

# DS | THE DOMAIN STANDARD



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Calendar events

FEATURE INTERVIEW:  
WHY NAIROBI, WHY NOW:  
HELMUTS MESKONIS  
ON BUILDING DOMAIN  
SUMMIT AFRICA

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NEWS FROM THE MARKET  
COMMENTARY  
BY REYNARD RION

& More

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Innovation & Technology  
THE ENDURING POWER  
OF DOMAINS  
Jothan Frakes

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The Voice of the Quarter  
MIKE MANN: RISK,  
RELENTLESSNESS, AND  
THE LONG GAME OF .COM

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Feature interview  
ART IN THE AGE OF WEB3:  
CHIKAI ON DOMAINS AND  
DIGITAL EXPRESSION

# .ART: FROM DOMAIN TO DIGITAL MOVEMENT

# 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 block-chain-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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# Art, Identity, and the Persistent Power of Naming

Art has always named the world in new ways. Today, as digital culture accelerates through Web3, artists, technologists, and domain innovators are redefining how identity is shaped online. At the core of this transformation lies the domain name, a deceptively simple tool that continues to anchor creativity, ownership, and presence across the evolving internet. This issue of The Domain Standard places this intersection at its center.

We begin with Jeff Sass's feature, ".ART: From Domain to Digital Movement," celebrating the tenth anniversary of .ART. What launched in 2016 as a bold new top-level domain has grown into a global cultural ecosystem of more than 300,000 creators, institutions, and visionaries. Our 'Quarterly Focus' continues with an in-depth conversation with Chikai, the Japanese-American filmmaker and artist whose work in "cinematic AI" explores emotion, time, and narrative through generative technologies.

In this edition's 'Voice of the Quarter,' we turn to industry veteran Mike Mann, whose interview traces an extraordinary entrepreneurial journey: from being kicked out of school at 15 to building market-shaping companies like DomainMarket.com, SEO.com, and Phone.com. Mann reflects candidly on risk, innovation, and the future of the premium .com landscape.

Our 'Innovation & Technology' section features "Jothan Frakes' essay "The Enduring Power of Domains". Far from a simple commentary, Frakes offers a sweeping exploration of why the Domain Name System – born in the early 1980s – remains one of the most durable technologies of the internet. This issue's Who's Who section turns the spotlight on the people shaping the domain industry from the inside out. From Lars Steffen of Eco (Association of the Internet Industry) to the CEO of InterNetX Elias Rendón Benger, this collection brings together leaders from registries, investing, advocacy, and brand strategy. Their profiles offer a closer look at the individuals whose decisions, ideas, and experience influence how the naming landscape evolves. Our Quarterly Reports analyze the top aftermarket sales of Q3 2025, notable sub-\$100k transactions, new gTLD activity, ccTLD performance, and broader registration trends. This issue's aftermarket report is further enriched by Reynard Rion's commentary, offering expert perspective on the forces shaping valuation and buyer behavior. As always, these numbers provide crucial context for understanding not only where value concentrates today, but how the naming landscape continues to shift under cultural and economic pressures.

The 'Calendar Events' section highlights major gatherings from October 2025 onward and previews what lies ahead in the global domain ecosystem. This includes our featured interview with Helmut Meskonis on Domain Summit Africa, offering insight into one of the industry's most dynamic and rapidly expanding regions.

Across these contributions, a theme emerges: whether in the hands of artists, entrepreneurs, or technologists, the domain name continues to function as one of the most meaningful tools of digital identity and expression. It is a place to build, to create, and to endure, long after platforms and trends fade. Welcome to Issue 03 of The Domain Standard, where art meets infrastructure, and naming becomes a new form of authorship. We hope you'll enjoy the read!

*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





# .ART: From Domain to Digital Movement

2026 marks the 10th Anniversary for .ART Registry. When .ART launched, it wasn't merely offering a new web extension - it was inviting the art world to define itself in the digital age. The first adopters understood instinctively that a name online could hold as much meaning as a name on a gallery wall. Institutions like the Marina Abramović Institute (mai.art), the Louvre (louvre.art), and Fondation Louis Vuitton (fondationlouisvuitton.art) joined from the outset, recognizing that digital identity could itself be an act of authorship. Whitewall (whitewall.art), a magazine dedicated to contemporary art and culture, was among the first to claim its space, as were innovators like Pixar (pixar.art), Facebook (facebook.art), and Amazon (amazon.art) - companies whose creative influence extends far beyond technology. Later came Porsche (porsche.art), which turned its domain into a platform for artistic collaboration, proving that a domain could be more than a destination - it could be a statement of vision and values.

Today, .ART has evolved into a thriving ecosystem of more than 300,000 artists, creatives, and institutions worldwide - a living archive of contemporary culture in all its forms. The diversity of its community mirrors the diversity of art itself: from celebrated figures like Sharon Stone (sharonstone.art), El Anatsui (elanatsui.art), Shantell Martin MBE (shantellmartin.art), and Sophia Wallace (sophiawallace.art) to pioneering digital creators exploring the frontiers of technology and creativity like Refik Anadol (DataLand.art).



**Jeff Sass (.ART)**  
Author

CMO at .ART Domains. With a rich 40-year background in tech and entertainment, including co-founding and serving as CMO at .CLUB Domains, Jeff brings a wealth of experience as a creative professional. His extensive career includes writing and producing for film and television, as well as authoring a published book.

## The Technology Beneath the Canvas

Before there was blockchain, there were WHOIS records - a quietly powerful system of traceable digital ownership that predated decentralization. Building on that foundation, .ART developed Digital Twin, a patented technology that repurposes the Domain Name System into a secure, decentralized archive for cultural assets.

Through Digital Twin, each .ART domain can carry verified information about a physical or digital artwork or object directly within its infrastructure. Provenance, authorship, and metadata no

longer depend on third-party databases or disappearing web pages - they live permanently within the domain record itself. Using an international standard developed by the J. Paul Getty Trust, creators can generate a trusted "twin" of any object, embedding details such as title, dimensions, and ownership history, or linking it to blockchain certificates.

Unlike typical websites, these records exist independently of hosting, ensuring that even if a webpage changes or vanishes, the verified identity of the artwork remains intact. Protected by

international patents and authorized by ICANN, .ART is the only domain registry in the world permitted to extend WHOIS domain fields in this way. In effect, names in the .ART zone can become a vessel of authenticity - an art object's permanent digital home.

This foundation set the stage for some of .ART's most visionary collaborations.

**"Names in the .ART zone can become a vessel of authenticity - an art object's permanent digital home."**

## Collaborations that Redefined the Digital Exhibition

When Ars Electronica (ars.electronica.art) - the Linz-based institution synonymous with the digital avant-garde - sought to expand its reach during pandemic lockdowns, .ART's Digital Twin technology provided the solution. The result was the Ars Electronica .ART Gallery, the festival's first large-scale online exhibition platform, where artists could certify and present their works using .ART's infrastructure. More than 3,000 global visitors joined the inaugural edition, proving that art and technology don't just coexist - they coevolve.

That same year, the Contemporary and Digital Art Fair (cadaf.art) moved entirely online, with .ART as its innovation partner. Exhibiting artists authenticated their works through Digital Twin, reinforcing .ART's mission to bring trust, transparency, and permanence to the digital art ecosystem.

At the 14th Shanghai Biennale in 2023, .ART served as sponsor and launched CosmosCinema.art - the exhibition's official digital home - extending the Power Station of Art program into a weekly online series of screenings and discussions that link cinema history with cosmic exploration. Built around the "Cosmos Cinema" theme of light, shadow, and time, the

site presented rotating film segments with recorded introductions and context, turning each release into a curated learning experience. The partnership underscored .ART's role as cultural infrastructure: giving a major biennale a living, public portal while advancing dialogue on our place in the universe and the narratives that shape it.



Ars.Electronica →

## Expanding into Web3

If Digital Twin represents .ART's archival backbone, Web3 compatibility marks its expansion into a fully connected digital universe. After launching .ART ENS name compatibility in 2023, in 2024, .ART introduced gasless Web3 integration, enabling creators to link their domains to crypto wallets or decentralized storage at no extra cost - making .ART one of the

first domain zones to bridge traditional DNS and blockchain seamlessly. With a few simple steps, a .ART domain can now serve both as a standard website and a Web3 identifier - connecting to crypto wallets, decentralized apps, or IPFS-hosted content. The result is a new model of authorship: one name serving as both address and asset. A musician, film-

maker, or painter can showcase, own, and monetize their work within a single identity, independent of platforms.

In many ways, this development circles back to .ART's founding principle: giving creators autonomy over their digital presence. Only now, that autonomy extends beyond Web2 into the decentralized, interoperable world of Web3.



# A New Home for the Digital Artist

That vision came to life with .ART's acquisition of HUG, the inclusive artist platform co-founded by Randi Zuckerman and Debbie Soon. Initially launched as a partnership, the collaboration evolved into an acquisition in December 2024 - uniting HUG's vibrant global community of 35,000 artists with .ART's tools for identity, provenance, and professional growth.

Known for its open calls and collaborations with Sotheby's, Tezos, and other cultural leaders, HUG is a creative hub where artists, collectors, and curators meet. Through the merger, every HUG creator received a complimentary .ART domain and access to ID.art PRO, enabling them to issue Certificates of Authenticity and Digital Twins for their works. The result is a seamless bridge between community and infrastructure - one where visibility meets verification.



Hominis | Hands of Man by Chikai - Detail

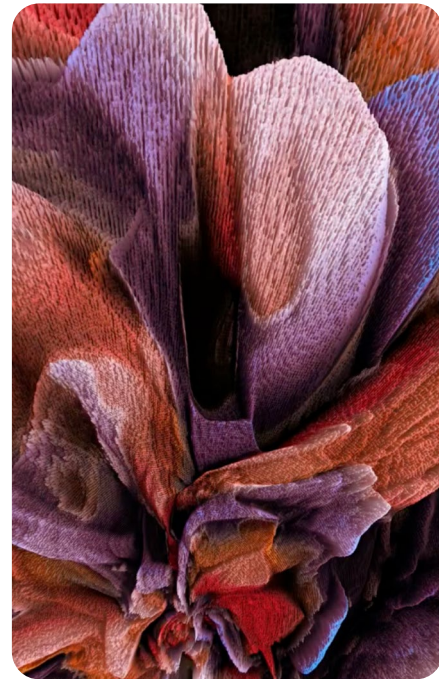
Among these creators are artists shaping the language of digital art itself. **Chikai (chikai.art)**, co-creator of Google Earth, merges science and cinema through "Cinematic AI," crafting surreal, time-bending narratives that explore the human condition.



**Chikai**  
Artist  
co-creator of Google Earth



Hominis | Hands of Man by Chikai



Earthen Vessels by Cromwell

**Cromwell (cromwell-zla.art)**, a Venezuelan generative artist, transforms architecture into living light displays, projecting her rhythmic, color-driven works from Times Square to Taipei. Guided by her mantra "art with a reason to exist," she brings intention and soul to code.



**Cromwell**  
Visual Artist  
& Motion Designer

# Bridging Worlds: Medina

Equally emblematic of .ART's ethos is Medina (medina.art) - an artist of connections between mediums, worlds, and senses. Trained in the tactile crafts of painting, stained glass, and sculpture, she now extends her practice into the digital realm, where algorithms become poetic extensions of her hand.

As the official artist for .ART, Medina embodies the registry's Healing Power of Art Initiative, which funds art therapy education and projects worldwide. Her journey spans continents and mediums: from Berlin's TIME TO ART, where her generative series replaced advertising billboards with digital poetry, to her metaverse

solo show From Canvas to Code, pairing her oil paintings with AI reinterpretations. Her works have also reached COP29 in Baku, Art Basel Miami, Art Basel Hong Kong, and exhibitions in Seoul, Taipei, and Dublin, where augmented reality allowed paintings to transform before the viewer's eyes.

Across all these contexts, Medina's art insists that technology, when guided by emotion and purpose, can amplify empathy and reframe healing for the digital age.



**Medina**  
Multidisciplinary  
artist



Digital Billboards by Medina, Times Square

# Platforms of Innovation

Beyond individual creators, the .ART ecosystem connects to a constellation of platforms shaping digital culture. **DATALAND.art**, founded by **Refik Anadol**, is the world's first museum of AI arts - a living neural space where data, nature, and algorithmic imagination converge. **EXPANDED.ART** continues this curatorial momentum, offering a marketplace and publishing platform that legitimizes digital art through thoughtful curation and scholarship.



**Refik Anadol**  
Media artist and pioneer in  
the aesthetics of data.



Unsupervised, Machine Hallucinations  
by Refik Anadol

Another important voice in the .ART community is CIRCA (circa.art), the public art platform known for transforming global cityscapes into open-air galleries. Best recognized for its daily artist commissions broadcast on London's Piccadilly Lights - and since expanded to cities including Seoul, Lagos, New York, and Tokyo - CIRCA merges art, activism, and public space at a monumental scale.

