MAR 2018

.brands Industry Report

Everything you need to know about .brands

neustar.

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What is a .brand?

Over 550 of the world's largest brands now have their own piece of internet real estate.

brand.com ➡ anything.brand

It's time to end the search, and start connecting

.brand

The future for a connected world

www.makeway.world

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Foreword

A new year in the .brands space is always a good chance to reflect on the incredible progress of the previous 12 months.

And 2017 did not disappoint. It was a year we entered with great optimism, and that optimism was rewarded with significant momentum among .brands – from those who took the first steps towards rollout, to those who built up existing strategies, to those who took the plunge with full transitions.

Personally, it was incredibly exciting to see the emergence of trends in utilization, as we collectively learn and discover the potential benefits of .brands for digital marketing, customer experience and brand loyalty.

In this way, we're truly seeing the foundations for the next evolution of the internet: one that empowers consumers to regain control of their online experience and deepens connections between brands and their customers.

With 2018 well and truly under way, some of our key predictions for the next year in .brands are that these usage trends will continue to strengthen, particularly in campaign and promotional pages, and the use of .brands in social media (read more about this on page 17).

We're also expecting to see more emphasis on the security benefits of .brands, as organizations educate their customers that 'if it doesn't end in our .brand, it isn't us.' This could mean an unprecedented opportunity to build trust and legitimacy in the digital space.

Finally, 2018 will likely feature many brands challenging the status quo of digital, using new technologies in conjunction with their .brand to develop new tools and techniques for engaging with customers. AXA's use of Blockchain technology for its fizzy.axa site is just one great example of this.

