiar word that builds immediate trust. We also saw some interesting niche demand. Gamefi.com and mayan.com both sold for \$300,000, pointing to interest in Web3 on one hand and timeless cultural names on the other. And while the metaverse hype has cooled, the sale of metawatch.com for just under \$290,000 suggests there's still some life in that adjacent space. Geographic and industry-specific domains had their moments, too. Indiana.com selling for nearly \$168,000 shows that strong regional names remain valuable for local businesses and institutions. Similarly, veramed.com going for \$167,500 highlights steady activity in sectors like health and science, where clarity and cred-

ibility are paramount. All in all, Q4 painted a picture of a mature market. The occasional seven-figure sale still happens at the very top, but the real engine is in the mid-six figures, where buyers find clear, practical value for their brands. The fundamentals haven't changed: quality sells, trends need substance, and a great domain name is still a smart long-term asset.

**"Interestingly, only a few years ago, Skins.com likely would not have achieved anywhere near its recent sale price. With the decline in adult-related domain valuations and reduced usage of the term "skin" in that context, its perceived value had softened. The resurgence of the term and game companies' ability to monetize it demonstrate how quickly domain values can shift—both positively and negatively—based on industry trends and cultural relevance."**

**Jeffrey Gabriel**

## Other Relevant .Com Sales (below 100,000\$)

While the seven-figure deals make the headlines, the real heartbeat of the domain market is often found below the \$100,000 mark. In Q4 2025, this range was buzzing with activity, giving us a clear look at where actual businesses are putting their money. Several sales hit that nice, round \$100,000 mark. Names like [healthstrategy.com](#) and [wonderly.com](#) reached six figures by focusing on clarity and brandability rather than chasing trends. One serves the corporate healthcare sector, while the other has a friendly, versatile sound perfect for consumer brands. The sale of [velocity.io](#) for the same price shows strong demand for punchy tech names beyond .com, and [cloudx.ai](#) proves a clean, modern AI name can still command a premium. Right below that threshold, we saw some interesting plays. [Metareels.com](#) at \$99,999 shows there's still curiosity around metaverse-related ideas, even if the spending is more cautious now. And [altitude.xyz](#) selling for \$99,888 reminds us that a powerful, single-word brand in a newer extension can hold serious value. Much of the list was filled with solid, traditional .coms. [Specialty.com](#) and [projectbritain.com](#), both around \$96,000, represent different ends of the spectrum – one broadly commercial, the other hyper-specific – but they both highlight that a clear, exact-match name hasn't lost its appeal. The \$95,000 sale of [lw.org](#) is a good example of how short, prestigious non-.com domains remain important for established institutions.

Brandable names continued to be reliable sellers. [Happymonster.com](#) (\$94,888), [magik.com](#) (\$90,000), and [tesoro.com](#) (\$91,000) all trade on memorability and feeling. They're not tied to any particular trend; they're just great, buildable names. A lot of these sales pointed to very practical uses. [Remoteyear.com](#) (\$88,321) fits the remote work and travel niche, and [tuning.com](#) (\$83,670) shows automotive and hobbyist terms are still strong. [Lonestar.bet](#) (\$80,000) pairs regional identity with the betting sector, and [123hao.com](#) (also \$80,000) reflects steady demand for numeric names that work well in Asian markets. Even AI names in this tier felt more

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
<a href="#">healthstrategy.com</a>	100,000 USD	2025-12-23	<a href="#">QualityNames</a>
<a href="#">wonderly.com</a>	100,000 USD	2025-12-12	<a href="#">Afternic</a>
<a href="#">velocity.io</a>	100,000 USD	2025-11-21	<a href="#">Private</a>
<a href="#">cloudx.ai</a>	100,000 USD	2025-11-12	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">metareels.com</a>	99,999 USD	2025-11-18	<a href="#">LabelCrate</a>
<a href="#">altitude.xyz</a>	99,888 USD	2025-11-03	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">projectbritain.com</a>	96,001 USD	2025-10-09	<a href="#">GoDaddy</a>
<a href="#">specialty.com</a>	96,000 USD	2025-12-16	<a href="#">GoDaddy</a>
<a href="#">lw.org</a>	95,000 USD	2025-11-09	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">happymonster.com</a>	94,888 USD	2025-10-02	<a href="#">DomainMarket.com</a>
<a href="#">tesoro.com</a>	91,000 USD	2025-10-31	<a href="#">NameJet</a>
<a href="#">magik.com</a>	90,000 USD	2025-11-23	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">remoteyear.com</a>	88,321 USD	2025-12-20	<a href="#">GoDaddy</a>
<a href="#">tuning.com</a>	83,670 USD	2025-10-26	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">lonestar.bet</a>	80,000 USD	2025-12-19	<a href="#">Afternic</a>
<a href="#">123hao.com</a>	80,000 USD	2025-11-23	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">solit.com</a>	80,000 USD	2025-11-17	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">soulmate.ai</a>	80,000 USD	2025-11-13	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">cocobet.com</a>	75,000 USD	2025-12-02	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">ado.ai</a>	75,000 USD	2025-11-09	<a href="#">Sedo</a>

measured. Sales like [soulmate.ai](#) (\$80,000) and [ado.ai](#) (\$75,000) suggest buyers are now looking for AI domains that are more about smart branding than just owning the keyword. All things considered, this part of the market feels stable and sensible. These aren't speculative buys; they're purchases by people who have a real use for the name. In many ways, this steady, mid-tier activity tells us more about the true health of the domain industry than the occasional multi-million dollar splash.

**There's a saying in golf: "Drive for show, putt for dough." The blockbuster sales highlighted earlier certainly generate headlines and capture attention, but it's the steady, consistent transactions that make up 99% of the market and sustain domain investing and brokerage as a career we genuinely enjoy. What stands out to me is the diversity of extensions and keyword categories represented in these sales. Not every transaction revolves around AI, tech, or Web3. While those sectors may dominate conversations at times, the broader market remains active and resilient. If one vertical slows, others inevitably step in to fill the gap, creating new opportunities across different industries and extensions.**

**Jeffrey Gabriel**

## Country codes

Even beyond the classic .com, this quarter showed real momentum in country code and specialty domain extensions. The AI space, in particular, continued to drive high-value sales, led by [wisdom.ai](#) at \$750,000 and [blockchain.ai](#) at \$405,000. It's clear that buyers see serious value in short, commanding names where the extension itself, like .ai, perfectly matches the industry.