Through its #CIRCAECONOMY initiative, it reinvests proceeds from print sales into funding future commissions and supporting social causes, creating a circular model where culture directly fuels community impact. With artists like Ai Weiwei, Marina Abramović (herself a .ART adopter with MAI.art) and David Hockney participating, CIRCA epitomizes how digital infrastructure and physical urban screens can work together to broaden access to contemporary art and amplify urgent cultural conversations.

Will capitalism  
have an end?

81 QUESTIONS by Ai Weiwei



**Ai Weiwei**  
Contemporary artist, doc-  
umentarian, and activist.

A vibrant force within the .ART ecosystem, WoW.art reimagines what a digital community can be. Born from the groundbreaking World of Women NFT movement, WoW has evolved into a global sanctuary for learning, growth, and purpose-driven creativity. Guided by CEO Vi Powils, the platform blends Web3 innovation with a human-centred ethos,

building an ecosystem where belonging, personal development, and collective empowerment are core values. Its milestones - from a blue-chip NFT sell-out in 2021 and a record-breaking Christie's sale to cultural collaborations with Madonna, FC Barcelona, Billboard, and Reese Witherspoon - mark WoW as one of the most influential cultural engines in Web3. Today, WoW.art stands not just as a community hub, but as a blueprint for how digital identity, creativity, and shared ambition can move. Another key innovator within the .ART ecosystem is Pika (pika.art), a rapidly growing AI video platform that has redefined what it means to create moving images. Founded by Stanford-trained researchers Demi Guo and Chenlin Meng, Pika empowers anyone - from casual creators to film professionals - to transform text, images, and existing footage into cinematic, anime, or 3D-style videos through intuitive generative tools. In just its first six months, the platform attracted over half a million users and secured \$55 million in funding to expand its vision of democratizing professional-quality video production. By lowering the barriers to visual storytelling, Pika extends .ART's mission into the realm of motion - giving every creator the power to direct their imagination.

"Names in the .ART zone can become a vessel of authenticity - an art object's permanent digital home."

# The Future of Art & Technology

Looking forward, .ART continues to honor the innovators shaping tomorrow's cultural landscape through the Digital Innovation in Arts & Culture Award (DIAC). Now in its eighth year, the award - founded with GP Bullhound's Allstars - celebrates real-world impact across arts, heritage, education, and emerging media.

Finalists such as Verisart, Artivive, ArtCentrica, ArtCrush, and WHATCLASS have shown how technology can make culture more transparent, interactive, and accessible. Each edition of DIAC charts a new frontier where art, AI, and infrastructure

converge, proving that technology, when guided by creativity and ethics, deepens rather than dilutes cultural experience. The award's juries have included leaders from MoMA, the Getty Museum, Sotheby's, the American Alliance of Museums, GoDaddy, and the Shanghai Biennale - a cross-sector dialogue that keeps DIAC's vision grounded, credible, and forward-thinking.

Equally aligned with this vision is the AI Hokusai ArtTech Research Foundation (aihokusai.art), whose recent publication AI Hokusai: Reflections on Art,

AI and Legacy explores how artists use artificial intelligence not merely as a tool but as a collaborator - a generator, analyst, and even a reimagined spirit of Hokusai himself. Combining research, residencies, and virtual exhibitions, the project reframes authorship and heritage in the digital age. A collaboration between .ART and AI Hokusai is now in development, continuing this shared pursuit of understanding how technology can both preserve and propel creativity.



# Art That Heals and Endures

Even as .ART ventures further into AI, Web3, and blockchain, its mission remains rooted in the human experience. Through the Healing Power of Art Initiative, .ART channels its technological innovation toward emotional restoration and community well-being. As a cornerstone of this initiative, .ART pledges a portion of all domain sales to a scholarship endowment supporting graduate fellow-

ships for students in the Art Therapy Program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. This long-term commitment represents the first step in a broader mission to advance the field of art therapy worldwide. In collaboration with GWU and other institutional partners, .ART is developing a series of virtual programs and dialogues that explore how creativity fosters resilience, empathy, and

recovery. Few stories embody this mission more powerfully than that of Sharon Stone (sharonstone.art) - an artist, advocate, and early adopter whose creative journey transformed personal adversity into advocacy for healing through art. Her example serves as a reminder that art's greatest strength lies not only in innovation, but in its enduring capacity to connect, restore, and uplift.

In less than a decade, .ART has evolved from a domain extension into a digital movement - a global stage where creativity meets infrastructure, and where technology safeguards legacy instead of erasing it. From AI-driven museums to metaverse exhibitions, from decentral-

ized provenance to the healing power of expression, .ART continues to build the bridge between art's timeless essence and its infinite digital future.

## Quarterly focus Interview

## Art in the Age of Web3: Chikai on Domains and Digital Expression

Chikai's path from biomedical engineering to co-creating elements of what became Google Earth might seem unconventional, but it is precisely this spirit of curiosity and experimentation that has guided him into the world of Web3. An early explorer of NFTs, generative art, and blockchain domains, Chikai has carved a space where technology,

creativity, and ownership intersect. In this interview, he reflects on how digital domains like chikai.eth have become extensions of his artistic identity, how AI and generative art are reshaping creative practice, and why artists must actively navigate Web1, Web2, and Web3 to fully claim their presence in the digital world.



### Chikai

Chikai is a Japanese-American artist and filmmaker whose work explores the human condition through what he calls "cinematic AI"-crafting deeply layered narratives with generative AI models and workflows. Blending surreal juxtapositions with expansive notions of time, his art probes the boundaries between technology and emotion. His piece Anomalia was a finalist for the 2025 Still Image Lumen Prize, recognized for its innovative use of AI in visual storytelling. Chikai's work has been exhibited internationally in Norway, London, Rome, Dubai, and New York City. His short film Saving Nine opened the inaugural Napa Valley Asian American Film Festival. Beyond his cinematic and AI creations, he is the creator of the generative art project Circle of Frens and the founder of MONOLITH Gallery, a digital space that houses his personal art collection and curatorial projects. A pioneer at the intersection of art and technology, Chikai is also the co-creator of Google Earth and holds a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering-bridging scientific precision with creative exploration to push the limits of digital art.

**"Chikai's work explores how generative AI can shape cinematic narratives, blending scientific precision with creative exploration to push the limits of digital art."**

Chikai, let's start from the beginning. You have such a unique background: from biomedical engineering to helping create what became Google Earth. What was your entry point into the Web3 world? How did you even get here?

I was in the process of shutting down my last start up and was looking for something fun to learn about and stumbled upon NFTs. I had never bought any crypto or been part of that world and I found it crazy that Nyan Cat had sold for a half-million

dollars. I started to learn more about it and got pulled into the NFT art community. I had never seen or been part of such a vibrant group of creative people and so I went deep down the rabbit hole and have been here ever since.

I read that buying chikai.eth was your first step into Web3. I'm curious: what does owning a Web3 domain mean to you personally and as an artist? Is it just a digital handle, or does it feel like part of your artistic identity? As an artist, to how many use you put your Web3 domain so far?

I've been part of the tech world for a long time and I've always been early to try out new products. During the Web2 era, I would sign up early just so that I could claim my name as my handle, so when I first dove into Web3 I bought my name immediately, so that I could claim it. Initially it wasn't that useful, but over time ENS has become widely supported across platforms so became an easy way to enter and share my wallet address.

In your view, can a domain itself be art? I mean, could we start thinking of domains as creative spaces, or even as artistic statements in their own right?

Yes, for sure. There are artists like Rafaël Rozendaal who have been selling websites as art for many years, so it is definitely possible and is already being done.

A lot of people still see AI art as something experimental or even "less real." You've talked about cinematic AI as a genuine artistic medium. How do you respond to that skepticism? And what kind of future do you imagine for AI-based art in the Web3 world?

For any truly ground breaking technology, it is healthy and natural for there to be skepticism. I think the key is dialogue with an authentic desire to understand each other and where each of us are coming from. Technology is not inherently good or evil, but the intent behind its use can be. The intent for now comes from humans and what humans want to do with technology, in this case AI, and I think AI-based art will likely be a reflection of that human intent and the impact of it.

**"AI-based art will likely be a reflection of that human intent and the impact of it."**

One of your most interesting projects is Circle of Frens (which our readers can see here: <https://circleoffrens.xyz/>). It's a fascinating exploration of the potential of generative art, where you've created concentric circle compositions inspired by the color gradients of various artists' works. What inspired you to embark on this project, and how do you see it contributing to the evolving dialogue between AI-generated art and traditional artistic practices?

Circle of Frens is actually an older project, created before I really thought of myself as an artist. It was an homage to all of my favorite artist friends in the Web 3 space and I did it more out of a love for the art than to create art itself. But it was a huge hit and the first one sold out in minutes, so fast that I thought I had been hacked, but luckily I wasn't and the project had somehow been organically discovered. The first season was just 500 pieces, the second season was 10K pieces, which was a whole different beast. I think fondly on this project and want to return to it someday when the time is right.

As to how it relates to my AI-generated art, I actually have not thought about it that since Circle of Frens was such a unique and singular phenomenon very early on in my journey as an artist. I do see elements of generative art in my most recent project, Latent Space Terminal, but it is more an unconscious influence than a conscious one

Here at The Domain Standard, we think a lot about how domains, identity, and ownership intersect. From your experience, how should artists be thinking about their digital presence, especially when their name, their art, and their "on-chain identity" are all practically all tied together?

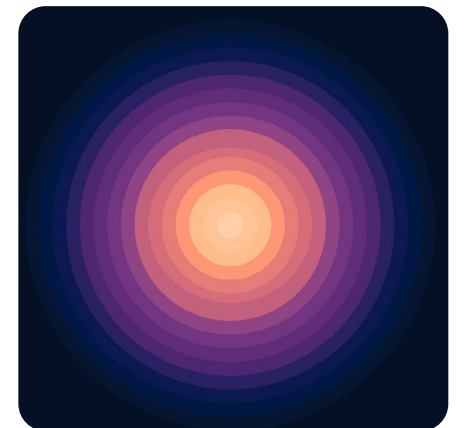
I think Web 3 is not a replacement for Web 2 or Web 1, but they all build upon each other and you need all of them to succeed in the digital world. I personally think every artist should have their own website on their own domain, it's the one place where they have complete control of everything on the site. Web 2 allows you to connect and build upon the social layer built by platforms like Instagram, X, and TikTok. You have less

control over your profile, but the network is the key value in that case. Then Web 3 adds the layer of ownership that had never existed before, whether that be currency or digital assets. They all work together and I do think you need to to manage all of them actively.

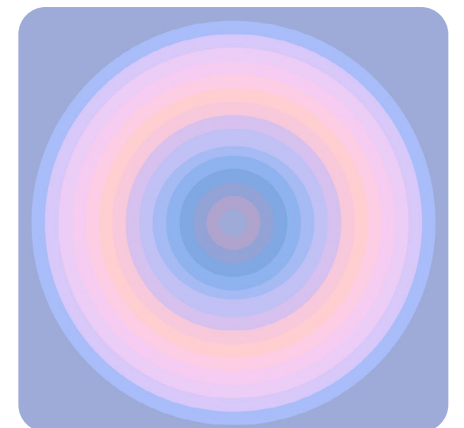
**"I personally think every artist should have their own website on their own domain - it's the one place where they have complete control."**



Circle of Frens by Chikai



Richard Zheng | Circle of Frens by Chikai



Pastel Papi | Circle of Frens by Chikai



# Mike Mann: Risk, Relentlessness, and the Long Game of .COM

Few figures have left a mark on the domain name industry as deep and as enduring as Mike Mann. His story is often told as a classic tale of improbable success: expelled from school, forced out of his home by the age of fifteen, and written off early as “practically the least likely to succeed.” Yet that difficult beginning became the forge in which Mann’s entrepreneurial temperament was formed. Decades later, he stands as one of the most influential domain investors in the world, having built, scaled, and sold a long series of companies at the intersection of technology, data, and digital assets.

For many, Mann is synonymous with DomainMarket.com, a platform that has supplied premium domain names to companies across virtually every sector of the global economy. But his career reaches far beyond domaining alone. From developing early internet service businesses to building operating companies such as SEO.com and Phone.com, Mann has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to spot value ahead of the curve and to turn abstract digital property into scalable, revenue-generating enterprises.

In an industry often split between speculation and development, Mann has comfortably inhabited both worlds. He has bought and sold domains by the hundreds of thousands, while selectively transforming a small number of names into full-fledged businesses with staff, infrastructure, and exit strategies. At the same time, he has remained outspoken about what he sees as the enduring fundamentals of the market, consistently arguing that the very best .com domains represent a unique “flight to quality” that newer extensions and experimental models have yet to match.

In this conversation, Mann reflects on the formative role of early hardship, the discipline required to survive repeated risk-taking, and the mistakes that quietly shape long-term success. He shares his views on the future of premium domains, emerging experiments in domain finance, and the practical advice he would offer to newcomers entering an increasingly competitive field. What emerges is not a story of overnight success, but of sustained intensity: a career built on focus, scale, and an unwavering belief in the long game.