We're no longer talking about a handful of examples in niche, technical industries. The .brands space now encompasses a huge number of the world's biggest brands, ready to reap the rewards of more direct customer relationships.
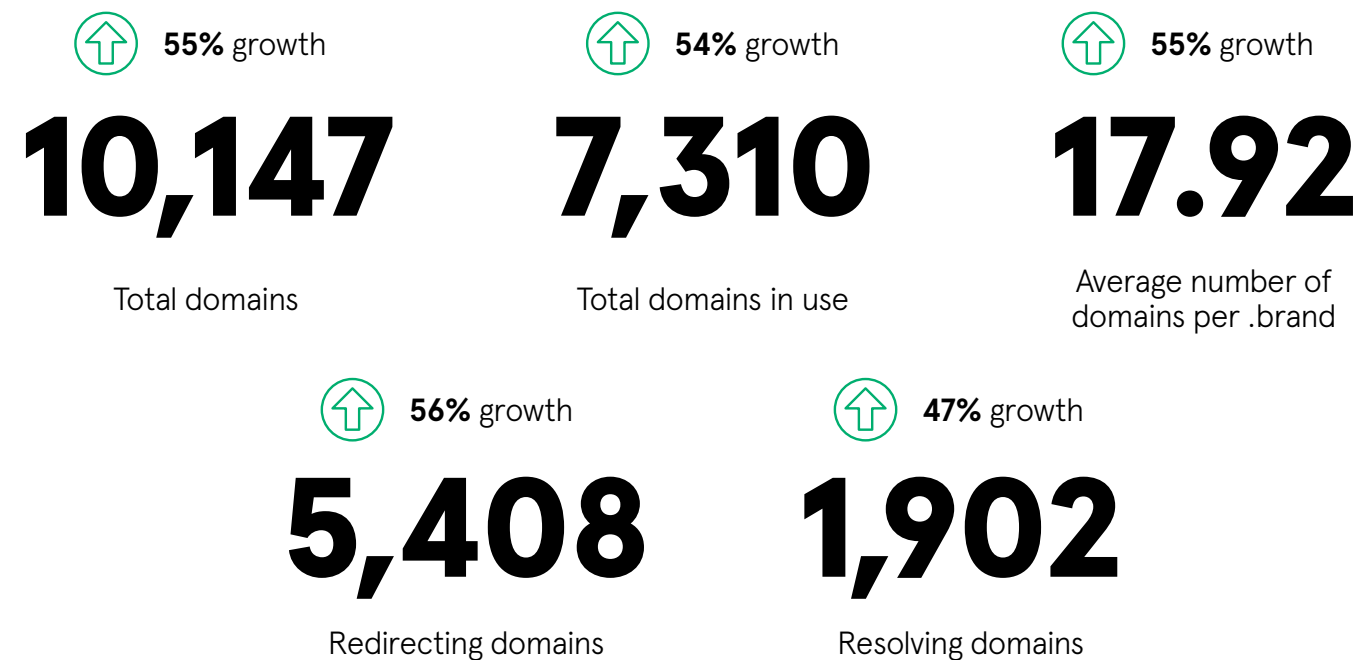
2018 is set to be a momentous year in .brands, and we're thrilled to be part of the movement that is truly revolutionizing digital.
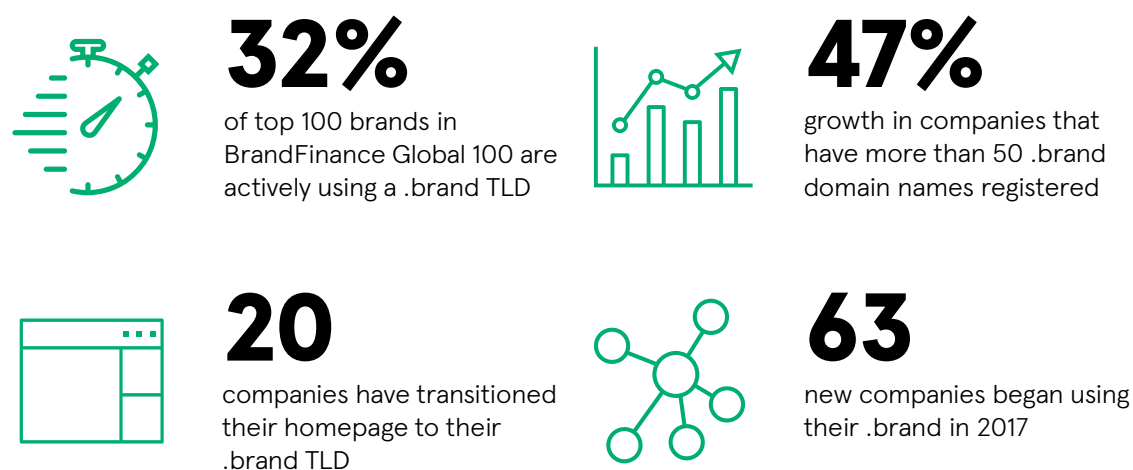
Tony Kirsch
Head of Professional Services, Neustar
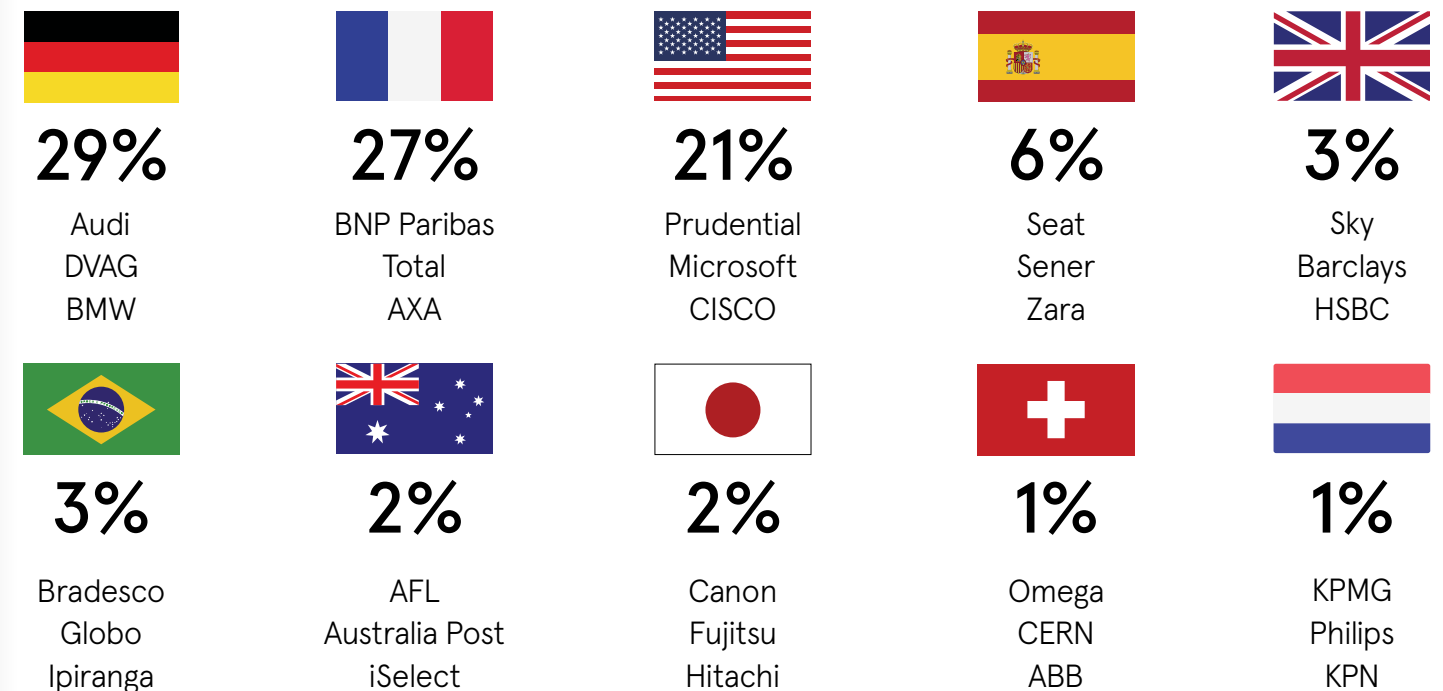tony.kirsch@team.neustar