The activity in AI didn't stop there. We saw a steady stream of other strong sales, including [leo.ai](#) at \$150,000, [intuitive.ai](#) at \$125,000, and [cloudx.ai](#) at \$100,000, all the way down to names like [accomplish.ai](#) at \$55,000. This range shows that buyers aren't just after generic keywords; they're looking for AI domains that feel like distinctive, buildable brands.

**It is certainly significant to see Google recognize .AI, .IO, and other ccTLDs not as geographically restricted domains, but as globally relevant and functional extensions—just as viable as .COM, .NET, or .ORG. As a result, we are witnessing continued growth in demand, sales volume, and widespread adoption of these extensions across industries and international markets.**

**Jeffrey Gabriel**

Interest was strong in other tech-focused extensions, too. The sale of [mb.io](#) for \$220,000, [velocity.io](#) for \$100,000, and [companies.io](#) for \$65,999 proves there's still healthy demand for short, modern names in spaces popular with startups and developers. Similarly, [nova.co](#)'s \$160,000 sale reinforces that .co has firmly established itself as a credible alternative for global businesses.

We also saw targeted demand in specific regions. In the UK, the dual sale of [seo.uk](#) and [seo.co.uk](#) for \$75,000 each highlights how local businesses still rely on their country's domain for trust and relevance. And in Australia, [ops.com.au](#) selling for nearly \$60,000 is a reminder that short, high-quality domains in local markets continue to hold significant value. The takeaway from this quarter is that these specialty extensions have fully arrived. Buyers are evaluating them with the same critical eye they use for .coms, focusing on names that are concise, brandable, and perfectly

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
<a href="#">wisdom.ai</a>	750,000 USD	2025-10-13	<a href="#">Grit Brokerage</a>
<a href="#">blockchain.ai</a>	405,000 USD	2025-10-12	<a href="#">Namecheap</a>
<a href="#">mb.io</a>	220,000 USD	2025-11-23	<a href="#">K-Ventures</a>
<a href="#">ai.tv</a>	200,000 USD	2025-10-16	<a href="#">Saw.com</a>
<a href="#">nova.co</a>	160,000 USD	2025-11-05	<a href="#">NamePros Lander</a>
<a href="#">leo.ai</a>	150,000 USD	2025-12-18	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">intuitive.ai</a>	125,000 USD	2025-11-15	<a href="#">Afternic</a>
<a href="#">velocity.io</a>	100,000 USD	2025-11-21	<a href="#">Private</a>
<a href="#">cloudx.ai</a>	100,000 USD	2025-11-12	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">specs.ai</a>	85,000 USD	2025-11-13	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">soulmate.ai</a>	80,000 USD	2025-11-13	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">ado.ai</a>	75,000 USD	2025-11-09	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">seo.uk</a>	75,000 USD	2025-10-12	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">seo.co.uk</a>	75,000 USD	2025-10-12	<a href="#">Sedo</a>
<a href="#">cursive.ai</a>	70,000 USD	2025-11-13	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">told.ai</a>	70,000 USD	2025-11-04	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>
<a href="#">companies.io</a>	65,999 USD	2025-11-23	<a href="#">Brands.io</a>
<a href="#">gandalf.ai</a>	65,000 USD	2025-11-13	<a href="#">Spaceship.com</a>
<a href="#">ops.com.au</a>	58,497 USD	2025-12-17	<a href="#">Afternic</a>
<a href="#">accomplish.ai</a>	55,000 USD	2025-11-19	<a href="#">Atom.com</a>

aligned with their field. The market is selective, but when the right name meets the right extension, it can absolutely justify a major investment.

**Over the past two years, we have completed countless ccTLD transactions, reflecting this broader shift. We are especially proud that this year we achieved the highest .TV sale in our company's history with [Ai.tv](#) in August, surpassing our previous record set with [Go.tv](#).**

**Jeffrey Gabriel**

# New gTLDs

The market for new domain extensions (like .xyz, .bet, or .finance) kept a steady pace in the last quarter of 2025. While the price tags don't usually hit .com levels, there's a clear pattern of demand, especially in areas like finance, crypto, and modern branding.

The standout here was rwa.exchange at \$135,000. A sale like that shows how a short, perfectly targeted name in a niche extension can still pull in serious money. Right behind it was altitude.xyz at just under \$100,000, proving that a strong, versatile brand name can attract buyers in creative or tech-forward industries.

There was also solid activity in betting and finance. Sales like lonestar.bet (\$80,000), auto.finance (\$45,000), and place.bet (around \$20,000) tell us that in specific verticals, buyers prioritize a name that screams what they do. They're often more interested in that instant clarity than in having a traditional .com.

I had rarely seen extensions like .Finance or .Exchange before, so witnessing sales of this magnitude under less popular NgTLDs is a strong signal. It demonstrates that these less popular extensions are gaining meaningful adoption, trust, and credibility with consumers and businesses alike.

Jeffrey Gabriel

The .xyz extension was particularly busy, with a string of sales including ala.xyz and surge.xyz (both \$50,000), trove.xyz (\$37,500), and own.xyz (\$30,000). These names, ranging from cool and brandable to clever and conceptual, are finding homes with startups, online communities, and digital projects. We also saw interest in other new extensions tied to emerging sectors. Genesis.bio went for \$30,000, pointing to steady demand in biotech. Names like titan.now (\$26,496) and mind.health (\$12,500) show practical use cases in media and wellness. And sales like onchain.one (\$25,000) indicate that crypto-related domains are still moving, albeit more carefully.