## Mike Mann

CEO of DomainMarket.com

Mike is the founder of several successful, active, for-profit corporations. Three of these corporations were listed among the 2012 Inc 500 fastest-growing small companies in America – Phone.com, DomainMarket.com, and SEO.com. Plus, he founded and operates AccurateAppraisals.com, as well as authored a book which can be found at MakeMillions.com. He also has a charitable fund, Make Change Trust! which you can read more about at MakeChange.com.

His companies exchange resources, talent, and technologies in their never-ending quest to deliver innovative, profitable digital products and services.

“The best .Com is the only good long term bet.”

Mike, thanks for joining us. It’s wonderful having you here today. Let’s start from the beginning – your beginnings. What a remarkable success story you have! I read somewhere that you once said that you were “practically the least likely to succeed” after being kicked out of school and home by 15. And yet, you went on to build and sell multiple companies, becoming one of the most successful figures in the domain industry. I wonder, like I guess many of our readers are: Looking back, how did those early struggles shape your appetite for risk and your approach to entrepreneurship?

Every day since a very young age I have felt that I had to stay more focused, study more, and work harder longer hours in order to survive, compete, succeed, and to prove myself. Plus, I have always wanted to help other people struggling, given what I have gone through and others close to me. In order to do so I try to earn a lot of money to donate to charity; and I spend a lot of time helping charities. I haven’t changed much in all this time; a little slower and less aggressive with age, but that is about it.

Many readers will know you today as a domain mogul, but let’s go back. How did you first discover the world of domain names, and what convinced you that this was going to be a real business opportunity rather than just a passing trend?

I sold a small internet services company that I owned and was left with some great domains I had once used to try to attract customers. One of them was Menus(.com) which I sold for \$25K. At that point I was hooked on the profit margin and digital nature of this business. I directed my associate on how to create software to optimize the domain speculation business, and then ended up buying and selling a huge number of domains as a result. We also patented the technology Whoisplus/NameFind.

One of your standout successes has been DomainMarket.com, which has supplied premium names to companies across industries. That growth didn’t happen overnight. Can you walk us through what you consider the key turning points in building DomainMarket into a powerhouse?

It is mostly about the people I have hired to create unique software and data experiences and related user interfaces that we can leverage to speculate on domain names. And the incredible customer service and sales people that work with me. With that help I stay focused on studying large number of domains for purchase and sale; appraising each one and comparing it to the costs, and negotiating when necessary. Trying to always scale and accomplish more. I have built many companies and the end goal is to always sell them. <https://www.mikemann.com/successes/>



Continue →



It won't be an exaggeration to say that you've worn many hats so far: investor, innovator, founder and many more. From building tools like NameFind to developing companies like Phone.com and SEO.com, you've often been ahead of the curve. In your mind, what has given you the edge to spot value and trends before others?

I try to study and learn and talk to the smartest people to understand where internet related markets are going, before the crowds pile on. A lot of hard work mixed with trial and error. I have made innumerable mistakes that I try not to repeat, so I can leverage and scale the best ideas that remain. It's never easy and not always so fun. But on good years it pays the bills.

"I try to study and learn and talk to the smartest people to understand where internet related markets are going, before the crowds pile on."

When you built SEO.com into a company of more than 100 employees, you stepped from domaining into a much more traditional business model. What lessons did you learn from growing that kind of operation, and how do they inform your ventures today?

SEO.com was about my 15th company, and perhaps 100th business plan. So, I wasn't so much a novice. The strategy I employed there and many companies is to hire a staff with expertise in the subject matters, buy the best possible domain, write the best business plan and related best practices documents, and help manage those day to day operators through success and selling of the company.

Unlike many domain investors who only buy and sell, you've often chosen to develop names into operating companies. What guides your decision whether to keep a domain as an investment, flip it, or turn it into a full-fledged business?

They are all for sale, hundreds of thousands. We have only bought or selected from our inventory a couple dozen over the years that go with business plans we have. Two separate paradigms.

The domain industry has evolved dramatically: new extensions, shifting search engine rules, and different valuation models. Some still insist .com is king, while others are betting on a more fragmented future. How do you see the next 5–10 years playing out for premium domains?

The best .Com is the only good long term bet. The others have 1500 competitors so far, so no matter how good a few seem to be at the moment they have limited long term speculative value. They are too risky. .Com is the flight to quality that the others can never match. The best .Com have gone up in value every year for 25 years and will continue to do so. All of the best and smartest CEOs and marketing people use .Com (nearly all the Fortune500; see Table 1).

".Com is the flight to quality that the others can never match."

Alongside your business ventures, you've invested heavily in philanthropy with projects like MakeChange. How do you balance that mission-driven work with the sharp business of domains and negotiations? Do you find that your charitable philosophy shapes how you approach deals?

I just need to divide my time accordingly (not or sleep or party much). With charity and business, you need to be disciplined to not waste time or money or get scammed. Make sure you are following a rational scalable meaningful plan. And leveraging technology and great people to help.

We're now seeing experiments that treat domains explicitly as financial assets. For example, Freename recently launched Domora, a "stock market of domains" where investors can hold and trade fractional ownership of premium names like stocks. What's your take on this shift toward "domain finance"? Could fractionalized ownership be the next big thing for the domain industry?

The jury is out. There are no case studies to support alternatives just yet. But I look forward to studying and experimenting.

Finally, if a young entrepreneur asked you how to get started in domains today, what would you tell them? What's the single most important principle they should keep in mind to build something sustainable in such a competitive market?

Only invest in the very best .com domains and make positive you are getting a low price so you can liquidate successfully if necessary and better yet make big profits and scale up.

Table 1  
2025 Fortune500 companies and their domains

Rank		Count	Percentage	Examples
1	.com	481	96.2%	Walmart, Amazon, Apple, Exxon Mobil
2	.org	6	1.2%	TIAA, FM, AAA (The Auto Club Group)
3	.net	4	0.8%	CHS (chsinc.com), Community Health Systems
4	.xyz	2	0.4%	Alphabet (abc.xyz), Block (block.xyz)
5	.technology	1	0.2%	DXC Technology (dxc.technology)
	Other/Unique	6	1.2%	Various (e.g., .group, .co)





# The Enduring Power of Domains

Written by



**Jothan Frakes**

CEO of Private Label Internet

→ Check out his profile in the Who's Who section

Few technologies have remained as quietly foundational – and as widely misunderstood – as domain names. For those outside the industry, a domain may seem like just a web address, a string of letters pointing to a website. But for domain enthusiasts like Jothan Frakes, CEO of Private Label Internet, each domain represents far more: a spark of innovation, a persistent digital identity, and a bridge between past, present, and future internet technologies.

In this article, Frakes shares his decades-long passion for domains, tracing their history from the early 1980s origins of the Domain Name System (DNS) to their modern role in Web3, digital security, and global communication. He explores how a domain is not merely a technical locator, but a tool for digital agency – an asset that endures beyond the fleeting lifespan of social platforms, trends, or applications. From traditional websites and email to blockchain integration and decentralized identity, Frakes illustrates how domain names continue to empower creators, entrepreneurs, and businesses in ways both practical and profound. More than a technical guide, this is an invitation to nerd out on the enduring power of domains and to appreciate why a simple registration can ignite ideas, preserve digital ownership, and unlock new horizons online.

I am probably quite boring at cocktail parties, because I will almost always find a way to share my enthusiasm over domain names. Since my first domain I managed in 1991, I continue to be very passionate about the benefits that domain names have brought to us. I often say that the internet and domain names are intertwined - that you cannot talk about the internet and its practical advantages without mentioning a domain name.

What I find truly amazing is how there is always a group of people who share my passion for domain names, and the conversation gets very nerdy and interesting when we do a deep dive on some of the cool things enabled by a domain. I hope you will read on and nerd-out with me a bit about domains.

At their core, domain names are a basic ‘speed dial’ technology that let us as humans interact with servers and services (and each other), but they can be so much more.

It can be very exciting to register a domain name when your idea is forming, and it is truly that spark that plants an exciting seed for your idea to grow and manifest.

To build upon the vast and growing potential that the simple act of registration can get you, I want to talk a little about the past and future of domain names and their capabilities that you gain when registering.

The Domain Name System (DNS), a foundational technology born in the early 1980s, remains the inconspicuous bedrock of the modern internet. Far

from a relic, it is a testament to distributed design, providing the central, trusted authority that underpins global communication, commerce, and innovation. A domain name-your digital address-is not merely a locator; it is the ultimate expression of agency in the online world, the starting point for every new company, idea, and entrepreneurial endeavor.

**“At their core, domain names are a basic ‘speed dial’ technology that let us as humans interact with servers and services.”**

**“DNS remains the inconspicuous bedrock of the modern internet.”**



## The Genesis of Internet Identity

The DNS was formally introduced through the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) with the publication of RFC 882 and RFC 883 in November 1983, authored by Paul Mockapetris.



**Paul Mockapetris**

American computer scientist and Internet pioneer

This marked the birth of a technology designed to map human-readable names to numerical IP addresses, a system that, over four decades later, is still leveraged in the default configuration of virtually every contemporary Operating System and network-connected device worldwide. This deep integration and established trust make the DNS the

de facto global directory, and there has been ongoing evolution to introduce a variety of new records types, standards and best practices in the decades since.

**“This marked the birth of a technology designed to map human-readable names to numerical IP addresses.”**



# The Domain Name as a Permanent Address

The choice between building a presence on a proprietary social media platform versus establishing a business address using a domain name is a critical inflection point for digital entities. Relying on a third-party platform’s address, such as platform.com/bandname, subjects the user to the platform’s volatility, whims, and eventual obsolescence. The history of the internet is littered with the digital tombstones of once-dominant social networks—from Friendster and MySpace to countless others—where communities, contacts, and content vanished when the platform closed its doors or fundamentally changed its terms. Consider a musical band that built its entire fan base on MySpace in the mid-2000s. When MySpace ceded ground

to newer platforms, the band’s primary address and connection to its fans effectively dissolved. For an even more contemporary example, while many of these social platforms may hold attraction in audience, in our polarized social world, one can be subjected to rules that govern behavior in ways that other users (competitors or those with a different perspective) might disrupt your visibility through the lightest of efforts by weaponizing platform rules or even cause you account suspension, often without appeal. This can be devastating to a business or organization. In stark contrast, a brand (or example band) that owned a domain name, such as BandName.com, possessed true digital ownership. As platforms rose and

fell, this central, trusted address never changed. When MySpace became irrelevant, the band simply updated the DNS record—a two-minute task—to seamlessly redirect BandName.com to their new primary presence on a surviving platform like Facebook or Instagram. This simple act of redirection ensured that every fan, every search result, and every printed flyer or email footer still pointed to the right place, keeping their base intact and maintaining unbroken digital agency. The domain name acts as a persistent, user-controlled layer above the transitory infrastructure of individual applications.

“The domain name acts as a persistent, user-controlled layer above the transitory infrastructure of individual applications.”

## Expanding Horizons: Beyond Websites and Email

While the core functionality of DNS enables universal standards like websites (HTTP/HTTPS) and email, the technology’s inherent reliability and global trust have allowed its use cases to expand dramatically. Here are just a few examples:

Purpose	Description	Key DNS Record Types Utilized
Traditional Web Presence	Hosting a website or application	A, AAAA, CNAME
Email Communication	Directing mail to the correct server	MX
Digital Security & Identity	Verifying domain ownership for SSL certificates and email authentication.	TXT (SPF, DKIM, DMARC)
Blockchain Naming	Linking a human-readable domain to a cryptocurrency wallet address or smart contract.	TXT, or specialized records (e.g., records used by ENS or other Blockchain projects) and even new proposed types like WALLEET
Social Media Handles	Providing a consistent, verifiable link to a person or business’s social media profile.	TXT (for verification), URL redirection

“The DNS provides a crucial bridge between the legacy internet infrastructure and Web3.”

The adoption of DNS in the blockchain space is particularly significant, demonstrating its enduring relevance. By allowing users to link a traditional domain name (the trusted central authority) to a decentralized, distributed ledger address (like a crypto wallet), the DNS provides a crucial bridge between the legacy internet infrastructure and Web3. This integration solidifies the domain name’s role not just as a pointer to content, but as a universally recognized handle for digital assets and verifiable identity. Where the core conventional DNS advantages, such as website and email use of a domain name are complemented by new capabilities with web3, and allow for familiar namespace syntax of the existing domain name space where

browsers have wallet-like capabilities in place, either as an extension or natively. Some of the practical advantages of blockchain wallet use are becoming norms (as opposed to solutions in search of problems to solve or notional activities). Users that take advantage of web3 wallet capabilities are able to participate in a variety of trusted ledger-based activities, such as document signing, consensus voting, federated identity (log in to browser wallet accesses numerous websites), and transfer of value. Users or services can of course conduct these with or without a human-readable domain name, but user simplicity and clarity are a real thing, and decades of domain name familiarity contribute to aiding users newer to blockchain tech-

nologies in their comfort and adoption. There is a very significant psychological boost to trust where it is tied to a domain name that someone may have been interacting with over a long span of time. These are just a small set of examples of just how amazing the expansion of this simple, distributed protocol of DNS has delivered trusted value and service across decades, and will continue to do so for years to come. This is why I remain a very prolific enthusiast of domain names, the underlying technology, and the innovation and spark of a journey they can represent.