By the numbers

↑ **55%** growth

10,147
Total domains

↑ **54%** growth

7,310
Total domains in use

↑ **55%** growth

17.92
Average number of domains per .brand

↑ **56%** growth

5,408
Redirecting domains

↑ **47%** growth

1,902
Resolving domains

The growth rates above indicate yearly change throughout 2017.

32%
of top 100 brands in BrandFinance Global 100 are actively using a .brand TLD

47%
growth in companies that have more than 50 .brand domain names registered

20
companies have transitioned their homepage to their .brand TLD

63
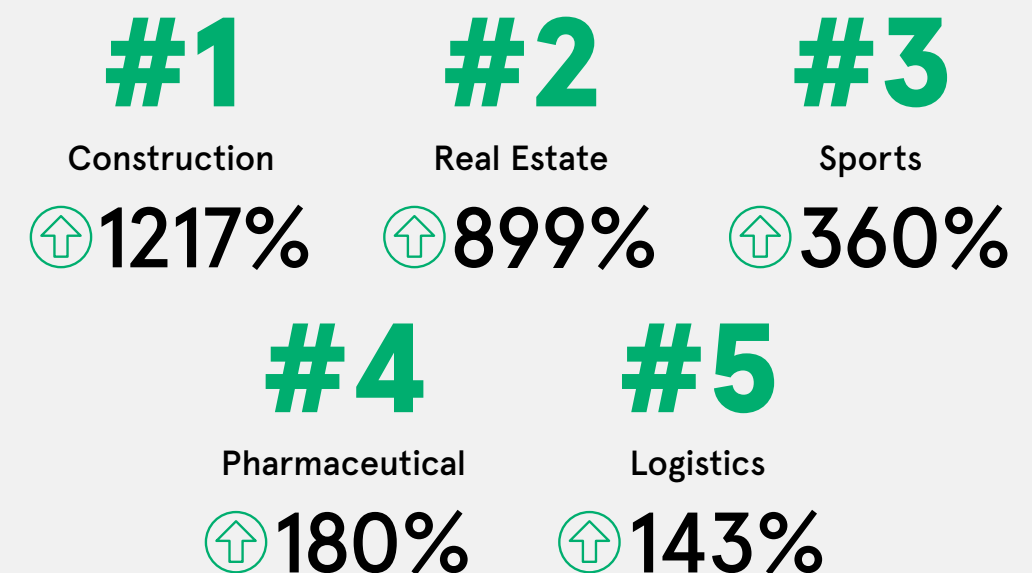new companies began using their .brand in 2017

The increase in brands with large volumes of domains, high number of new additions to the space and significant number of full transitions to .brands all further illustrate a shift towards usage of .brand domains.

