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Brand protection and security threats: domain management at Red Ventures

Tegan Dover is information technology procurement manager at [Red Ventures](#), which owns consumer brands and businesses such as Lonely Planet, CNET, ZDNet, TV Guide and Chowhound. In that role she oversees the company's domain portfolio and has been the architect of its ongoing management and consolidation as the company has expanded in recent years.

In this guest piece, Elisa Cooper, head of marketing and product at [GoDaddy Corporate Domains](#), speaks to Dover about her perspectives on working collaboratively with other stakeholders, best practices for domain consolidation, emerging security concerns, and challenges she has seen impacting Red Ventures and its business environment.

Guest interview

Domain management has become a more intricate part of your job, and your favorite part. What makes it interesting for you?

Before I came into this IT procurement role, I had done freelance web design and digital marketing. That background gave me some exposure to the digital side of domains. Domains are dynamic and always changing. Now, new internet top-level domains (TLDs) are emerging, such as '.brands'. The fact that a company could own 'best.pizza' as a domain was fascinating to me. Back in the 90s, '.com' was the main TLD and even '.net' was seen as secondary. Now, there are several thousand other options for domains. So I have been following the '.brands' opportunity as a possibility for Red Ventures and recently discussed it with our marketing department. '.brands' are therefore something we may benefit from in the future, though we have no imminent plans to pursue them. The factors that could come into play when making the assessment of whether to pursue a '.brand' would include brand recognition, increased security and the need for simplified navigation.

How does your role overlap/intersect with people from legal and marketing departments?

Initially, responsibility for Red Ventures domains came to me along with SaaS administration. When I started in my position, our domains were decentralised and spread out across several registrars. This fragmentation was largely due to our history of multiple acquisitions. However, when the company got bigger and made several more acquisitions, many more domains came into the fold. Then, my team realised we needed to centralise and organise them with one main registrar.

Domain management itself is a cooperative effort at Red Ventures. If our marketing department wants to buy more domains, then legal gets involved to investigate trademark infringement and other legal issues. In my area, which combines IT with procurement, we are collaborating with marketing and legal, and we are continually reevaluating our domains. We identify which domains are most valuable, which ones are being productively used, and which ones are no longer serving the company.

Are there instances where a low traffic domain is deemed of high value?

Yes, we may choose to retain a low traffic domain for use in the future or as for defensive registration.

With a diverse portfolio of brands and businesses, Red Ventures has a large and varied domain portfolio. How large is it now, and how do you keep track of it all?

Red Ventures has several thousand domains which serve countries in North America, South America and Europe. We use a technology platform to assign domains to different groups based on market category such as banking, travel, media, technology and more. Our team can then filter domains further by brands within each category.

Red Ventures has made several acquisitions recently. How has this affected your domain portfolio and consolidation efforts and what challenges arose during your domain name consolidation process?

Due to numerous acquisitions, we had domains spread across over more than 20 registrars. This created security and general administrative efficiency concerns. We made a huge push to bring all domains together under one umbrella with a central user interface domain management technology system. Documentation, clarity and transparency are crucial as we are still maintaining domains which originated from many different sources.

What security trends are you seeing impact domains?

Security has become increasingly important. We use DNS records to secure emails sent from our primary domains. DNS records or 'zone files' are instructions that reside in authoritative DNS servers and provide information about a domain including what IP address is associated with that domain and how to handle requests for that domain.

We work with Red Ventures operations to secure domain names and vigilantly watch out for spoofers, phishers, hackers or other bad actors which are using illegitimate or similarly spelled domains to improperly imitate our legitimate product/brand names. We have added SPF (Sender Policy Framework), an email authentication standard which helps to protect senders and recipients from spam, spoofing, and phishing. We have also implemented DMARC (domain-based message authentication, reporting & conformance) to protect our email traffic against fraud. These measures ensure greater security and less risk to the company and its customers and third-party vendors.

What trends have you observed in terms of security threats and how has the company pivoted?

We have seen a lot of email spoofing recently. As such, we have increased the scope of our email security protocol and modified our DMARC policies.

Can you share insight where you came up with a creative solution regarding domains that still benefits Red Ventures today?

During RV's CNET Media Group acquisition in Fall 2020, we had to bring over approximately 1,000 of the company's domains into our centralised Red Ventures domain management system. We partnered with a domain name consulting firm and technology provider to divide domains into groups according to risk levels based on DNS records. Strategically, we started with low risk domains first, including domains that were not used or minimal usage, and then worked our way up to 'CNET.com' which was the most important, high-risk and high-stakes domain.

Elisa Cooper

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TAGS

[Brand management](#), [Enforcement and Litigation](#), [Online](#), [Internet and Online](#), [Media & Telecoms](#), [Travel & Leisure](#), [North America](#), [United States of America](#)