

# Secrets to Saving Money When Using a Web Designer

by Mary Anne Shew

When people learn that I own a Web design firm, the first question they usually ask is how much a Web site costs. As with most things, the answer is: "It depends." Each of my estimates takes into account numerous factors, several of which a business owner can take care of before working with me, which will save me time and the business owner money. This series of articles addresses those factors.

In last month's newsletter I discussed the first secret: Answer four basic questions about your site's strategy and objectives before talking with a Web site developer. Those answers will ensure that the site will meet your objectives. They will help prevent misunderstandings and rework that can increase the site's development cost.

The second secret involves the site's domain name. Domain names are the least costly element of having a Web site. You can register one for \$5-25 (or more) per year. However, problems in three aspects of domain names are all too common. Getting the problems corrected can, in extreme cases, require lawyers and courts, an expense no one wants. Even in less serious situations, the problems still need to be fixed to ensure your site and its associated e-mail addresses operate properly and that you retain control over them. You'll have to pay your Web developer to take care of these problems or, with a little knowledge, you can prevent or resolve them yourself.

The three areas are:

1. Knowing the registrar

(domain name registration company) where you registered your domain name.

2. Having the correct "Registrant" name and address on the domain name.

3. Having a current "Administrative Contact" e-mail address on the domain name.

Let's use my company's domain name as an example. Go to any domain registration service (I like [www.DirectNIC.com](http://www.DirectNIC.com)) and type "shewtech.com" (without the quotation marks) into its search function, also called "WHOIS." Print out the resulting screen and refer to it while reading the rest of this article.

## It's 10 pm. Do You Know Where Your Domain Name Is?

Know which registrar your domain name is registered through. This is required before you can do such things as point your domain name to the hosting service on which your Web site resides. Also, knowing where it is registered prevents you from falling prey to e-mail based or direct-mail based scams that are thinly disguised attempts to transfer your domain name's registration from one registrar to another. For example, one company that has used such a tactic is Domain Registry of America. They are a legal registrar, but their marketing leaves a lot to be desired.

Some commonly used registrars are Register.com, BulkRegister.com, and GoDaddy.com. Where a domain name is registered is not easily determined through the WHOIS information, if at all, or anywhere

else. If you registered your domain name yourself, keep track of the registrar's URL and the login ID and password of the account you created with the registrar. If someone else registered your name for you, take the time now to search through your records and note who that was. (If you need to register a new name, use [www.DirectNIC.com](http://www.DirectNIC.com). I have used them for years and highly recommend them.)

## You Don't Own Me

No one truly owns their domain name even though the word "owner" is used to describe the person or organization under which a domain name is registered. Registrar terms and conditions for registering a domain name often resemble those for leasing an office or apartment. As long as the owner pays the registration fee, he or she owns the domain name.

Each domain name can have up to four separate names and addresses associated with it. The "Registrant" is the person or organization that the registrar considers to be the owner and final authority when it comes to that domain name.

The process to change Registrant information can be confusing and time consuming because the registrar must ensure it is dealing with the domain name's true owner to prevent domain name theft, cybersquatting, and scams.

So, to prevent problems, *your* business name and current address

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should be shown in the Registrant address, as is shown in mine. If your domain's Registrant address is out of date or, worse, shows the name of the company that registered your name for you, then it must be changed, or you risk losing the name. Either login to your account at the registrar where you registered it and fix the address, or contact the person who registered it for you and insist it be changed to your business name and address.

### Admin, Admin, Where Art Thou, Admin?

The e-mail address in the Admin Contact is the address a registrar uses to communicate with the owner of the domain name. If there is no separate Billing Contact address shown, then the Admin Contact is where the registrar sends e-mail reminders when the domain name registration is up for renewal.

If this e-mail address is no longer working, the registrar may or may not send a registration renewal letter to the Registrant address about the domain renewal.

If you haven't tracked when your registration is coming up for renewal, and the registrar's reminders don't reach you, you could lose your domain name.

If you lose your domain name, then your Web site will become the dreaded "404-Page Not Found" message. If you use an e-mail address with the domain name, you will no longer be able to receive those e-mail messages.

Should you ever want to move your domain's registration to another registrar (and there are numerous good reasons why you might want to do that), the Admin Contact is also the e-mail address your current registrar will use to

verify that the transfer is authorized. If someone registered your domain name for you but put their own e-mail address in this contact field, then it's possible for this person to block the transfer of your domain name to another registrar, even though you own the domain name and want that done.

The most common problem I encounter about the Admin Contact e-mail address is that the domain name owner changed e-mail addresses since the domain name was initially registered and never updated the registration information. For example, people often get rid of their Internet dial-up account and get a cable modem. The e-mail address they had with their dial-up account, e.g., somebody@frontiernet.net, becomes inactive. Then, when the registrar sends a registration reminder e-mail to that address, the e-mail goes into the Great Bit Bucket in the Sky (nowhere), you don't renew the registration, and your ownership of the name expires.

So, if your Admin Contact information needs correction, then either log in to your account at your registrar and fix it there, or contact the people who registered it for you and insist that they change it to *your* name, address, and e-mail.

If none of these three problems apply to you, congratulations! Otherwise, invest the time now to get things straight. You will be rewarded with less expense and greater peace of mind.

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