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Where are the active .brand domains coming from?

29%
Audi
DVAG
BMW

27%
BNP Paribas
Total
AXA

21%
Prudential
Microsoft
CISCO

6%
Seat
Sener
Zara

3%
Sky
Barclays
HSBC

3%
Bradesco
Globo
Ipiranga

2%
AFL
Australia Post
iSelect

2%
Canon
Fujitsu
Hitachi

1%
Omega
CERN
ABB

1%
KPMG
Philips
KPN

All other countries 5%

Who were the fast movers in 2017?

#1
Construction
↑1217%

#2
Real Estate
↑899%

#3
Sports
↑360%

#4
Pharmaceutical
↑180%

#5
Logistics
↑143%

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Most commonly registered terms

social
facebook.audi
twitter.prudential
youtube.erni

my
my.audi
my.sky
my.swatch

careers/jobs
careers.ford
careers.bloomberg
jobs.dell

home
home.prudential
home.cisco
home.deloitte

news
news.sky
news.vistaprint
news.leclerc

www
www.sap
www.target
www.neustar

annual report
annualreport.deloitte
annualreport.sandvik
annualreport.kpn

about
about.philips
about.everbank
about.auspos

mail
mail.bentley
mail.toshiba
mail.kpn

shop
shop.mango
shop.abbott
shop.afl

Who is most actively using .brand domains?

1. Insurance
MMA
Esurance
Allstate

2. Real Estate
Jones Lang LaSalle
Capital One
Deutsche
Vermögensberatung

3. Automotive
Ford
Lamborghini
Bentley

4. Information Technology
Google
Microsoft
Cisco

5. Industrial
Philips
Sandvik
CITIC

6. Banking & Financial
Barclays
HSBC
State Bank of India

7. Media
Fox
Sky
Bloomberg

8. Retail
Target
Lidl
LeClerc

9. Manufacturing
Hitachi
DuPont
Komatsu

10. Health
Abbott
Fresenius
AARP


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.BRAND SHOWCASE

Showcase: .neustar

At Neustar, we think .brands are the future. In fact, we're certain of it. So much so, that we recently moved to our .neustar extension, in order to take advantage of everything that owning your own piece of the Internet provides.

With the challenges facing marketers today, why wouldn't we aim for better connections with our customers and increased efficiency of our advertising dollars? And truthfully, we're pretty excited about the opportunity to take back control of our data and get visibility on what our customers are looking for.

Our transition revolved around a number of key tasks, which together created a holistic approach to rolling out .neustar. These included:

1. Rebuilding our new website using home.neustar and cloning existing content to new site
2. Creating dedicated sites for each our business units
3. Building our own Neustar search engine at search.neustar
4. Creating new staff emails – name@team.neustar
5. Moving to a new, branded URL shortener in social media
6. Creating additional pathways to our content via redirects
7. SEO & analytics testing
8. Integration with existing systems
9. Launch communications for stakeholders