# The Faces Shaping the Industry

Step into Who's Who, the space where the people powering the domain industry come into focus. This section celebrates the minds and makers (entrepreneurs, executives, innovators, and strategists) whose vision, drive, and creativity shape the digital world. Each profile goes beyond titles and accomplishments, revealing the motivations, insights, and passions that fuel their work. From guiding groundbreaking projects to steering long-standing institutions, these are the individuals defining the present and inspiring the future of the industry. Discover their stories, learn from their journeys, and see the human side of the forces behind the domains.

## In this issue:

In this edition, our Who's Who highlights six influential figures making an impact across the domain industry, including one contributor to this issue: Jothan Frakes, CEO of Private Label Internet, who shares his expertise in the feature article 'Innovation and Tech'.

Joining him are Lars Steffen, Head of International at Eco, advocating for the industry on a global stage; AbdulBasit Makrani, a Malaysia-based investor specializing in brandable domains; Vaughn Liley, General Manager of Nova Registry, whose work has helped shape the .link TLD; Elias Rendón Benger, CEO of InterNetX, building comprehensive domain solutions in Germany; and Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau, MD of MarkUpgrade in Kyiv, focusing on founder-driven strategic domain approaches. From strategy to innovation, their journeys reveal the people turning ideas into impact and shaping the future of the domain industry.



## Jothan Frakes

CEO | Private Label Internet

Years in the industry  
In the domain space since 1992

Location  
Seattle, WA

Specialization  
ICANN / Registries, Registrars, Aftermarket, DNS

Notable Achievement  
Just celebrated 30 years of owning jothan.com

Fun Fact  
"I toured with a popular top-40 band Stevie B in the late 80s/early 90s."

Motto  
"There are no strangers, only friends you have yet to meet."



Jothan.com



## Lars Steffen

Head of International, Digital Infrastructures & Resilience |  
Eco – Association of the Internet Industry

Years in the industry  
I'm in the domain industry since 2008

Location  
Cologne, Germany

Specialization  
Representing the industry's interests in every way is my mission.

Notable Achievement  
Together with my colleague, Thomas Rickert, I manage the Names and Numbers Forum working group of the eco association, which is the world's largest organized advocacy group of the domain industry.

Fun Fact  
I collect domain names in the wild on <http://yummy.domains/>

Motto  
"In the public eye, nothing symbolizes the internet more than domain names. Take advantage of that!"



<https://international.eco.de/topics/names-numbers/>





## AbdulBasit Makrani

Domain investor

Years in the industry  
Since 2010

Location  
Malaysia

Specialization  
Brandable domains

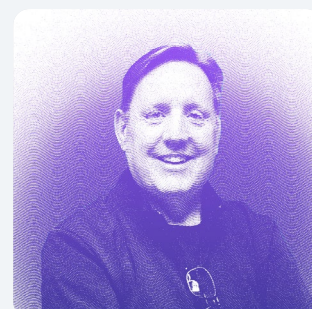
Notable Achievement  
Symphony.com for \$375,000

Fun Fact  
“Full time domain investing since 2010.”

Motto  
“Domain gives freedom to live,  
work anywhere and be your own boss.”



Abdulbasit.com



## Vaughn Liley

General Manager | Nova Registry, operator of the .link TLD

Years in the industry  
15+ years.

Location  
Malta

Specialization  
Namespace expansion

Notable Achievement  
Making .link the TLD it is today

Fun Fact  
I started work the year of the internet’s “official birthday” - 1983

Motto  
“Keep it real and be creative”



nova.link



## Elias Rendón Benger

CEO | InterNetX

Years in the industry  
In the domain industry since 2022

Location  
Regensburg/Karlsruhe, Germany

Specialization  
Building the ultimate Domain Solution Provider for all target audiences

Notable Achievement  
Led InterNetX to B2B domain expert within the IONOS Group

Fun Fact  
As the CEO of a tech company, I support our sponsorship of Frankfurt Galaxy because American football and the domain business at Inter-NetX & the IONOS Group share the same principles: quick decisions, strong teamwork, and a competitive edge. Watching the team excel under pressure reminds me that success-whether managing domain portfolios or scoring touchdowns-comes from cohesive teamwork, rather than solo performance.

Motto  
“There is no passion to be found playing small -  
Domains are the infrastructure of digital identity.”



LinkedIn  
eliasrendonbenger



## Tatiana Gramatikova-Bonneau

MD | MarkUpgrade, SmartBranding, Domains For Equity

Years in the industry  
Since 2018

Location  
Kyiv, Ukraine

Specialization  
Founder-focused strategic .com domain strategy

Notable Achievement  
SmartBranding.com - one of the most comprehensive founder-focused resources in the domain world

Fun Fact  
Ultra runner, speak 5 languages, have 4 kids, doberman who drives me crazy, husky and a baby cat.

Motto  
“Great brands are built on great foundations.”



LinkedIn  
tatiana-gramatikova-bonneau



# Quarterly report

# Aftermarket

## Q3 2025

The domain aftermarket had a strong third quarter in 2025, with several six- and seven-figure deals showing that investors remain highly interested, particularly in tech and AI domain extensions. The biggest sale was sword.com at \$1.5 million through LegalBrandMarketing, one of the year's top transactions. Right behind it, zh.com brought in \$1 million on Sedo, proving that premium two-letter .com domains still command serious money. Divinity.com went for \$795,000 via atom.com, and cloud.ai hit \$600,000 on GoDaddy, further evidence that AI domains are becoming major players in the market. Meanwhile, mid-range brandable .coms like footage.com, smartchoice.com, and haggle.com all sold for six figures, showing there's still plenty of appetite for short, memorable names. Other notable sales included ferienhaus.de at \$414,156, which points to healthy demand for European country-code domains. Super.xyz and intelligence.xyz both performed well, cementing .xyz's place in tech circles. And crypto.bot's \$250,000 sale suggests specialized Web3 domains are gaining real traction. All told, the quarter showed a diverse and active market where traditional .coms and newer extensions alike are finding serious buyers. This is undoubtedly a sign the domain aftermarket remains both resilient and dynamic.

## Top 25 Sales

### in Q3 2025

The third quarter of 2025 showed the premium domain market holding steady, with several major sales demonstrating ongoing confidence in high-end digital assets. Sword.com topped the charts at \$1.5 million through LegalBrandMarketing. Compelling one-word .coms undoubtedly still command serious prices. Zh.com followed at \$1 million on Sedo, underlining just how liquid and valuable two-letter domains remain. Divinity.com sold for \$795,000 on Atom.com, and cloud.ai hit \$600,000 at GoDaddy, making it clear that AI is reshaping how domains are valued.

“Nearly 70 percent of this quarter’s top sales were one-word domains, proving their lasting appeal across different extensions. From Sword.com to Cloud.ai, brands continue to pay premiums for clarity, authority, and instant recognition. One-word domains remain valued for their simplicity and global resonance, central to how brands build their online identity.”



Reynard Rion  
BD at Freename

Artificial intelligence kept fueling demand across the board. Law.ai, adapt.ai, and sim.ai all changed hands for six figures. Super.xyz and intelligence.xyz proved that .xyz has real staying power with tech brands, while crypto.bot's \$250,000 sale hinted that specialized Web3 domains are gaining credibility. Classic extensions held their own too. Ferienhaus.de brought in \$414,156, and r.org and therapy.org sold for \$375,000 and \$324,990 respectively. There is no doubt: .org domains and major country codes still inspire trust. Mid-tier .coms like directresponse.com, smartchoice.com, and haggle.com found buyers as well. The demand for short, brandable names remains consistent. The numbers tell a positive story overall. Total sales climbed to 47.5k from 46.4k in Q1, and total dollar volume grew to \$60 million from \$56.1 million. The average sale price edged up to \$1,265 from \$1,210, suggesting a slight improvement in deal quality. Standard deviation dropped from \$14.5k to \$11.5k.

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
sword.com	1,500,000 USD	2025-07-06	LegalBrandMarketing
zh.com	1,000,000 USD	2025-08-01	Sedo
divinity.com	795,000 USD	2025-09-15	Atom.com
cloud.ai	600,000 USD	2025-07-02	GoDaddy
ferienhaus.de	414,156 USD	2025-07-16	Sedo
r.org	375,000 USD	2025-07-06	LegalBrandMarketing
law.ai	350,000 USD	2025-08-16	Sedo
therapy.org	324,990 USD	2025-07-22	Private
adapt.ai	300,000 USD	2025-08-29	Private
footage.com	300,000 USD	2025-07-11	Sedo
super.xyz	287,607 USD	2025-09-05	Atom.com
directresponse.com	252,500 USD	2025-07-11	DropCatch
crypto.bot	250,000 USD	2025-07-13	Sedo
aitools.com	238,000 USD	2025-07-20	Guta.com
sim.ai	220,000 USD	2025-07-22	Private
export.com	163,000 USD	2025-08-24	Canavas Media
smartchoice.com	155,000 USD	2025-07-24	Afternic
intelligence.xyz	150,000 USD	2025-09-30	Afternic
beside.com	150,000 USD	2025-09-21	Sedo
haggle.com	150,000 USD	2025-08-24	Sedo
my.bet	150,000 USD	2025-07-06	Afternic
ausgov.com	130,000 USD	2025-09-26	DomainMarket.com
releaf.com	128,000 USD	2025-09-02	Private
territory.com	125,625 USD	2025-08-06	Namecheap
finanta.com	125,000 USD	2025-08-05	DomainMarket.com

This might signify more stable pricing across transactions. True, Q3's highest sale (\$1.5 million) didn't match Q1's peak (\$2.2 million), but the broader growth in volume and value shows the market remains healthy. Traditional .coms still rule the roost, but newer extensions – especially .ai – are carving out a solid position in the premium tier.

### Comparison between Q1 and Q3

	Total number sales	Dollar Volume	Average Price	Standard Deviation	Low Price	High Price
Q3	47.5k	\$60m	\$1,265	\$11.5k	\$100	\$1.5m
Q1	46.4k	\$56.1m	\$1,210	\$14.5k	\$100	\$2.2m



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

The “Other Relevant .com Sales” section for Q3 2025 was packed with solid mid-tier activity. Sigma.io, itworldcanada.com, and siam.com each hit \$100,000: a trio that spans tech branding, corporate media, and geographic appeal. It’s a reminder that buyers still value domains that are either short and punchy or carry specific regional or industry weight. Buno.com, mcc.com, and cari.com kept the momentum going. It definitely seems like the market hasn’t lost its taste for compact, brandable names that work across contexts (the question is: will it ever?)

Meanwhile, .ai domains continued their run. Wander.ai, producer.ai, phenom.ai, and orchid.ai all sold between \$75,000 and \$95,000, which tells us something important: AI extensions aren’t just a high-roller game anymore. There’s genuine depth to this market now, with buyers willing to pay serious money even outside the seven-figure tier.

And it wasn’t all about established extensions. A handful of newer gTLDs made noise too: purpose.app, watch.now, and love.now each fetched around \$80,000. These aren’t huge numbers, but they signal that modern, action-oriented domains are finding their audience. It’s a quieter trend, but one worth watching as these newer spaces mature.

Q3 2025 delivered impressive results for mid-tier .com sales. Total dollar volume jumped to \$50.5 million from \$33.6 million in Q1, a substantial leap that suggests real momentum. The average sale price climbed from \$908 to \$1,065, which is notable on its own, but the standard deviation also widened, going from \$2,776 to \$3,635. That spread matters: it means we’re seeing a wider range of deal sizes, not just incremental gains across the board.

What’s driving this? Buyers are clearly more willing to spend on quality mid-tier domains, and they’re not limiting themselves to traditional .coms either. AI extensions and newer gTLDs are pulling their weight too, adding variety and depth to what’s become a genuinely diverse market. The growth isn’t just about volume, it’s about appetite.

