

Protect your domain name

According to Howard Rybko, Synchrony CEO, many South African domain names (websites) are at risk because domain registration details are incorrect. This erroneous information occurs because of administration problems that are glossed over in the rush to register the domain, to get the site live and email up and running.



Howard Rybko, Synchrony CEO: If your domain registration details are wrong, you can guarantee you will have problems in the future.

“You can be sure that if your details are wrong, it will inevitably lead to problems further down the line,” says Rybko. He goes on to describe how a client’s website was inadvertently transferred to new ‘owners’ during an update of domain records to setup a new mail server.

He points out that this could be done with malice and would lead to inconvenience, embarrassment, downtime and the costs of getting one’s self out of this entirely avoidable mess.

The 60-second domain check

He goes on to explain how to check South African domains registered with COZA, however the principles can be used for checking the ownership and registration details of any domain.

- 1) Go to the COZA home page - type co.za in your browser
- 2) Click on the ‘Who Is’ (Registration Details) link midway down the left hand side of the page
- 3) When the ‘Who Is’ screen comes up, enter the name of your domain (skip the .co.za) and then click the ‘Enter’ button
- 4) You should get a registration page
- 5) Now perform the 60-second check

You need to check two vital items - 'Registrant Details', which should reflect your business name or personal name. The registrant is the legal owner of the domain. If it has the name of a service provider or an IT person then he or she owns the domain. The other is 'Email Addresses', of which at least one must belong to you or your organisation as all conversations about the domain are directed to these addresses.

The best practice is to have two or more addresses pointing to mail boxes that you control. Avoid using a person's name like john@xxx.co.za, rather use domains@xxx.co.za. This is because John can leave and then mail sent to him from COZA may go into a black hole. In addition, try to use another domain for one of the mail addresses - consider using a Gmail or similar public service mailbox as a backup. It is perfectly acceptable to have the mail address of service provider or IT company listed as the 'Tech Contact'.

If your email address does not appear on the form then you will be excluded from any form of control of the domain. If, for example, all email addresses point to your service provider, then only the service provider will be able to change and adjust the domain details. This effectively eliminates your ability to control your own domain.

Annual billing pitfalls - and how to avoid them

Another important benefit to making sure your email addresses are correct and accurate relates to the annual billing invoices that COZA sends to the email address list.

What often happens is that payment reminders end up with the wrong recipients and many are uninterested and the domain is suspended. This causes your site and email to go down until payment is made and the domain is reinstated. If your email addresses are correct then you will get the payment reminders and can act on them before this happens.

Domain changes

COZA uses a simple round robin voting process to approve and act upon any changes to the registration details. A voting email is sent to each email address on the form. The voting email allows the recipient to vote yes or no by presenting two words ['Accept'] ['Decline'] to the recipient, who votes by deleting one of these words and sending the other back to COZA and their vote.

Each mail address on the form represents a single vote. Voting rules are:

- Any update will be refused by COZA if zero responses (votes) are received;
- A single 'No' vote will prevent an update from going through;
- A 'Yes' vote with no declines (no votes) will allow the update to go through.

It is crucial to understand that some forms can have a single mail address, because each of the mail address fields have been filled in with the same email address.

In conclusion, performing the quick 60-second domain check, as suggested above, will ensure that you know enough about the registration process to maintain control of your assets. For more information, go to www.syncrony.co.za.