This is just a taste of the work we've done to launch our .brand. Learn more about our approach at hello.neustar and stay tuned for more resources based on our experience soon.
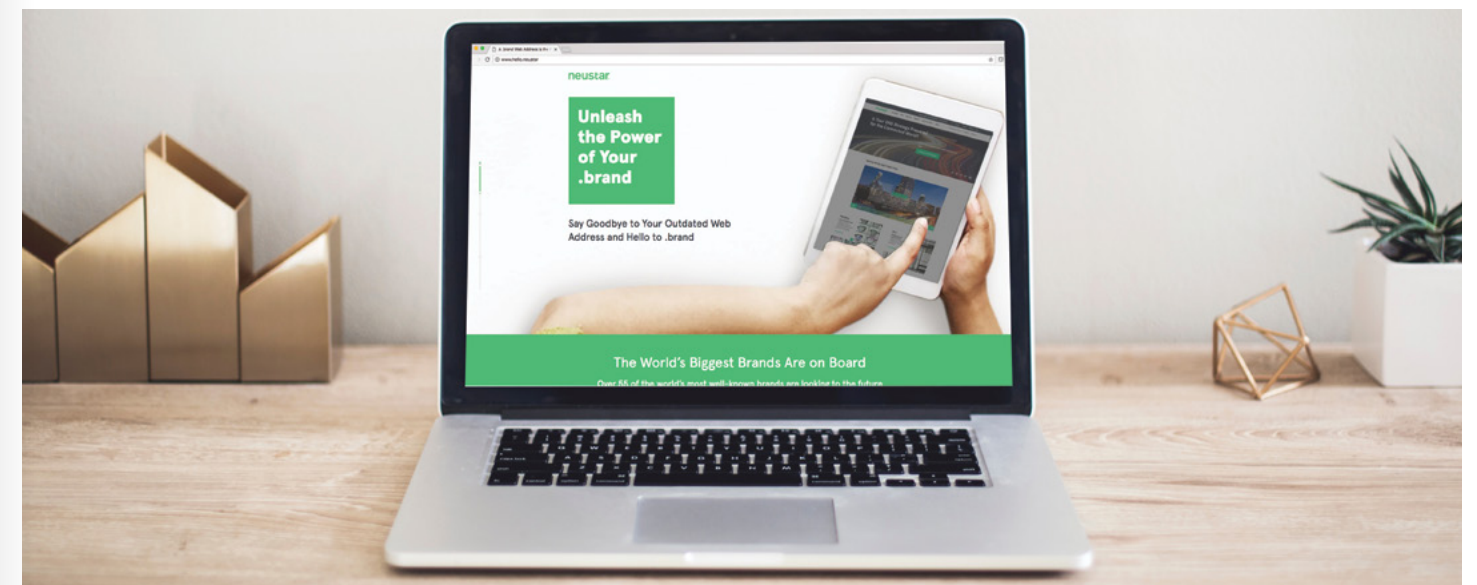
Showcase: Highlights
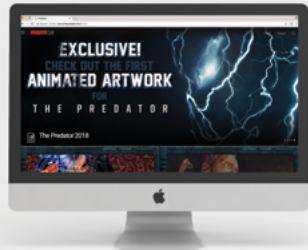
thepredator.fox

A fan application for FOX's Predator movie.

fizzy.axa

A microsite for AXA's new insurance product, Fizzy.

design.philips

A redirect to Philips' '90 years of design' campaign page.

letsride.hsbc

A microsite on HSBC's cycling-based health and fitness program.

pride.google

A microsite on US Pride celebrations from Google.

machinery.canon

A new site for Canon sub-brand Canon Machinery.

buildon.aws

A campaign site for AWS Cloud Solutions products.

timeline.barclaycard

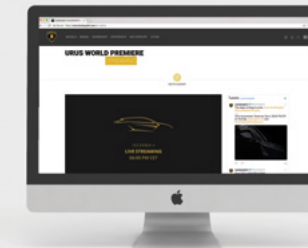An interactive timeline microsite of Barclaycard's history.

xbox.microsoft

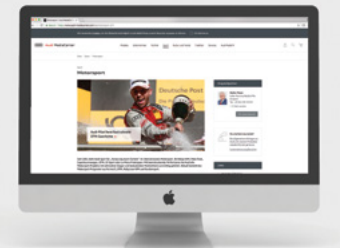A redirect to the product microsite for the Microsoft Xbox.
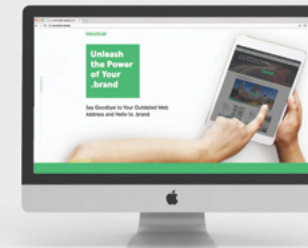
hello.neustar