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
sigma.io	100,000 USD	2025-09-21	Afternic
itworldcanada.com	100,000 USD	2025-08-18	GoDaddy
siam.com	100,000 USD	2025-08-03	Sedo
forward.org	100,000 USD	2025-07-06	LegalBrandMarketing
buno.com	95,000 USD	2025-07-20	Sedo
wander.ai	95,000 USD	2025-07-11	Spaceship.com
reve.com	92,364 USD	2025-07-13	Sedo
mcc.com	90,999 USD	2025-07-23	Sedo
cari.com	90,000 USD	2025-08-17	Sedo
myforce.com	90,000 USD	2025-08-06	QualityNames
lectron.com	88,000 USD	2025-07-08	Private
purpose.app	87,550 USD	2025-09-08	TOP.DOMAINS
usax.com	85,000 USD	2025-07-03	Private
producer.ai	84,000 USD	2025-07-11	Spaceship.com
toonie.com	82,221 USD	2025-09-21	Sedo
ninetyfive.com	80,655 USD	2025-09-23	DomainMarket.com
xoa.com	80,500 USD	2025-08-05	Sedo
phenom.ai	80,000 USD	2025-09-15	Spaceship.com
orchid.ai	80,000 USD	2025-09-15	Spaceship.com
nnet.com	80,000 USD	2025-08-07	Afternic
watch.now	79,988 USD	2025-07-16	TOP.DOMAINS
love.now	79,499 USD	2025-07-07	TOP.DOMAINS
buildyourstore.com	75,000 USD	2025-09-23	Afternic
scoop.ai	75,000 USD	2025-09-06	MediaOptions.com
liquid.xyz	75,000 USD	2025-08-22	Efty

### Comparison between Q1 and Q3

	Dollar Volume	Average Price	Standard Deviation
Q3	\$50.5m	\$1,065	\$3,635
Q1	\$33.6m	\$908	\$2,776

# New gTLDs

The ngTLD market in Q3 2025 mixed standout premium sales with consistent mid-tier movement. Super.xyz grabbed top spot at \$287,607 on Atom.com, while crypto.bot brought in \$250,000 on Sedo. Both sales point to ongoing appetite for tech and Web3 keywords. Intelligence.xyz and my.bet each hit \$150,000. No surprise there: short, brandable names with obvious relevance still pull serious money across different extensions.

What’s interesting is how certain patterns keep surfacing. The .xyz extension dominated activity once again. Turtle.xyz, liquid.xyz, thoughtful.xyz, karta.xyz, hyperlink.xyz, metablock.xyz, code.xyz, and nocturnal.xyz all sold between \$25,000 and \$106,000, spanning tech, lifestyle, and media niches. Buyers clearly see .xyz as versatile: it works for all sorts of projects. Meanwhile, .now and .app kept attracting people looking for modern, action-oriented names: purpose.app, watch.now, love.now, ai.now, peace.now, yolo.app, and flex.app all found buyers.

“The new gTLD market this quarter showcased a wide mix of extensions. While .xyz remains the most active, notable sales appeared across .bot, .bet, .app, .now, .dev, and niche gTLDs like .chat, .media, and .tax. This diversity makes the landscape especially interesting as we head toward ICANN’s next gTLD application round next year.”



Reynard Rion  
BD at Freename

The venue landscape tells its own story. Afternic handled a big chunk of .xyz deals, while Sedo focused on Web3 and tech plays like crypto.bot and airport.media. TOP.DOMAINS carved out a niche with expressive, consumer-facing ngTLDs, particularly in the .now space. Each platform seems to have found its lane, which is probably a good thing for the aftermarket as a whole.

All this points to a maturing segment where short, thematic, and brandable domains command premium prices, especially in .xyz, .app, .bot, and .now. Sure, ngTLDs still trail .com in overall volume, but they’re pulling targeted buyers willing to spend big on quality names, particularly in tech, blockchain, and lifestyle categories.

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
super.xyz	287,607 USD	2025-09-05	Atom.com
crypto.bot	250,000 USD	2025-07-13	Sedo
intelligence.xyz	150,000 USD	2025-09-30	Afternic
my.bet	150,000 USD	2025-07-06	Afternic
turtle.xyz	106,000 USD	2025-07-14	Afternic
purpose.app	87,550 USD	2025-09-08	TOP.DOMAINS
watch.now	79,988 USD	2025-07-16	TOP.DOMAINS
love.now	79,499 USD	2025-07-07	TOP.DOMAINS
liquid.xyz	75,000 USD	2025-08-22	Efty
thoughtful.xyz	64,888 USD	2025-08-25	Afternic
airport.media	50,215 USD	2025-07-14	Sedo
karta.xyz	34,888 USD	2025-08-14	Afternic
hyperlink.xyz	30,000 USD	2025-09-16	Afternic
go.chat	30,000 USD	2025-07-28	Sedo
metablock.xyz	29,995 USD	2025-08-29	Afternic
aspire.dev	25,988 USD	2025-08-14	Afternic
code.xyz	25,509 USD	2025-09-06	GoDaddy
api.dev	25,000 USD	2025-08-03	Sedo
ai.now	25,000 USD	2025-07-30	LaserAI.com
nocturnal.xyz	25,000 USD	2025-07-14	Afternic
peace.now	25,000 USD	2025-07-10	Atom.com
kinogo.club	24,057 USD	2025-08-24	Sedo
yolo.app	23,000 USD	2025-08-31	Spaceship.com
flex.app	20,000 USD	2025-08-10	Sedo
zero.tax	20,000 USD	2025-08-05	Sedo

The numbers across quarters tell an even more dramatic story. Sales jumped from 567 in Q1 to 800 in Q3, a relatively modest gain of 233 transactions. But dollar volume? That more than doubled, rocketing from \$1.1 million to \$2.8 million (up roughly 154.5%). Average prices surged from \$1,857 to \$3,467, an 86.7% leap. And standard deviation widened considerably, from \$6,024 to \$17,400, driven by those

high-end .xyz, .bot, and .app sales reshaping the top of the market. Perhaps most telling: Q3’s peak sale hit \$287,607, dwarfing Q1’s top transaction of \$79,900. NgTLDs are evolving from alternative options into legitimate premium assets, with buyers clearly willing to pay top dollar for the right names in the right sectors.

### Comparison between Q1 and Q3

	Total number sales	Dollar Volume	Average Price	Standard Deviation	Low Price	High Price
Q3	800	\$2.8m	\$3,467	\$17.4k	\$100	\$287.7k
Q1	567	\$1.1m	\$1,857	\$6,024	\$100	\$79.9k



# Country codes

Country code domains had a solid quarter in Q3 2025, with AI extensions stealing most of the spotlight. Cloud.ai led the pack at \$600,000 on GoDaddy, while law.ai and adapt.ai followed at \$350,000 and \$300,000 respectively. Short, descriptive AI domains clearly have staying power. Buyers keep coming back for them. The mid-tier wasn't quiet either: sim.ai, bind.ai, and demand.ai all sold between \$75,000 and \$220,000, showing there's consistent interest beyond just the headline deals.

“The global AI boom has redefined what counts as a premium extension. Nearly every top country-code sale this quarter carried the .ai extension, reflecting how artificial intelligence is reshaping investor and end-user demand in this category. The .ai ccTLD is now eclipsing traditional tech favorites like .io and .co”



Reynard Rion

BD at Freename

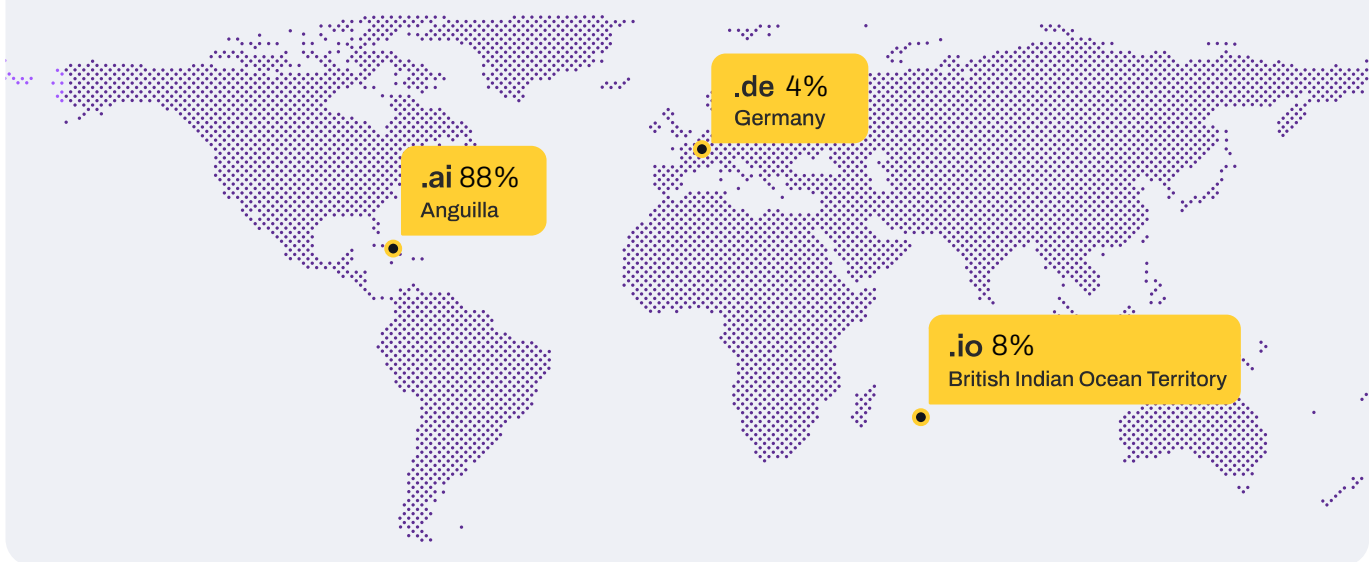
But AI wasn't the whole story. Ferienhaus.de pulled in \$414,156 on Sedo, a reminder that European country codes still command premium prices when you've got a high-demand generic keyword. And the .io space stayed active too: queen.io went for \$108,500 and sigma.io for \$100,000, reinforcing that tech-focused extensions have carved out their own niche alongside the AI

The numbers back up what the sales suggest: this market is heating up. Total transactions jumped from 3,704 in Q1 to 4,324 in Q3, which amounts to about 16.7% growth. More impressive, dollar volume surged roughly 27.3%, climbing from \$8.8 million to \$11.2 million. Average prices rose from \$2,363 to \$2,584 (up 9.4%), but here's what's interesting: standard deviation widened significantly, from \$11,200 to \$15,500. That spread reflects the pull of high-end AI and European ccTLD sales driving up the top end while the market stays busy across all price levels. With \$600,000 as the quarter's peak, it's clear that premium country code domains are drawing serious money and the market's becoming more diverse in the process.

Domain name	Price	Date	Venue
cloud.ai	600,000 USD	2025-07-02	GoDaddy
ferienhaus.de	414,156 USD	2025-07-16	Sedo
law.ai	350,000 USD	2025-08-16	Sedo
adapt.ai	300,000 USD	2025-08-29	Private
sim.ai	220,000 USD	2025-07-22	Private
bind.ai	120,000 USD	2025-07-30	Spaceship.com
demand.ai	118,000 USD	2025-08-22	Spaceship.com
pioneer.ai	111,000 USD	2025-08-07	Spaceship.com
tech.ai	110,000 USD	2025-08-08	Spaceship.com
queen.io	108,500 USD	2025-09-16	Apex Moon
sigma.io	100,000 USD	2025-09-21	Afternic
wander.ai	95,000 USD	2025-07-11	Spaceship.com
producer.ai	84,000 USD	2025-07-11	Spaceship.com
phenom.ai	80,000 USD	2025-09-15	Spaceship.com
orchid.ai	80,000 USD	2025-09-15	Spaceship.com
scoop.ai	75,000 USD	2025-09-06	MediaOptions.com
smb.ai	75,000 USD	2025-08-07	Spaceship.com
village.ai	75,000 USD	2025-07-30	Spaceship.com
gary.ai	75,000 USD	2025-07-30	Spaceship.com
sauna.ai	70,000 USD	2025-07-30	Spaceship.com
detector.ai	68,000 USD	2025-08-13	Spaceship.com
velocity.ai	65,500 USD	2025-09-02	Namecheap
covenant.ai	65,000 USD	2025-09-15	Spaceship.com
bankruptcy.ai	65,000 USD	2025-08-13	Spaceship.com
f2.ai	65,000 USD	2025-07-11	Spaceship.com

Comparison between Q1 and Q3						
	Total number sales	Dollar Volume	Average Price	Standard Deviation	Low Price	High Price
Q3	4,324	\$11.2m	\$2,584	\$15.5k	\$100	\$600k
Q1	3,704	\$8.8m	\$2,363	\$11.2k	\$100	\$373.5k

Graph  
Top Selling Countries by ccTLD  
Share of domain per extension in the top 25



## Key Takeaways

Q3 2025 painted a picture of a domain market that's both steady and stretching. Premium .coms held their ground: sword.com at \$1.5 million and zh.com at \$1 million reminded everyone that one-word and two-letter domains aren't going anywhere. But the real surprise was mid-tier .coms finding their stride. Volume jumped from \$33.6 million in Q1 to \$50.5 million, and average prices nudged up from \$908 to \$1,065. Country code domains told a growth story too. Total sales climbed 16.7% and volume surged 27.3% compared to Q1, with .ai and .io leading the charge. Cloud.ai's \$600,000 sale and ferienhaus.de's \$414,156 exit showed buyers are paying

serious money for AI-focused domains and high-value European generics alike. But ngTLDs? That's where things got interesting. An extra 233 sales, dollar volume more than doubling, and a peak transaction hitting \$287,607. This segment isn't just participating anymore, it's starting to compete with other extension. Short, thematic, and brandable names in .xyz, .app, .bot, and .now are clearly resonating with buyers who see them as legitimate alternatives, not afterthoughts. Something to keep an eye on! If we step back and the pattern becomes clear: the market's expanding on multiple fronts. Legacy .coms provide the foundation, AI ccTLDs are capturing new

money, and innovation-focused ngTLDs are carving out real territory. It's a more mature, more diverse market than we've seen before, and as we head into the final stretch of 2025, that diversification looks like it's here to stay.