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
rwa.exchange	135,000 USD	2025-12-19	Spaceship.com
altitude.xyz	99,888 USD	2025-11-03	Spaceship.com
lonestar.bet	80,000 USD	2025-12-19	Afternic
ala.xyz	50,000 USD	2025-12-07	Sedo
surge.xyz	50,000 USD	2025-10-24	DomainAgents.com
auto.finance	45,000 USD	2025-10-03	Dynadot
trove.xyz	37,500 USD	2025-11-07	Private
blimp.xyz	32,000 USD	2025-12-08	Spaceship.com
genesis.bio	30,000 USD	2025-12-05	Atom.com
own.xyz	30,000 USD	2025-10-19	Sedo
society.xyz	29,888 USD	2025-11-15	Afternic
titan.now	26,496 USD	2025-12-23	DN.now / Atom.com
onchain.one	25,000 USD	2025-10-10	Afternic
bitcoin.site	24,999 USD	2025-11-01	Afternic
exe.xyz	24,888 USD	2025-11-08	Afternic
model.studio	24,000 USD	2025-11-02	Sedo
moolah.xyz	20,000 USD	2025-12-08	Afternic
place.bet	19,895 USD	2025-11-04	Afternic
bitcoin.talk	18,888 USD	2025-12-14	Sedo
mind.health	12,500 USD	2025-12-07	Afternic

I believe this is only the beginning. While we may continue to see occasional headline-making sales, I expect we will increasingly see steady transactions in the \$5,000–\$10,000 range on a consistent basis. Over the next five to ten years, as the generations who grew up with these “new” gTLDs move into leadership and decision-making roles, adoption will likely accelerate even further. At the same time, with the continued rise of AI and the potential for workforce restructuring at large companies, more individuals will need the ability to launch websites, web apps, and independent services quickly and affordably. As people look to differentiate themselves and stay relevant in the marketplace, demand for accessible, one-word domains will grow.

Jeffrey Gabriel

All in all, the new gTLD space feels pragmatic. Buyers are looking for names that are relevant, brandable, and ready to use. It's not about speculation; it's about finding a sharp, functional address for a specific idea or business. While they may not make the million-dollar headlines, the right names in these newer extensions are consistently proving their worth.

# Key Takeaways

The final quarter of 2025 solidified several clear trends, showing a domain market that is both mature and active.

## Premium .COM market dominance

The classic premium .com still rules at the very top, as proven by the multi-million dollar sales of anything.com and skins.com. These ultra-broad, versatile dictionary words remain the gold standard for investors and major brands seeking long-term security.

## AI branding and demand trends

Artificial intelligence was once again a dominant theme, with high-value sales like wisdom.ai and blockchain.ai leading the way. The trend is clear: buyers in this space are moving beyond generic keywords and are instead paying a premium for names that sound authoritative and brand-ready. This same demand for sharp, modern tech branding was seen in sales of names like mb.io and ve-

## Short .COM domain strength

Even outside the top tier, short and memorable .coms continued to perform strongly. Names like nolimit.com and nickel.com attracted significant investment, proving that brevity and clarity are timeless assets in a .com address.

## Mid-Tier domain market demand

The heart of the market, however, beats strongest in the sub-\$100,000 range. This is where practical, end-user demand is most visible. Sales like healthstrategy.com and wonderly.com show that businesses are consistently willing to invest in names that are either immediately descriptive or creatively brandable.

And where can entrepreneurs find reasonably priced, great domains today? Increasingly, the answer is new gTLDs. I don't spend much time following market headlines or daily news cycles. Instead, I stay focused on our own business—where we are, the progress we're making, and the challenges in front of us. That said, Saw.com is off to one of the strongest starts in our history. The volume of opportunities coming from qualified companies shows

## Methodology

All data presented in this report were derived from publicly available records on NameBio, the leading searchable database of historical domain name sales. NameBio aggregates verified sales across a wide range of venues, including Sedo, GoDaddy, Afternic, DropCatch, NameJet, and more. For this report, we focused on domain transactions recorded between October 1 and December 31, 2025. Sales were filtered by extension (e.g., .com, .ai, .xyz, .bet, etc.) and categorized into three main groups: legacy gTLDs, ccT-

## Country code domain growth

We're also seeing country-code and specialty extensions fully come into their own. Sales such as seo.uk and nova.co demonstrate that these are no longer niche options, but credible choices for regionally focused or globally-minded startups.

## New domain extensions selectivity

Activity in new extensions like .xyz and .exchange was more selective but still meaningful. Top sales like rwa.exchange and altitude.xyz highlight a market focused on relevance—buyers in specific sectors are choosing names that directly signal their purpose or embody a modern brand aesthetic.

## Domain aftermarket ecosystem strength

This diverse activity was supported by an equally diverse aftermarket. A healthy mix of private brokerages and major platforms like Sedo and Afternic facilitated deals, showing a robust and well-functioning ecosystem.

## Stable outlook for 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, the market's foundation feels stable. While the occasional blockbuster sale grabs headlines, the steady volume in the mid-tier confirms a balanced environment. The core drivers haven't changed: quality, brandability, and real-world utility continue to define value across every category

no signs of slowing down, and neither do we. The data and results shared by colleagues and even competitors further reinforce what we're seeing firsthand: there is significant opportunity still ahead for all of us in this industry. While 2026 may bring its share of challenges, the momentum we're experiencing suggests it has the potential to be another great year.