A landing page promoting Neustar's move to .neustar.

live.lamborghini

A redirect to Lamborghini's live streaming service.

motorsport.audi
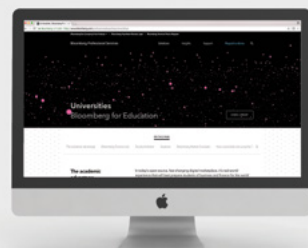
A shortcut to motorsport content on Audi's blog.

oui.sncf

A new customer site for French transport authority.

miku.ricoh

A product page from Ricoh promoting a new brand collaboration.

institute.bloomberg

A shortcut to the website for Bloomberg Institute.

sbiyono.sbi

A product page for the State Bank of India's Yono product.

globaltrade.dhl

A shortcut to DHL content about global trade.

pr.kia

A redirect to Kia's corporate media and press information.

.brand insights

Advice and guidance for your .brand

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Insights: Amazon Web Services targets startups with .aws

In a highly-publicized advertising campaign, Amazon Web Services featured a memorable .brand domain call-to-action to capture commuting passengers. So what can other .brands learn from AWS' efforts?

Amazon Web Services targets startups with .aws

Tony Kirsch – Head of Professional Services, Neustar

It will come as no surprise that I get pretty excited about seeing .brand domains launch.

At Neustar we're all in on promoting .brand usage in any industry, from all around the world and as such, we're always watching closely for any signs of new domains on the horizon, trawling for case studies or any hint of new activity.

So imagine my surprise when a brilliant .brand example jumped out in front of me at JFK airport.

Amazon Web Services (AWS) recently launched a campaign around its AWS Cloud solutions, appealing to startups, creators and 'builders.' The catchy tagline "Build On" rounds out the branding nicely – and the go-to location for information is the new address buildon.aws.

The campaign includes a great video that speaks to 'the new builders' of today's startups and big businesses, as well as billboard and other display advertising at major airports and train stations throughout the US. All these efforts use the buildon.aws call-to-action.

Credit where it's due

This is an extraordinary effort from AWS. As I've written in the past, we're under no illusion that changes to branding in major organizations is easy. In fact, my entire job revolves around slowly but surely making the case for brands to change their approach to branding, marketing and online navigation. And that can be a gamble – it's no easy feat and I acknowledge that.

And that's why I'm so impressed by this launch from AWS – for a brand as established, recognized, and customer-facing as Amazon this must have taken a lot of effort.

It takes guts to see the potential benefits of .aws to the brand as a whole. It takes trust that customers won't be deterred by an unfamiliar domain. And it takes some awesome forward-thinking to rethink customer experience in this way and consider how to create the most memorable, meaningful call-to-action possible.

Not just new domain, but a new approach to marketing

The Seattle Times reported in November that this campaign is unique in another way: widespread advertising like this is almost unheard of from AWS. As reporter Matt Day pointed out, "For many years, AWS didn't advertise, partly because it didn't have to. The service held a wide lead over the competition, and word-of-mouth was enough to catapult the company's tools atop the growing market for web-based business software."

This makes our interest in the campaign from a .brand perspective all the more heightened: when a brand of this scale does such minimal advertising, its efforts are bound to be watched even more closely. And AWS has chosen its .brand for this rare mainstream effort.

Back to advertising basics

I've written before about the considerations required for using .brand domains in advertising, and how a simple 'back to basics' approach to advertising theory can remind us of the most important aspects of audience, medium and recall.

AWS has done an excellent job here of applying solid 'old-school' advertising principles to a 'new-school' asset. And who would expect less

of Interbrand's number five 'Best Global Brand', especially one highlighted as one of the top growing brands in 2017?

You don't get to a position like that by sticking to the status quo, and Amazon has really shown its mettle here.

For example, the decision to include 'www' in the call-to-action is a clever tool to avoid any possible confusion around the new .aws extension and to reinforce audience education that this is a legitimate address.

Also, given the ads appeared largely in locations where people are commuting, recall is vital for the success of the campaign – so the 'build on' branding and a call-to-action that sticks in audience's minds are essential.