“The domain market is showing healthy balance, with legacy .coms anchoring trust and liquidity while .ai and new gTLDs inject momentum and creativity. Regardless of extension, one-word domains continue to set the benchmark for value, reflecting a market growing through both innovation and stability”

### 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, Drop-Catch, NameJet, and more. For this report, we focused on domain transactions recorded between July 1 and September 30, 2025. Sales were

filtered by extension (e.g., .com, .ai, .xyz, .bet, etc.) and categorized into three main groups: legacy gTLDs, ccTLDs, and new gTLDs. The data include domain name, sale price (in USD), sale date, and marketplace venue. Statistical summaries – such as total sales count, dollar volume, average price, standard deviation, and price range – were also derived directly from the NameBio dataset.

While NameBio does not capture every domain sale globally (particularly private and unreported transactions), it offers the most reliable and comprehensive snapshot of the publicly visible domain aftermarket available.



# Quarterly report | Registrations Q3 2025

## Most Important gTLDs

Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Registrations			
169	169.8	170.5	171.9
Growth % compared to previous Q			
	+ 0.47%	+ 0.41%	+ 0.82%

By the end of September 2025, the combined domain base for .com and .net stood at roughly 171.9 million registrations. This represents a modest rise of 1.4 million domains, or 0.82%, compared with the 170.5 million recorded at the close of June 2025. Year over year, the total increased by 1.3 million, reflecting growth of about 0.7% from the 169.6 million

registered in September 2024. Breaking down the distribution, .com domains accounted for 159.4 million registrations, while .net domains reached 12.5 million. New registrations for these two TLDs in Q3 2025 totaled 10.6 million, up from 10.4 million in the previous quarter and from 9.3 million in the same period of the prior year.

## All TLDs

Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Registrations			
364.3	368.4	371.7	378.5
Growth % compared to previous Q			
	+1.12%	+0.89%	+1.83%

In the third quarter of 2025, the total number of registered domain names across all top-level domains reached 378.5 million. This figure reflects an expansion of 6.8 million compared with the previous quarter's 371.7 million, amounting to a 1.83% increase quarter over quarter. On a yearly basis, registrations grew by 16.2 million relative to the 362.3 million recorded in Q3 2024, corresponding to an annual growth rate of 4.47%.

## ccTLDs

Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Registrations			
140.8	142.9	143.4	144.8
Growth % compared to previous Q			
	+1.49%	+0.34%	+0.97%

As of the end of September 2025, country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs) reached a total of 144.8 million registrations. This reflects an increase of 1.4 million, or 0.97%, compared with the 143.4 million recorded at the end of June 2025. On a year-over-year basis, ccTLD registrations rose by 4.7 million, a 3.35% increase from the 140.1 million reported in September 2024.

## ngTLDs

Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Registrations			
36.8	37.8	39.5	42.9
Growth % compared to previous Q			
	+2.72%	+4.49%	+8.6%

By the end of Q2 2025, new generic top-level domains (ngTLDs) reached 42.9 million registrations. This represents a quarterly gain of 3.4 million, or 8.6%, compared with the 39.5 million recorded in the prior quarter. Relative to the same quarter in 2024, when registrations totaled 35.4 million, ngTLDs increased by 7.59 million year over year, amounting to a 21.44% rise.

## Other Legacy gTLDs

Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025
Registrations			
17.6	17.9	18.3	18.9
Growth % compared to previous Q			
	+1.70%	+2.23%	+3.27%

By the close of Q3 2025, legacy generic top-level domains (gTLDs) excluding .com and .net totaled 18.9 million registrations. This reflects a rise of 0.6 million, or 3.27%, relative to the 18.3 million recorded at the end of Q2. Year over year, these legacy gTLDs expanded by 1.6 million registrations, a 9.24% increase compared with the 17.3 million reported in the same quarter of 2024.

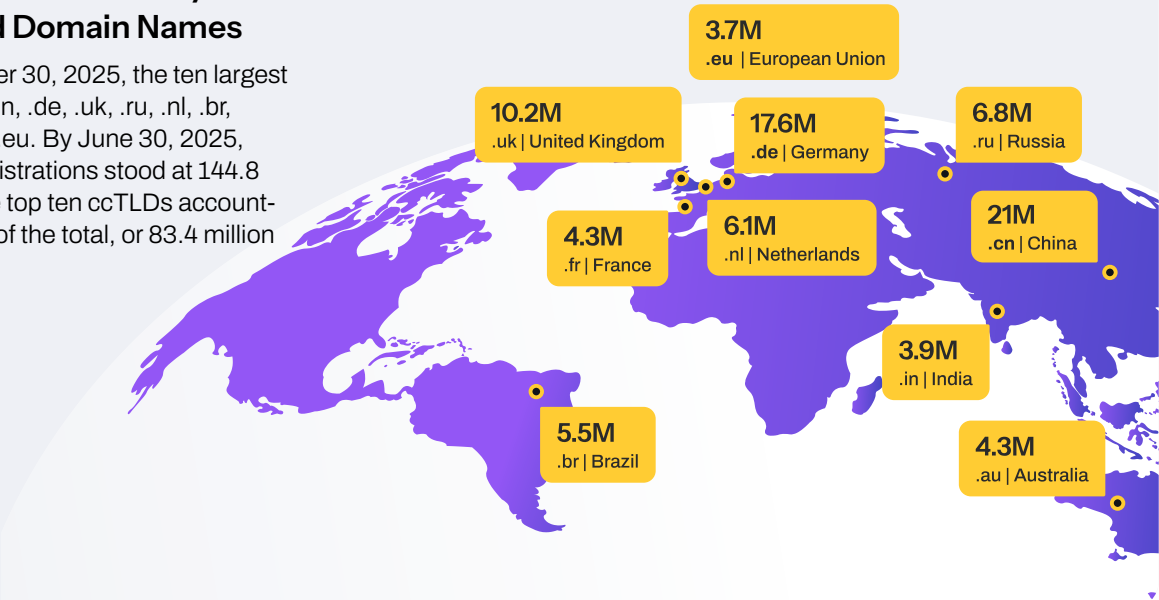
## Top 10 Largest TLDs by Number of Reported Domain Names

As of September 30, 2025, the ten largest TLDs by reported domain count were .com, .cn, .de, .net, .org, .uk, .ru, .nl, .xyz, and .br. Together, these TLDs represented 67.7% of all domain registrations, out of a total of 378.5 million.



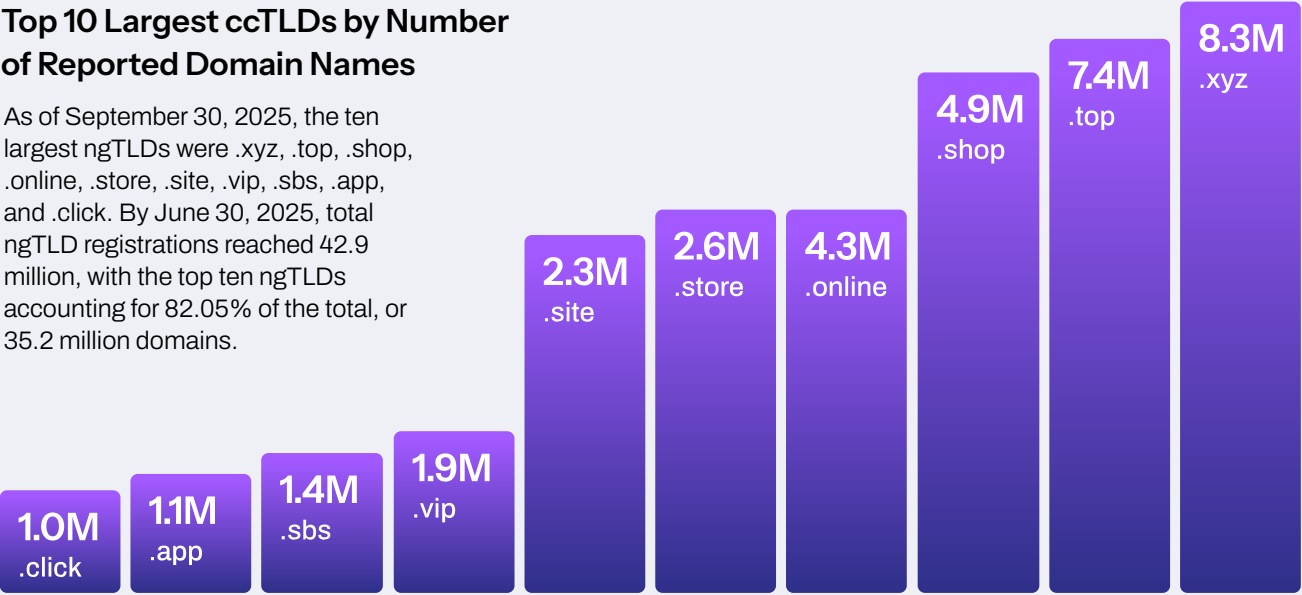
## Top 10 Largest ccTLDs by Number of Reported Domain Names

As of September 30, 2025, the ten largest ccTLDs were .cn, .de, .uk, .ru, .nl, .br, .au, .fr, .in, and .eu. By June 30, 2025, total ccTLD registrations stood at 144.8 million, with the top ten ccTLDs accounting for 57.59% of the total, or 83.4 million domains.



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

As of September 30, 2025, the ten largest ngTLDs were .xyz, .top, .shop, .online, .store, .site, .vip, .sbs, .app, and .click. By June 30, 2025, total ngTLD registrations reached 42.9 million, with the top ten ngTLDs accounting for 82.05% of the total, or 35.2 million domains.





# Key Takeaways

## Overall Domain Market Shows Stable Growth

The global domain market keeps growing at a steady clip, with total registrations now over 378 million. Growth has been consistent quarter to quarter, suggesting the market is holding up well even if it's not exploding. As the digital economy expands, demand for domains continues along with it.

## Traditional gTLDs Are Saturating

.com and .net maintain their dominant position, but their growth is slowing. We've said this before, but it seems they've hit a maturity point where the biggest, most recognizable domains are filling up. Don't expect dramatic gains here anymore. Registries will need to get creative if they want to pull in new registrations in these spaces.

## Emerging and Alternative TLDs Drive Significant Growth

New gTLDs and legacy gTLDs are where the real action is. NgTLDs are growing at over 8 percent per quarter, which tells you that users and businesses are actually adopting alternative domains in meaningful numbers. These TLDs are pushing the market forward.

## Market Concentration Highlights Geographic and Segment Trends

A handful of TLDs control most of the market: .com leads overall, .cn dominates ccTLDs, and .xyz tops ngTLDs. Growth is happening, but it's concentrated in specific regions and domain types. For registries and investors, this means going after popular or emerging TLDs makes more sense than trying to break into crowded, saturated segments.

# Conclusion

The domain market in Q3 2025 is healthy and growing, mostly thanks to new and alternative TLDs gaining traction. Traditional domains like .com and .net are showing their age, with only modest upticks that suggest they're close to full. The market's still expanding overall, but future growth is going to come from diversification rather than

leaning on legacy TLDs.

New gTLDs are rising fast, and country-code domains in China, Germany, and the United Kingdom continue performing well. Both geographic concentration and segment-specific growth will keep shaping where this market goes. Total registrations will likely keep climbing at a moderate pace, but the real op-

portunities for growth and innovation are in emerging domains and underused TLDs. Businesses and individuals are looking for alternatives to the crowded traditional options, and that's where the next phase of growth will likely come from.

## Methodology

The data presented in this report is based on domain registration statistics obtained from a combination of industry sources and internal analysis. For Q3 2024, we use data published by the Domain Name Industry Brief (DNIB), a recognized and authoritative source on global domain trends. For Q2 2025 and Q3 2025, the data comes from

Freename's own queries on publicly available zone files, which are open resources 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 specific 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)





# Connecting Minds, Shaping the Internet

The last quarter has seen a vibrant series of gatherings shaping the global domain, Web3, and digital identity landscape. From the bustling halls of Marina Bay Sands at TOKEN2049 Singapore to the landmark Internet Identity Workshop XL in Mountain View, thought leaders, innovators, and executives came together to explore emerging technologies, exchange strategies, and forge new partnerships. Regional summits such as Dubai Domain Days further strengthened local ecosystems while offering global perspectives.