Jeffrey Gabriel

# Quarterly Report Q2 2025: Registrations

## Most Important gTLDs

**173.5 million**

total .com and .net domains by December 2025

**2 million (1.16%)**

Quarterly increase in domain registrations

By the end of December 2025, the combined domain base for .com and .net reached 173.5 million registrations, reflecting an increase of 2 million domains, or 1.16%, compared with 171.9 million at the end of September 2025. On a year-over-year basis, this total rose by 4.5 million, representing growth of approximately 2.66% from the 169 million regis-

**4.5 million (2.66%)**

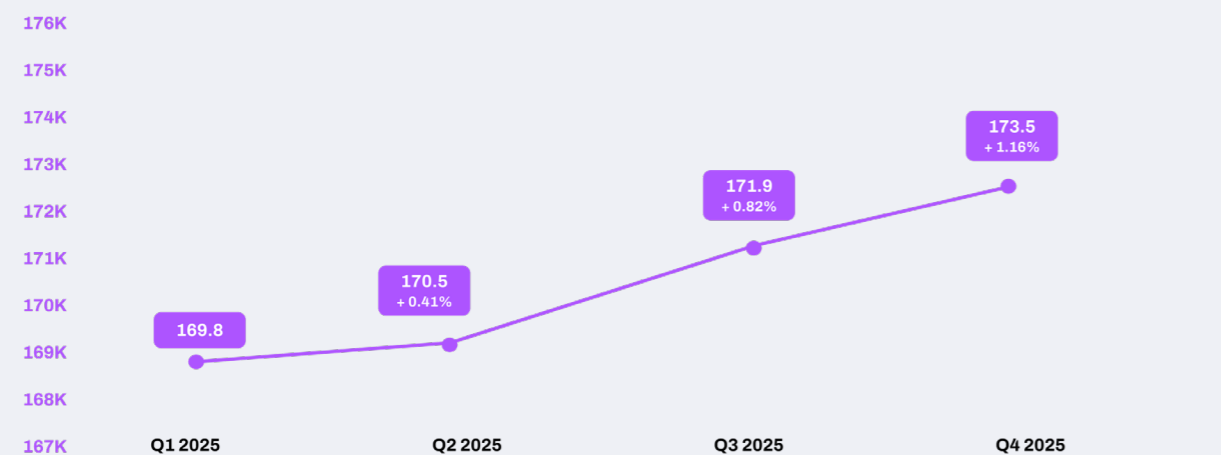
Year-over-year growth

**161 million**

Number of .com domain registrations

tered in December 2024. Looking at the breakdown, .com domains accounted for 161 million registrations, while .net domains totaled 12.5 million. New registrations for these two TLDs in Q3 2025 amounted to 10.7 million, up from 10.6 million in the previous quarter and 9.5 million in the same quarter of the prior year.

## Trend of the last four quarters Most Important gTLDs



## All TLDs

**386.9 million**

Total Domain Names In Q4 2025

**22.6 million**

Year-Over-Year Growth In Domain Registrations

In the final quarter of 2025, the total number of registered domain names across all top-level domains reached 386.9 million, up by 8.4 million from 378.5 million in the previous quarter, representing a 2.21% quarter-over-quarter increase. Compared to Q4 2024, when 364.3 million domains were registered, this marks a yearly growth of 22.6 million, equivalent to an annual growth rate of 6.2%.

## ccTLDs

**145.6 million**

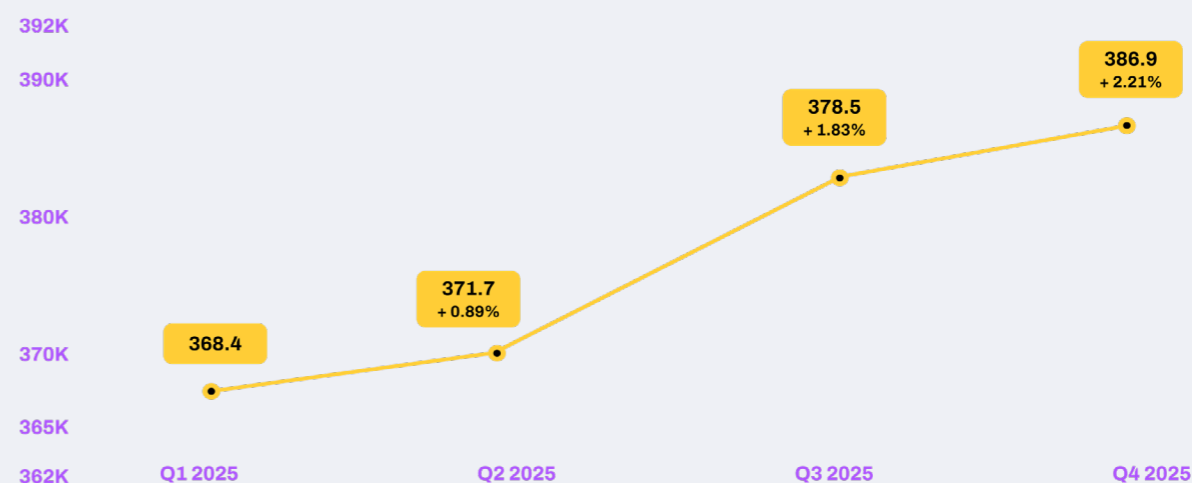
Total ccTLD Registrations In December 2025

**4.8 million**

Year-Over-Year Growth In ccTLD Registrations

By the close of December 2025, the total number of country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) registrations had reached 145.6 million. This represents a modest gain of 0.8 million, or 0.55%, compared with 144.8 million at the end of September 2025. Compared to December 2024, when 140.8 million ccTLDs were registered, the total grew by 4.8 million, reflecting a year-over-year increase of 3.4%.

## Trend of the last four quarters All TLDs



## Trend of the last four quarters ccTLDs



## ngTLDs

**47.8 million**

Total ngTLD Registrations In Q4 2025

**11 million**

Year-Over-Year Growth In ngTLD Registrations

At the close of Q4 2025, new generic top-level domains (ngTLDs) had reached 47.8 million registrations. This marks a quarterly increase of 4.9 million, or 11.4%, compared with 42.9 million in the previous quarter. Compared with Q4 2024, when 36.8 million ngTLDs were registered, the total grew by 11 million over the year, reflecting a 29.89% year-over-year rise.

## Other Legacy gTLDs

**20 million**

Total Legacy gTLD Registrations In Q4 2025

**2.4 million**

Year-Over-Year Growth In Legacy gTLDs

By the end of Q4 2025, legacy generic top-level domains (gTLDs), excluding .com and .net, reached a total of 20 million registrations. This represents an increase of 1.1 million, or 5.82%, compared with 18.9 million at the close of Q3 2025. On a year-over-year basis, these legacy gTLDs grew by 2.4 million registrations, marking a 13.63% rise from the 17.6 million recorded in the same quarter of 2024.