Throwing down the gauntlet

With more than 10,000 domains registered under .brand domains (and over 50% growth in 2017), momentum is undeniably growing. In fact, this isn't even the first domain on .aws – Amazon has also created specific product domains like ecs.aws and kinesis.aws.

However in this burgeoning space there is still an opportunity to be a 'first mover.' Widespread advertising using a .brand domain is still something we've seen only sparingly, and Amazon has gone big here with its buildon.aws campaign.

It's truly impressive to see a brand of this size get a campaign like this off the ground using its .brand domain.

And it's not a stretch to say this serves as a challenge to other .brand applicants: tackle the challenges of internal engagement and take advantage of the unique branding opportunities offered by .brand domains – or be left behind by those who are.

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.BRAND INSIGHTS

Insights: Rethinking 'links' in social media

Throughout its evolution, the practice of marketing has maintained simple objectives; inform and educate consumers, build relationships with them; and prompt them to take action.

And despite all the technical innovations over that time, the game remains pretty much the same. But things do change. This is the core of progress. To question the existing and follow the potential of finding a better way.

Let's consider the URL shortener, or the 'link'. A tool built from necessity in a social digital world. A tool that until recently, no-one stopped to ask 'what the hell are we doing?'

Saving the character count

Writing for social media has its own requirements due to the audience, typical behavior and general restrictions of the platforms available – such as Twitter and its historical 140-character limit.

Because of these limitations, a new 'best practice' has developed – the use of a URL shortener – where the typically long destination URL of the content is transformed into a short URL.

In addition to reducing the number of characters, one of the additional benefits of a URL shortener platform is that it often provides great insights into how posts are shared, clicked and are otherwise performing.

The game is changing

In recent years, Bitly reported that shortened links with some reference to your brand were capable of driving up to a 34% increase in click-through rate – a massive boost in any context.

And so brands took the advice, to varying levels of success:

· Some did a good job by using a shorter ccTLD or similar – ibm.co etc
· Some added a little extra to the domain – on.nfl.com
· Some made an attempt to represent their brand – bloom.bg, xfin.tv, ora.cl
· Others just hacked something together out of their brand – capitl1.co, at.van.fedex.com, s.gm.com

But despite this insight, a large proportion of brands – some of whom really ought to know better – still use generic links in social media.

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A new way of branding links

For organizations with a .brand, there now exists a better way to approach social links. The ability to create something short and branded means the best of both worlds – custom links, control of data and an accurate representation of your brand in every post.

In fact, this can be one of the simplest ways to get started with a .brand domain as we've noticed with organizations such as HSBC, Philips and us at Neustar.

Even then, not all customized links are created equal. It's all well and good to include your brand in your links, but what about that randomly generated text after the slash?

Think about it, what looks better:
i.neustar/3nsdD7 or i.neustar/socialblog

This part of your link gives people a preview of what to expect. Highly-available and often free tools exist that make this customization quick and easy. It's almost too simple, and is out there waiting and available for any brand to take advantage of.

The importance of brand in social

The matter at stake here is bigger than freeing up a few more characters.

It's about building things that people can identify and can trust. It's about increasing visibility of your brand, and your product. It's about creating a consistent experience for customers.

Identifying, connecting, tracking, building trust, branding. All of these outcomes are crucial to what marketers try to do every single day. So why are so many stuck in an old way of thinking?

About Neustar.

Neustar, Inc. is a leading global information services provider driving the connected world forward with trusted, holistic identity resolution. As the only company capable of understanding who is on the other end of every interaction, Neustar is trusted by the world's great brands to grow and guard their businesses with the most complete understanding of how to connect people, places and things. The combination of Neustar's unique, accurate, and real-time identity system and our cloud-based workflow solutions empower our clients to make actionable, precise and valuable decisions across marketing, risk, IT/security, network and operations departments. As the sole provider of the U.S. Number Portability Administration Center (NPAC), Neustar also facilitates the routing of all telephone call and text messages in the U.S. More information is available at www.home.neustar.

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