

Where the Grass Appears Greener in Another URL...

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There was an [article](#) published in FoxNews.com that sheds light on the need for a viable domain name strategy when your business has an online presence. Apparently, a grade-school education site owner, Peter Vavak, created an educational website under the URL “newsbowl.com” to assist teachers in keeping their students abreast of current events in engaging ways including, but not limited to game-show styled quizzes and national competitions. According to WHOIS records, the domain name record was created some 12 years ago. Unfortunately for the owner, a “newsbowl.org” was registered sometime later in 2006 (according to WHOIS records) that provides news and information on...ahem...*medical marijuana*. Imagine a student mistyping in the “.org” gTLD instead of “.com”, let alone curious linking to related search results – needless to say, it would not be the kind of “bowl” educators would like to envision their students participating in...

The better question to ask here is: *Why did this happen in the first place?* Of course, I would not expect a site owner to understand the intricacies of trademark law and domain name usage; however, it is becoming more commonplace to register other gTLDs along with your intended secondary level domain name. First, doing so is not cost-prohibitive, with multi-year discounts available through most reputable domain name registrars. Locking up the most common “.com”, “.net” and “.info” domains is straightforward, and in many cases, the registrar lists the availability of such other domains during the registration process (admittedly for their own self-interest in getting more registration \$\$\$, but not an altogether improper position given the potential benefit conferred to the registrant). This can prevent the occurrence at the outset.

The good news is that the site owner appears to have obtained a federal registration for the trademark “NEWS BOWL” in 1995 – a fact that will definitely assist him in wrestling the domain name away from the current registrant through a Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution (UDRP) proceeding if necessary (a topic for another discussion). Nevertheless, it just should have never come to this point. At the time of obtaining the federal trademark registration, the better practice would have been to obtain domain names with other gTLDs tied to the “newsbowl” secondary level domain.

As they say, an ounce of prevention...and yes, the pun is intended...;)

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