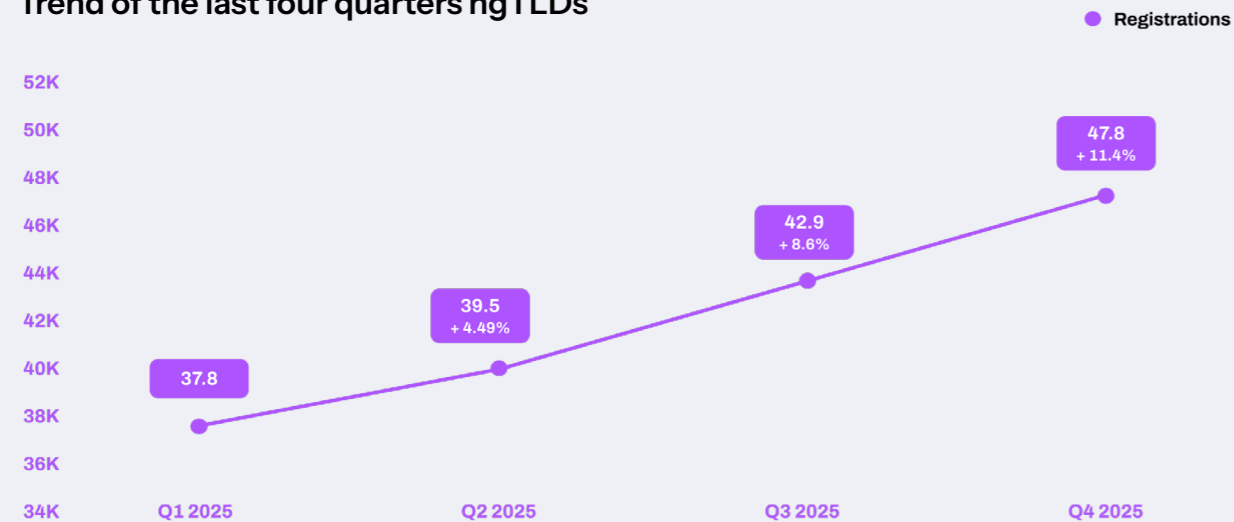
## Top 10 Largest TLDs by Number of Reported Domain Names

As of December 31, 2025, the ten largest TLDs by number of registered domains were .com, .de, .net, .org, .cn, .uk, .xyz, .nl, .ru, and .top. Collectively, these TLDs accounted for 66.6% of all domain registrations, out of a total of 386.3 million.



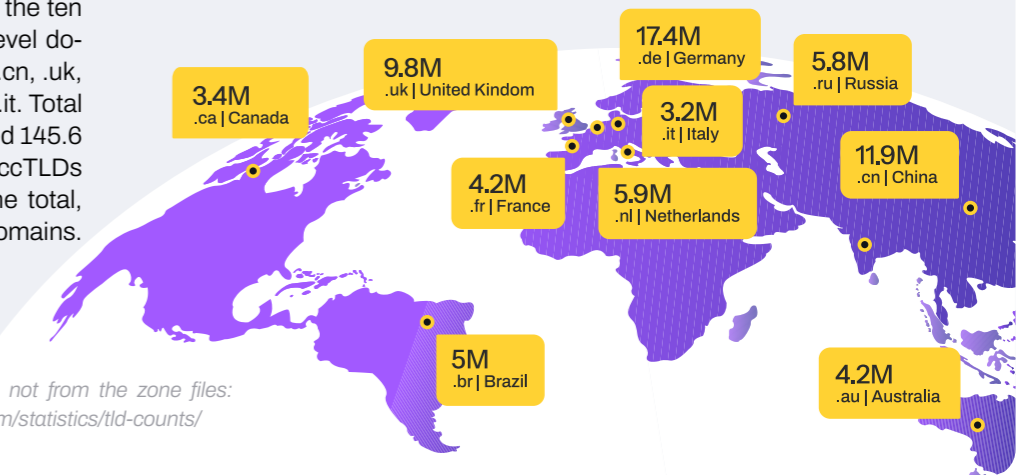
\* Taken from external sources, not from the zone files: <https://research.domaintools.com/statistics/tld-counts/>

## Trend of the last four quarters ngTLDs



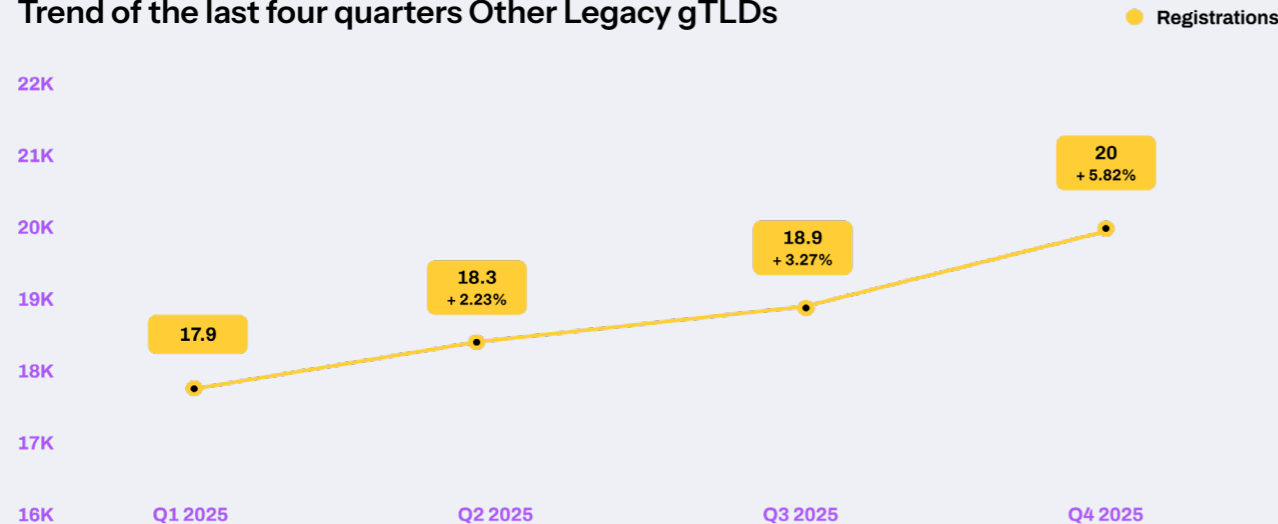
## Top 10 Largest ccTLDs by Number of Reported Domain Names\*

As of December 31, 2025, the ten largest country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs) were .de, .cn, .uk, .nl, .ru, .br, .fr, .au, .ca, and .it. Total ccTLD registrations reached 145.6 million, with these top ten ccTLDs representing 48.62% of the total, equivalent to 70.8 million domains.