In this issue, Mattia Martone (Freename co-founder and COO) offers a brief recap of TOKEN2049 Singapore; James Williams (MrConnectivity) reports from Dubai Domain Days; Gherardo Varani shares his take on what made NamesCon Miami the key event of the quarter, while an exclusive interview with Helmut Meskonis, organizer of Domain Summit Africa, offers a preview of what's ahead for the continent's domain industry.

Looking forward, the coming months promise continued momentum with Domain Pulse 2026, ICANN85 in Mumbai, and CloudFest in Rust, among others. Whether your focus is blockchain, DNS infrastructure, or digital identity, these events remain central to understanding - and shaping - the evolving architecture of the internet.

## Past Events



### TOKEN2049

7-8 October 2025 | Singapore

For more information: [token2049.com/singapore](https://token2049.com/singapore)

TOKEN2049 Singapore, held on 7-8 October 2026 at Marina Bay Sands, set a new benchmark for global crypto gatherings with more than 25,000 attendees and 7,000 companies from over 160 countries. The event featured over 1,000 side events and transformed Marina Bay Sands into a "pop-up city," offering not only conference sessions but also immersive activities like ziplining, pickleball, and wellness experiences.

World-class speakers, including Vlad Tenev, Balaji Srinivasan, Tom Lee, and Richard Teng, addressed major trends in DeFi, tokenization, and Web3 innovation. Highlights included the NEXUS Startup Competition, where 10 finalists pitched to top investors for equity-free prizes, and the TOKEN2049 Origins hackathon, which took crypto ideas from concept to product within 36 hours.

The event also delivered flagship networking-over 60% of participants were C-level executives-and concluded with the AFTER2049 festival at the SkyPark, blending crypto culture with Singapore's Grand Prix energy. TOKEN2049 confirmed its status as the definitive annual summit for shaping the blockchain industry's future.

"Freename's presence at TOKEN2049 highlighted how innovation, Web3, domains, and AI are converging to redefine the digital landscape. The event offered a powerful mix of insights and opportunities, reinforcing how much potential there is to build solutions that genuinely help people

navigate and do business in the next era of the internet. During the event, Freename announced a major partnership with Sandchain by The Sandbox for the launch of .sand and the integration of their new Layer-2 chain. This collaboration further strengthens Fre-

ename's position as the world's most innovative registrar, where domains have Web3 superpowers, such as resolving blockchain wallet addresses. Because the future is not 0x. The future is your name. And TOKEN2049 was yet another confirmation of this vision."



**Mattia Martone**

COO and Co-Founder at Freename



### Internet Identity Workshop (IIW) XLI – 41st Edition

21 October 2025 | Mountain View (CA)

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

The Internet Identity Workshop (IIW) XLI – 41st Edition was held October 21, 2025 at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California, and drew a record-breaking, international crowd of digital identity architects, technologists, and policymakers. This milestone event saw participation from 223 U.S. attendees and representatives from 28 countries, highlighting expanding global interest in open and user-controlled digital identity innovations. IIW XL delivered hands-on collabora-

tion in an open space format-eschewing keynotes and sales pitches for self-organized technical, strategic, and community sessions-focusing on decentralized identity, authentication, verifiable credentials, and interoperability challenges. Emerging topics included agent-based architecture for personal digital identity, trust infrastructure for digital credentials, new protocols for AI agents and LLMs, and critical discussion on the limits of SSI and digital wallets.

The workshop fueled rapid progress in the open standards ecosystem (DIDs, OpenID, eIDAS, and more) and provided a forum for industry leaders and new entrants alike to connect, brainstorm, and advance shared protocols and privacy-preserving approaches. Despite reaching its 41st edition, IIW retained its informal and collaborative ethos, with participants shaping the agenda and driving deep conversations both in sessions and hallways.





## Dubai Domain Days 2025

22–23 October 2025 | Dubai

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

Dubai Domain Days 2025 took place on 22–23 October at the Marriott Resort Palm Jumeirah, marking the event's third and biggest edition yet for the MEA region's domain and web hosting industry. This summit united global experts, registries, and innovators to discuss domain investments, Web3 domains, hosting, cloud, cybersecurity, and monetization strategies, with a dynamic agenda of panel sessions, fireside chats, and networking gatherings.

Dubai's glittering skyline framed the third edition of Domain Days Dubai, held October 22nd and 23rd, 2025, at the luxurious Marriott Resort Palm Jumeirah. With over 300 attendees and 50 global speakers, the event broke records for international participation, cementing its role as the MEA region's top forum for domain names, web hosting, and digital innovation.

Founded and curated by Munir Badr, Domain Days launched in 2023 and I had the privilege of working with Munir on that inaugural event, establishing a foundation for this 'must-attend' gathering of domain investors, registrars, and tech leaders. This year

The conference spotlighted headline topics like Domain Fractionalisation, ICANN's upcoming new gTLDs, Web3's impact on the domain space, IP and trademark case studies, and community best practices for Wordpress and hosting. Attendees enjoyed two full days of connections and learning, capped off by exclusive social experiences, including a sunset cruise aboard Dubai's largest mega yacht, "Lotus". Distinguished speakers included Munir Badr (AEserver), Dr. Marwan Alzarouni

expanded on that, exploring domain auctions, monetisation strategies, AI-driven management, and the surging importance of Web3 domains in the digital ecosystem.

A spotlight fell on efforts bridging Web2 and Web3, with innovators like Freename pioneering solutions such as their patented WebUnited protocol. This technology mirrors traditional domains into blockchain, creating seamless hybrid identities and uniting ecosystems. Panels ignited discussions on these trends and the conference doubled as the official launch for Domora ([www.domora.com](http://www.domora.com)), Freename's game-changing platform for

(Dubai Blockchain Centre), Sandy Carter (Unstoppable Domains), and leaders from Freename, .za Domain Authority, INTA, and Radix.

With support from sponsors like Nova Registry and Domora by Freename, and active participation from WebPros, Sedo, DMARC Manager, it.com Domains, and more, Domain Days 2025 reinforced Dubai's position as a hub for shaping the future of domains and digital identity in the Middle East and beyond.

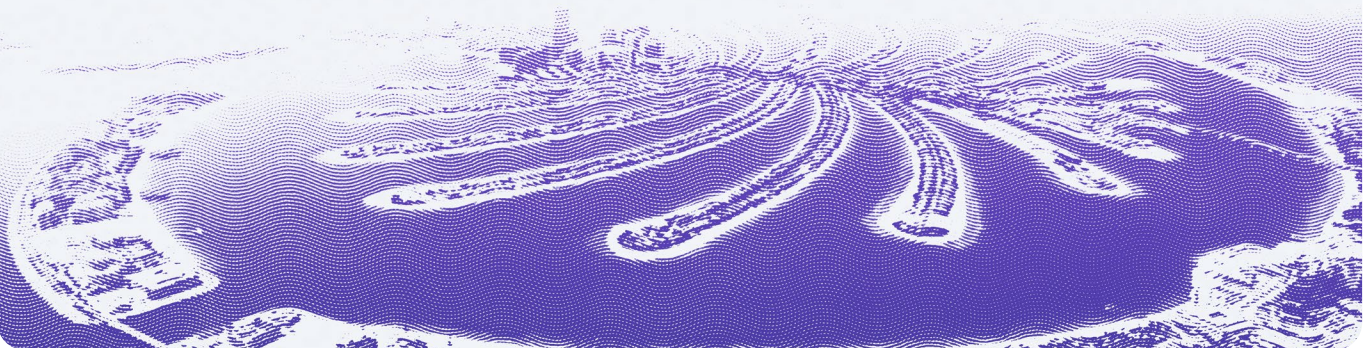
domain liquidity via fractional ownership - allowing investors to buy, sell, and trade shares of premium domains effortlessly.

Standouts for me included Monte Cahn's online auction and the amazing networking opportunities for all present. The event closed spectacularly on Dubai's 74-meter mega yacht "Lotus" and I am pleased to announce that the event will be back in Dubai mid-October 2026, scheduled currently to be right after the ICANN meeting in Oman. See you out in Dubai for Domain Days Dubai IV next October!



**James Williams**

CEO MrConnectivity Ltd., Adviser & Ambassador to Freename



## Key Events of the Quarter



### Namescon

5–6 November, 2025 | Ice Palace Film Studios, 1400 N Miami Ave, Miami, Florida

For more information: [namescon.com](https://namescon.com)

This major annual event brought together domain investors, registry operators, service providers, and entrepreneurs to explore the evolving world of domain names and digital assets. The Miami edition delivered a vibrant, festival-like atmosphere

in the city's arts district, building on more than two decades of NamesCon history. Attendees experienced expert keynotes and topical sessions covering investing, new gTLDs, UDRP management, industry best practices, digital asset auc-

tions, and interactive panels. Networking activities and social events—including a welcome party, food truck lunches, and community games—fostered new connections across the domain ecosystem.

### NamesCon Miami 2025 - A Turning Point for the Industry

NamesCon returned to Miami with incredible momentum this year, bringing together leading voices from across the global domain ecosystem - registrars, investors, brokers, brands, infrastructure providers, and a growing wave of Web3 innovators. The atmosphere throughout the venue reflected what many already feel: the domain space is evolving faster than ever.

Miami proved to be the perfect backdrop - energetic, international, and full of momentum, mirroring the transformation un-

derway in the industry.

The conference floor was packed with meaningful discussions ranging from premium domain strategies to emerging identity standards, interoperability, AI naming trends, and perhaps most notably: the convergence of DNS and blockchain. Freename had a strong presence throughout the event:

- A dedicated booth
- Dozens of product demos and partner meetings

• Multiple interviews recorded both onsite and in a dedicated external studio

• Countless conversations with registrars, service providers, domainers, and web infrastructure companies

This year, interest was significantly higher than previous editions - a signal that the industry is now actively looking beyond traditional models and toward new ways domains can operate and generate value.

### Blockchain Meets DNS

One of the key moments of the conference was the panel moderated by Freename, featuring:



**Andrew Allemann**  
Domain Name Wire



**Shane Layman**  
MarkMonitor

The conversation focused on one of the most anticipated questions facing the industry: How will DNS evolve when blockchain-enabled identity, ownership, and interoperability become standard? The timing couldn't have been better. Tokenization - once theoretical - is now entering production environments and real adoption cycles

### Tokenization & Fractionalization: The Next Shift

A recurring theme throughout NamesCon was the growing recognition that domain tokenization is no longer a niche experiment - it is emerging as a new capability layer for DNS:

- On-chain ownership
- Transfer automation
- Programmable renewals
- Payment and transaction routing
- Fractionalization and shared ownership models

Freename showcased this shift live through Domora - the first platform enabling fractional ownership of domain assets. For many attendees, seeing fractionalization operational (not hypothetical) was a defining moment of the event.

### A New Phase for Domains

NamesCon Miami made one thing unmistakably clear:

The domain industry isn't just evolving - it's expanding into new forms of identity, ownership, and utility.

Traditional DNS and blockchain naming systems are no longer separate worlds - they're aligning, influencing each other, and shaping what comes next.

Innovation is accelerating, and Freename is proud to help lead that transition - working with registrars, wallets, platforms, and the broader naming community to build a future where domains are not just digital real estate, but programmable digital identity.



written by  
**Gherardo Varani**  
Head of BD at Freename





What's to Come?



Domain Pulse 2026  
February 4–5, 2026 | SQUARE, University of St. Gallen,  
Guisanstrasse 20, 9010 St. Gallen, Switzerland

For more info: <https://domainpulse.ch>

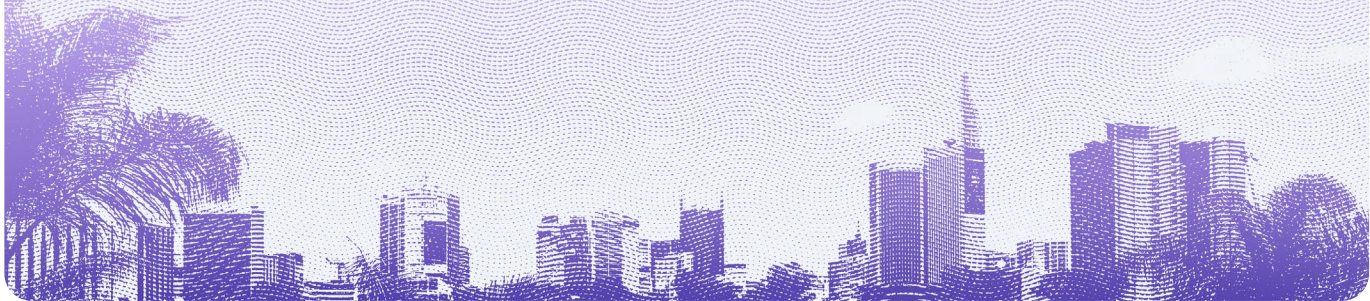
Domain Pulse 2026 is the largest domain industry conference in the German-speaking DACH region, hosted by SWITCH in cooperation with DENIC and nic.at. This two-day event offers expert talks, lively panel discussions, and cross-industry perspectives focusing on DNS security, CERT collaboration, resolver infrastructures, digital trust, and the evolving role of registries. It primarily targets registrars, ISPs, security professionals, legal experts, policymakers, and others active in the domain sector. The primary language of the conference is German, with selected presentations in English, but without simultaneous interpretation. The event includes innovative features such as the “Security Arcade,” a team-based interactive security awareness game, alongside an exhibition area with leading domain industry exhibitors. Registration is free and will open in autumn 2025, with ample networking opportunities including an evening get-together. The venue, SQUARE at the University of St. Gallen, provides a modern setting for this important annual meeting in the domain community.



