

Are You Master of Your Domain Name?

KEYS TO OWNING THE IDEAL URL FOR YOUR TEACHING BUSINESS

by David Gould, Staff Editor

Years ago when this company was undergoing a name change, “Proponent Group” was suggested and seemed like a good choice. Then came the dreaded moment of checking whether that name was already being used in another organization’s web address. In fact it wasn’t, however the name was indeed registered, owned and available for purchase. At too high a price, it turns out, especially when the workaround was simply to add a hyphen between “proponent” and “group.”

Now Proponent Group—and each of its members—is free to drop any unwanted hyphens, to subtract unwanted words, add desired words and otherwise clean up URLs while switching from .com to the highly appropriate .golf extension.

New URL Options Abound

In a sweeping change to the domain-name process, a slew of topic-oriented suffixes has been steadily added to Internet architecture. Instead of cobbling together awkward language in order to differentiate one URL from the rest, website owners suddenly have extensions like .cooking, .soccer, .fishing and .guitars—and that’s just in the Sports / Hobbies sub-category.

As this relatively immense set of additional extensions—over 600 in total—has become available, experts on Internet marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) have looked at examples of who made what URL changes and pondered whether a given switch represents significant improvement. In one case, influential blogger Christopher H. Laursen applauded the change made by an Idaho real estate agent who went from steventherealtor.com to stevenyoung.realtor. An obvious advantage here is that the agent’s last name becomes part of his web address. In that same blog post, Laursen pointed out that .realtor had emerged as one of the 10 most popular suffixes among that array of 600.

Meanwhile, .golf doesn’t seem to have caught fire in similar fashion. If you type “titleist.golf” into a URL box and hit return, the old familiar “titleist.com” does pop up, as



part of what’s called a website “redirect.” However the equivalent does not happen for “taylormade.golf,” “ping.golf” and many other major brands in the industry. What you get instead is a frowny-face icon and a message saying “This site can’t be reached.” In other words, golf’s largest and most successful companies don’t seem to be finding value in the .golf extension.

Is it time to use .golf?

But a Proponent member with a URL that’s never been satisfactory is in a different boat, and could indeed switch happily to the .golf suffix in order to achieve something like what our Idaho realtor pulled off. By the way, having those redirect commands installed by your web host will send your traffic to the old domain but then automatically redirect it to the new one. In time, as search engines update their databases, the new domain will pick up its own search results. Methods for how to redirect a URL will depend on a few factors, mainly what code your website is written in.

That’s the mechanics of it, which is second to the strategy aspect. Several months ago, the weekly marketing tip in Proponent Group’s emailed “Roundup” covered this very topic. It gave a shout-out to member Stan Moore for having leveraged the URL BocaRatonGolfLesson.com, and with that shrewd move taken a jump in Google search results up to the very top of the heap—usually No. 1, No. 2 or No. 3 when those keywords are typed in.

So, it’s worth reviewing what happens with important keywords such as these in the search process, and it’s also probably time to think about your URL and where it might be lacking. For some members the .golf extension could provide a boost to overall branding while helping pull more eyeballs to your business website.

As for the owner of “proponentgroup.com,” and anyone else who invested money to buy-and-stash website domain names, their assets must certainly have lost value with this overhaul of the naming system. Serves them right, we say. **PG**