\* Taken from external sources, not from the zone files: <https://research.domaintools.com/statistics/tld-counts/>

## Trend of the last four quarters Other Legacy gTLDs



## Top 10 Largest ngTLDs by Number of Reported Domain Names

As of December 31, 2025, the ten largest ngTLDs were .xyz, .top, .info, .shop, .online, .store, .site, .bond, .app, and .vip. By December 30, 2025, total ngTLD registrations reached 47.8 million, with the top ten ngTLDs accounting for 61.2% of the total, or 29.3 million domains.



# Key Takeaways

## Overall domain market growth and structure

By the end of Q4 2025, total domain registrations across all top-level domains reached 386.9 million, up 2.21% from the previous quarter and 6.2% year over year. The combined base of .com and .net remained dominant at 173.5 million, growing steadily both quarterly and annually, while ccTLDs reached 145.6 million, showing modest but consistent growth.

## High market concentration and industry balance

Market concentration remains high: the ten largest TLDs account for 66.6% of all domains, while the top ten ccTLDs represent almost half of ccTLD registrations. Overall, the domain industry demonstrates a mature but dynamic balance, with established domains maintaining dominance and ngTLDs driving the fastest growth.

## Rapid growth of new and legacy gtlds

The fastest expansion continues among new gTLDs, which rose to 47.8 million registrations, up 11.4% from Q3 and nearly 30% from the previous year. Legacy gTLDs excluding .com and .net also grew, reaching 20 million registrations.



# Conclusion

By the end of 2025, the domain name market shows steady growth and resilience. Established TLDs like .com and .net continue to dominate, while ngTLDs drive the fastest expansion, reflecting growing interest in new, creative

extensions. Country-code domains remain important, highlighting the value of national digital identities. Looking ahead, the market is expected to maintain steady growth, with legacy domains providing stability and new gTLDs offer-

ing diversification and innovation. Overall, the industry remains robust, with strong demand across both traditional and emerging domain spaces, suggesting continued expansion in the coming years.

## Methodology

The data presented in this report is based on domain registration statistics obtained from a combination of industry sources and internal analysis. Unless otherwise stated, the data comes from Freename's own queries on publicly available zone files, which are open re-

sources widely used across the industry to monitor domain registrations. This mixed-method approach ensures both accuracy and real-time relevance, allowing us to deliver up-to-date insights into the domain name ecosystem.

## About The Quarterly Report | Registrations

The Domain Standard Quarterly Report - Registrations provides an in-depth analysis of global domain registration trends across all top-level domains (TLDs) for each quarter. It offers insights into the performance of the most prominent generic TLDs (gTLDs), country-code TLDs (ccTLDs), and new generic TLDs (ngTLDs), providing a comprehensive view of the state of the domain name market.

This report is designed for investors, analysts, and industry professionals who require up-to-date data on the

registration patterns and growth trajectories of domain names. It tracks key metrics such as the total number of domain registrations, quarter-over-quarter growth, year-over-year changes, and the performance of individual TLDs. Furthermore, it highlights significant trends, emerging opportunities, and shifts in the market, making it a valuable resource for decision-makers in the domain and digital property sectors.

The report offers both a high-level overview of the global domain landscape and detailed insights into spe-

cific segments of the market, including the continuing dominance of .com and .net, the growing popularity of localized ccTLDs, and the explosive rise of ngTLDs. By analyzing these trends, the report aims to inform strategic decisions, uncover investment opportunities, and guide stakeholders through the ever-evolving domain name ecosystem.

## Learn more →

For comments or questions about The Domain Standard's Quarterly Report, email [matteo@freename.com](mailto:matteo@freename.com)



# Past, Present, Future: The Domain Calendar Unfolds

The first half of 2026 has been packed with influential gatherings shaping the future of domains, digital identity, Web3, and Internet infrastructure. From Consensus Hong Kong's exploration of blockchain, AI, and decentralized finance – highlighted in an in-depth recap by Habeba Elmahy (Social Media Lead at Freename) – to ICANN85's deep dive into DNS policy and governance in Mumbai, and CloudFest's focus on cloud computing and infrastructure in Germany, the past few months have offered insights, networking, and actionable strategies for industry professionals.

The quarter also highlighted regional innovation with Domain Summit Africa in Nairobi, organized by Helmut Meskonis (founder of Domain Summit and HostMaria), bringing together registries, registrars, policymakers, and technology providers to explore the growth of Africa's domain ecosystem and the integration of Web3 naming solutions into traditional DNS structures. A detailed recap of the event by Theo May (Business Development Associate at Freename) provides readers with a closer look at the conversations, presentations, and emerging opportunities from the African summit.

Looking ahead, the domain community has much to anticipate. Domainer Expo in Los Angeles, Nordic Domain Days in Stockholm, and ICANN86 in Seville promise to deliver further education, networking, and industry collaboration, with programs designed for both seasoned professionals and newcomers eager to explore domain investing, policy development, and emerging trends. Across all these gatherings, one theme remains clear: domains continue to serve as the foundational layer connecting people, technology, and digital innovation around the globe.