Domain Summit Africa  
February 23–24, 2026 | Villa Rosa Kempinski in Nairobi, Kenya

[nairobi2026.domainsummit.africa/e/2138663442](https://nairobi2026.domainsummit.africa/e/2138663442)

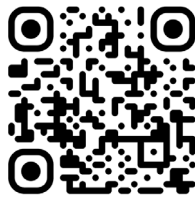
This premier domain industry event is recognized as the largest B2B domain conference on the African continent, bringing together domain service providers, registrars, investors, IT entrepreneurs, and digital industry leaders from across Africa and beyond. The summit features a comprehensive program including keynotes, expert panels, workshops, and an exhibition, with roughly 90% of speakers hailing from the African region. It focuses on fostering real business opportunities and partnerships within the domain ecosystem. The event kicks off with a pre-event day on February 22 featuring an exclusive KeNIC office tour and a networking drinks reception at the venue. Attendees benefit from continuous networking opportunities over meals and informal gatherings, with many choosing to stay at the official venue, Villa Rosa Kempinski, which offers special rates. The summit is a 100% business-focused event aimed at connecting top African domain registrars and ccTLD operators with global digital leaders to grow business networks across the continent's digital infrastructure landscape.



ICANN85 – Community Forum  
7-12 March, 2026 | Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, India

For more info: [meetings.icann.org/en/meetings/icann85/](https://meetings.icann.org/en/meetings/icann85/)

Hosted by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), this six-day event is the first meeting in ICANN's annual cycle of three global public meetings. The forum includes sessions for the internal work of Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees, cross-community interactions, and plenary discussions on internet governance, DNS operations, cybersecurity, and global digital policy. The event offers opportunities for in-person and virtual participation, with registration opening in late 2025. ICANN85 is a key venue for stakeholders worldwide to collaborate, discuss policy development, and advance the security and stability of the global internet.



Cloudfest 2026  
23-26 March, 2026 | Europa-Park, Rust (Germany)

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

This event is recognized as the world's leading cloud industry conference, drawing over 10,000 participants, 250+ speakers, and 150+ partners from more than 80 countries. Cloudfest is renowned for its unique festival atmosphere, transforming Europa-Park into a hub for cloud computing, internet infrastructure, and technology innovation. The conference features keynote speeches, panel discussions, hands-on masterclasses, and an exhibition hall with vendors showcasing the latest solutions in hardware, cybersecurity, open source, and more. In addition to educational sessions, the event highlights an extensive networking program, including legendary parties, a street food festival, and a dedicated CloudFest Lab for creative collaboration. New for 2026, the event introduces six thematic tracks focusing on the sustainability of digital infrastructure, alongside innovations in cloud technology and best practices for the evolving industry. Attendees can register now, with registration opening early, and can look forward to a vibrant and influential gathering designed to shape the future of the internet economy.





# Why Nairobi, Why Now: Helmut Meskonis on Building Domain Summit Africa



## Helmut Meskonis



Helmut Meskonis, founder of Domain Summit and HostMaria. Owner of DNForum.com (est 2001), AcornDomains.co.uk (est 2004), ConsultDomain.de (est 2002) and a number of more domain name forums - sending out 38k+ newsletters every Tuesday to our users (domain investors).

Helmut, great seeing you back on the pages of The Domain Standard. After the success of Domain Summit London and Domain Summit Asia, you're now bringing the event to Africa, and specifically to Nairobi. What drew you to Kenya, and why do you think now is the right time to host a summit here?

This seems to be a collection of fortunate life events :)

We became friends with the new KeNIC team after Andrew Lewela Mwanyota, the CEO of KeNIC, came to Domain Summit London in 2023. After that we kept in touch. A lot of this is also down to the super-friendly nature of KeNIC's CMO, Gitau Muraguri.

For me, Kenya was never just "a dot on the map". It felt like an answer to a question I've had for years: How do we take Domain Summit global, with partners we can actually trust?

Nairobi seems to be that answer.

Also, Kenya has a huge 57.5 million people and is one of Africa's biggest and most dynamic economies. In early 2025 there were about 27+ million internet users in the country, with internet penetration almost close to 50%.

It is a regional hub, and many registered attendees already appreciate it :) Flights from Europe, the Middle East and across Africa connect through Nairobi every day. That matters a lot when you run an international B2B event.

I have heard that Kenya itself has more mobile SIM cards than people and mobile money is a daily habit, not a "future trend". This makes it a very very unique and interesting market. KeNIC has grown .KE from fewer than 1,000 registrations in 2002 into a serious ccTLD player.

And even more - the energy of Andrew and Gitau feels familiar to me. It is the same "let's build something real together" spirit we have in Europe, but with even stronger family traditions in the background.

Why now? Because African domain markets are moving from "potential" into "execution". And because there is a gap: there are effectively no dedicated B2B domain-industry events for the continent. Of course, this wouldn't be possible if today 2 major forces Site.Pro and Freename didn't financially support the upcoming Summit which helped me covering all the main hotel costs (that are very significant, of course).

The main idea of Domain Summit Africa is to help unite that African domain name ecosystem, allow foreign businesses talking and doing business in Africa and create a proper annual meeting point here in Nairobi.

I noticed reading the program of the conference that for Domain Summit Africa you're planning for around 90% of the speakers to come from the continent itself. That's a strong statement. What's behind that decision, and how do you think it will shape the kind of conversations and partnerships we'll see in Nairobi?

Yes, I am planning that around 90% of the speakers come from Africa. And, yes - maybe this is a brave plan and difficult to realize it. I will do my best to achieve this!

Now with a new Global Partner like Team Internet on board, this number may shift a bit. Major sponsors usually get stage time. That is part of the game for all the events organizers and a common courtesy for good business.

Still the principle stays the same: this event should sound like Africa, not like a rerun of the same global speaker list.

At many "local" events I attend, quite often I see the same well-known international names on stage. They are great and super professional people, no doubt for that, though sometimes you leave without really understanding the local market. You hear polished case studies. I really want stories from registrars in Lagos, Nairobi or Kigali, where experience is shared how they actually fight for every customer and what are the lessons learnt.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent. It has 54 countries and a very young population. And, by the way, this is the only continent in the world with a growing population. Yet in our industry, many companies still treat it as "one region" on a slide.

So the 90% local-speaker goal is also a mirror we hold up to the global players:

Do you really have strong, empowered representatives in Africa?

Do they have a real African voice and regional expert, or are they just "someone on the ground"?

If we do this right, the conversations in Nairobi will be very practical: real pricing tactics, registry-registrar agreements, reseller networks, local marketing, mobile-first onboarding.

Less theory. More business. More deals. This is the plan :)

You've always emphasized that the Summit isn't just another conference. It's about building real connections. What kinds of opportunities will attendees have this time to actually network, collaborate, or even make deals on the spot?

I always design Domain Summit as a place where policy is in the background. Deals, partnerships and growth should be in the front plan.

And, Nairobi will follow the same logic. We are working to bring together African registries, registrars, marketplaces, hosting companies, infrastructure providers and investors into one building. Then we give them time and space to talk.

Practically, that means that we will have an exhibition area where African ccTLD registries can sit down with existing and potential registrars. Of course, there will be lots of break time and networking space, not just back-to-back panels. And yes, we plan to have a super cool KeNIC office tour for pre-selected attendees.

We will have roundtables and small sessions where people can deep-dive into topics like pricing, reseller models or payments, and of course, the industry common side events and dinners with more relaxed atmosphere, where real trust is built.

Just look at the African ccTLD numbers and the demographics. The growth potential is huge. The continent's internet economy alone is expected to hit around \$180 billion by 2025.

The need is here: registries have growth targets that can be reached mostly with their registrar partners, new local resellers and service providers want to meet global infrastructure players, and for all this a cross-border event like Domain Summit seems to be an answer.

My view is simple: businesses should leave Nairobi with new contracts to sign, not just photos for LinkedIn.

Africa's digital and domain landscape is incredibly diverse from fast-growing markets like Nigeria and Kenya to emerging ones that are just getting started. How did you approach building an agenda that speaks to that diversity while keeping a global perspective?

The main agenda is getting many major African ccTLDs to Nairobi as exhibitors, and the plan is coming together nicely. To get this achieved we are offering 10 complimentary exhibiting tables to selected African ccTLDs. The only gentleman's request is: invite your registrars and partners to meet you in Nairobi, face to face. And, KeNIC are individually inviting all their ccTLD colleagues to the Domain Summit Africa. This helps us balance the agenda: East, West, North, Southern Africa all having a voice, plus a few carefully selected global players to bring in external experience where it actually helps.

And finally, looking beyond February 2026. What's your long game for Domain Summit Africa? Do you see it becoming a recurring event, or perhaps the start of a larger African network within the global domain industry?

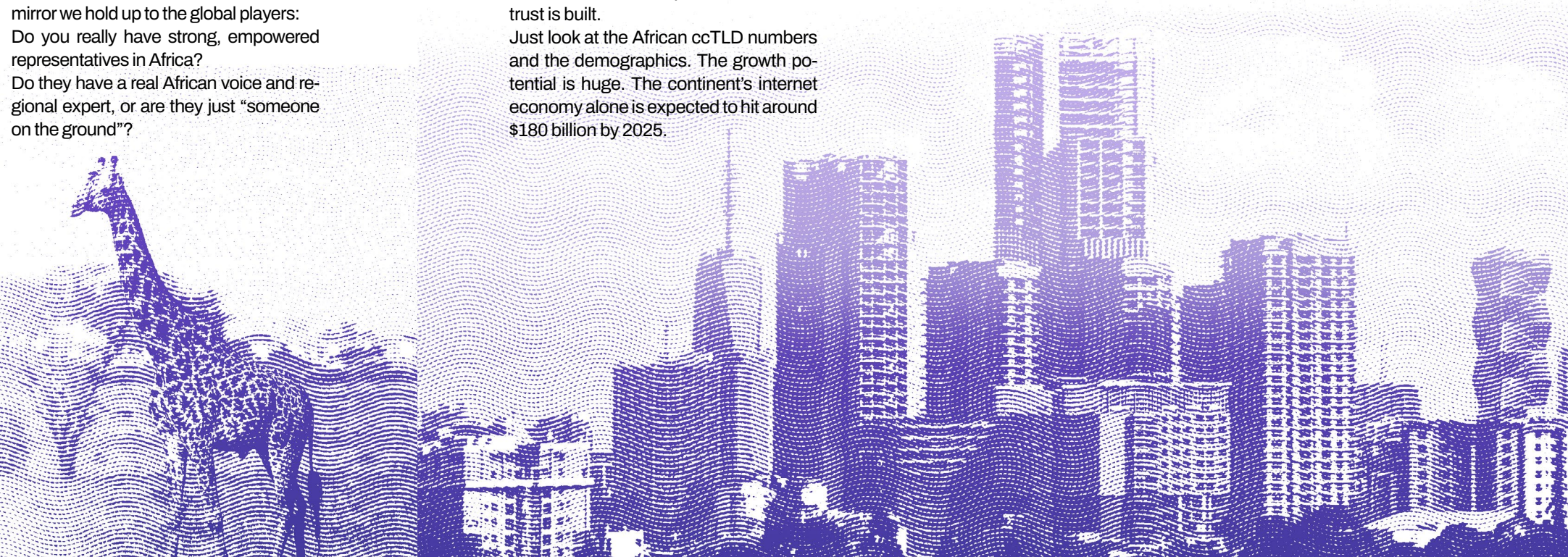
The long game for Domain Summit Africa is to run it consistently, year after year for 10 years, and to do this with a dedicated African team of Domain Summit. After that, it will be properly established and will be on all the industry calendars when planning the next year's events that need to be attended. There is also a consideration to rotate the Domain Summit Africa - every choosing a new strong ccTLD, but the reality will show if this is possible.

Of course, there is also a business reality and I am very open about that :) This means that the event has to be financially healthy to be repeated each year. The good news is that the fundamentals are strong. The the partners are even stronger.

The future will show is this one of the backbones of the African domain name business industry. I sincerely hope it is. For me, Domain Summit is my life's work - it has to have a meaning and positive impact. Why else do we do what we do? Just money?

Be happy and productive! Helmut

**"The long game for Domain Summit Africa is to run it consistently, year after year for 10 years, and to do this with a dedicated African team of Domain Summit."**





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