## Past Events



### Consensus

10-12 February 2026 | Hong Kong

For more info: <https://consensus-hongkong.coindesk.com/>

Consensus Hong Kong is a global conference focused on cryptocurrency, blockchain, Web3, and digital assets, organized by CoinDesk. The 11th edition of the event brought together industry leaders, developers, investors, regulators, and technology companies to discuss trends, innova-

tions, and policies shaping the future of the digital economy.

The 2026 edition took place from February 10 to 12, 2026 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hong Kong. It attracted around 11,000 attendees from more than 120 countries and featured over

350 speakers, including panel discussions, startup showcases, and networking events. Key topics included institutional adoption of crypto, stablecoins, decentralized finance (DeFi), tokenization, and the intersection of AI and blockchain.

This is where the future of technology felt surreal.

The venue had everyone. Robotics engineers, AI founders, blockchain architects, and exchange executives all gathered under one roof. Screens displayed token metrics while actual robots played with the crowds. Conversations flowed from regulation to artificial intelligence to digital identity. Consensus Hong Kong represented the entire next-gen ecosystem powering the internet's great future.

Seeing leaders like Richard Teng of Binance, Charles Hoskinson of Cardano, and Justin Sun of TRON in one place was a reminder that while crypto feels vast and global, its architects are also on the ground with everyone. They are not distant figures confined to the headlines. They are present and actively shaping the conversation. I would say it's one of

the great, unique features of this industry: founders becoming the face of the company.

What stood out most was how interconnected everything has become. Crypto no longer operates in isolation. AI companies discussed data infrastructure and automation. Robotics startups demonstrated how blockchain coordination could support real-world execution. Digital identity projects explored ownership beyond tokens, focusing on names, reputation, and privacy.

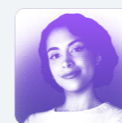
For the domain industry, this convergence carries important implications.

Domains are evolving beyond simple web addresses. They are becoming digital identity layers for AI bots and on-chain assets. As AI systems improve and blockchain networks expand, human-readable naming systems become more important. The

future of tech now appears more layered than before. Blockchain provides settlement and ownership. AI optimizes and decides. Robotics executes in the physical world. Domains function as the navigational layer connecting these systems to human users.

Consensus Hong Kong felt like a snapshot of an interconnected future. The conversations were less about short-term hype and more about infrastructure, compliance, and long-term sustainability.

If the past decade was defined by rapid invention, the next may be defined by interoperability. And within that landscape, domains will stand tall as the foundational layer, the silent infrastructure that gives everything else stability.



**Habeba Elmahy**

Social Media Lead at Freename





## ICann85 Mumbai Community Forum

7-12 March 2026 | Mumbai, India

For more info: <https://meetings.icann.org/en/meetings/icann85>

ICANN85 was the 85th public meeting of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), bringing together the global Internet governance community to discuss policies and technical coordination related to the Domain Name System (DNS) and the stable operation of the Internet. The event gathered representatives from governments, industry, civil society, and

the technical community to collaborate on key Internet infrastructure and policy issues. The meeting took place from 7-12 March 2026 at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai and was hosted by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI). It was organized as a hybrid event, allowing both in-person and virtual participation. The Community Forum included working sessions, cross-community

discussions, and plenary meetings covering topics such as DNS security, Internet governance, and preparations for the next round of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs). The event also provided opportunities for collaboration and policy development among ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees.



## Cloudfest 2026 Europa-park

22-26 March 2026 | Rust, Germany

For more info: <https://www.cloudfest.com>

CloudFest was an international conference focused on cloud computing, hosting, and internet infrastructure. The event brought together technology companies, service providers, developers, and industry leaders to discuss trends, innovations, and challenges

shaping the future of the internet and cloud services. The 2026 edition took place from March 23 to 26, 2026 at Europa-Park in Rust, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. It attracted more than 10,000 participants from over 80 countries and featured more than 250

speakers and 150 partners. The four-day event included keynote presentations, panel discussions, masterclasses, and a large exhibition showcasing cloud infrastructure, hosting services, cybersecurity, and related technologies.



## Key Event of the Quarter



## Domain Nairobi Summit Africa

February 23-24 2026 | Villa Rosa Kempinski, Nairobi, Kenya

For more info: <https://www.domainsummit.com/>

The Africa Domain Summit 2026 brought together stakeholders from across the domain name industry to discuss the growth and governance of the domain ecosystem in Africa. Participants included registry and registrar operators, policymakers, technology

providers, and members of the broader Internet governance community. Held on 8-9 April 2026 in Nairobi, the event featured keynote talks, panel discussions, and networking sessions focused on strengthening Africa's digital infrastructure. Key themes included

the adoption and promotion of country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), DNS security and resilience, regulatory developments, and strategies to expand Africa's role in the global domain name market.

Domain Summit Kenya showcased a vibrant cross section of the African domain name ecosystem, bringing together a majority of African ccTLD operators alongside registrars and DNS service providers. As one of the only Web3-native companies in attendance, Freename joined the conversation with a different, but complementary perspective on the future of domains.

In a session on the main stage, Freename's business development team, represented by Theo and Rey, presented how the company is build-

ing bridges between the traditional domain industry and Web3 naming. Rather than positioning Web3 as a disruptive replacement, the talk focused on creating synergies: enabling registries and registrars to extend their existing brands, infrastructure and expertise into blockchain-based domains.

Although the event itself was firmly rooted in the Web2 domain world, it was clear that Kenya, as well as Africa more broadly, is no stranger to web3 and digital assets. Many attendees shared a practical understanding of

how web3 works, which opened the door to thoughtful discussions on how Web3 domains might integrate with existing DNS models rather than compete with them.

Beyond the summit, Nairobi and Kenya left a strong impression: an incredibly welcoming environment, coupled with visible, rapid technological development. As one of Africa's fastest growing technology hubs, Kenya feels like a natural place for the conversation about the convergence of domains and Web3 to continue and deepen in the years ahead.



**Theo May**

Business Development Associate | Freename



# What's to Come?

## Domainer Expo

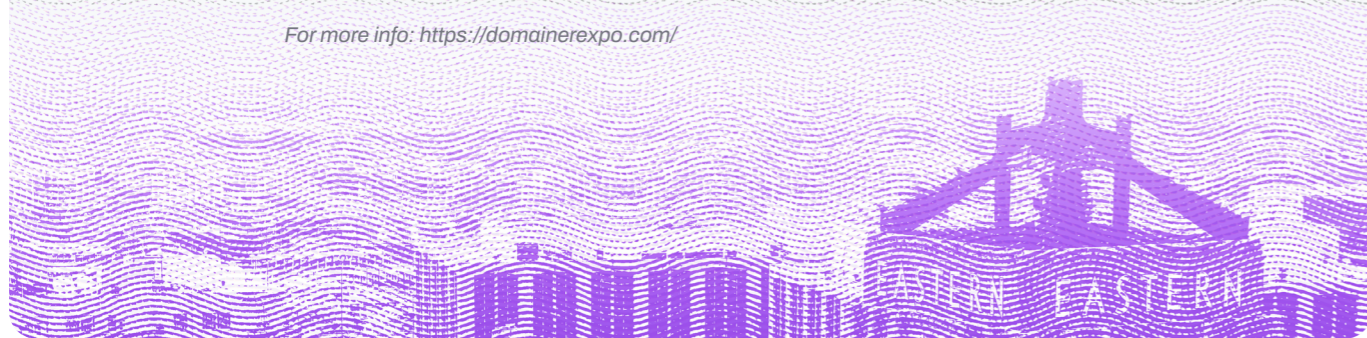
April 16-17, 2026 | Los Angeles, California



Domainer Expo 2026 will be the fourth edition of a major annual conference for the global domain name industry, bringing together investors, entrepreneurs, developers, and service providers. Over two days, the event will feature keynote presentations, panel discussions, and workshops on domain investing, portfolio development, monetization strategies, and emerging industry trends.

Attendees will have opportunities for networking with peers and experts, exploring an exhibition area with tools, marketplaces, and services, and gaining insights into best practices and innovations shaping the domain market. The conference aims to support both seasoned investors and newcomers in building knowledge, expanding portfolios, and connecting with the broader domain name community.

For more info: <https://domainerexpo.com/>



## Nordic Domain Days

May 24-26, 2026 | Clarion Hotel Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden

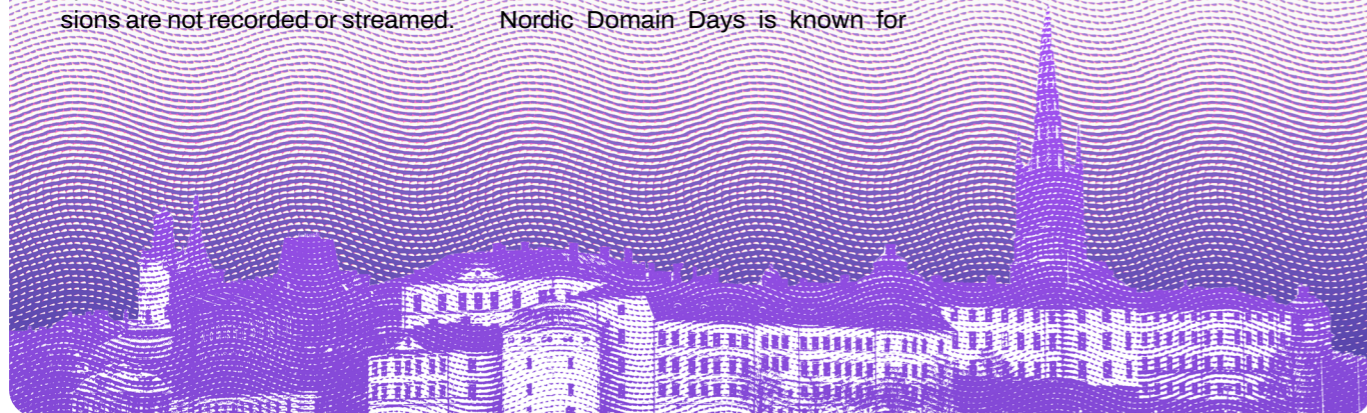
For more info: <https://nordicdomaindays.com>

Nordic Domain Days 2026 will be a major international conference for the domain name and DNS industry, designed to bring together registries, registrars, resellers, investors, hosting and service providers, security experts, policy leaders, and technical professionals for three days of focused content and high-value networking. The event emphasizes live, face-to-face interaction where all speakers present on stage and sessions are not recorded or streamed.

The program will include industry keynotes, expert sessions on market trends, DNS and security, policy and governance, business growth strategies, and technical tracks such as DNSSEC and automation. In addition to structured presentations, the event will feature workshops, roundtables, dedicated networking spaces, and social gatherings that foster collaboration across the global domain community.

Nordic Domain Days is known for

its community-focused atmosphere and has evolved into a truly international event while maintaining its Nordic roots. Attendees will have opportunities to connect with peers and thought leaders, exchange insights on emerging industry issues such as new gTLD processes, European policy developments, and AI impacts on domain business, and build meaningful professional relationships.



## ICANN86 Policy Forum

June 8-11, 2026 | FIBES Conference and Exhibition Centre, Seville, Spain



For more info: <https://meetings.icann.org/en/meetings/icann86>

ICANN86 Policy Forum will be one of the major public meetings organized by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, focused on the development and discussion of ongoing policy work related to the Domain Name System, Internet governance, and multistakeholder coordination. This four-day event will bring together representatives from registries, registrars, resellers, policymakers, technical operators, civil society, and other stakeholders to advance ICANN's policy-devel-

opment processes, outreach efforts, and community dialogue.

The meeting will be held in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and virtual participation, and all sessions will take place during regular working hours in Seville. Attendees can expect focused policy sessions led by ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees, with opportunities to engage in structured discussions on issues such as DNS security, governance frameworks, and emerging technical and policy

challenges affecting the global Internet.

ICANN86 will also include community-focused programs such as the NextGen@ICANN initiative for university students and the ICANN Fellowship Program, which provide structured learning and participation opportunities for emerging leaders in Internet governance, regardless of whether they attend in person or online.



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