



.brands Industry Report

Everything you need to know about .brands

FEBRUARY 2019

neustar[®]
www.registry.neustar

What is a .brand?

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



It's time to end the search, and start connecting.
.brand The future for a connected world.

www.makeway.world

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INTRODUCTION

Foreword.

**Tony Kirsch**

Head of Professional Services, Neustar

tony.kirsch@team.neustar**Welcome to the latest edition of the .brands Industry Report.**

In looking at the progress that's been made since we've been publishing these reports, there is unquestionably a groundswell of new .brand usage.

However, whilst we've seen consistent and impressive .brand usage by some of the world's most prolific brands, it's fair to admit that the expected fanfare and explosion of adoption across the industry has not occurred. This leads me to believe that the importance of aligning to your company's strategy and ensuring that sufficient support and education has been garnered appears to be more important for this type of innovation, as distinct to responding to competitor movements or other industry trends.

While this represents a shift from our previous thinking, upon reflection it seems logical that this is in fact exactly how a maturing space should behave. In any new technology, you often see an initial spike of activity – but, as we all know, this isn't sustainable. In order to see longevity and future innovation, there have to be periods of settling and stabilizing between the peaks.

I for one am really excited to see this industry continuing to mature and finding its feet as a stable, sustainable part of brands' long term tech and marketing arsenal.

In this edition of the .brands Industry Report, I speak with Kevin Audritt from HSBC about how one of the largest banking organizations in the world started using a .brand TLD to create shortened links in social media – and increased click-through rate in the process. Kevin's experience provides great insight into gaining internal buy-in for your .brand project so I recommend checking out the article on page 15.

Taking this theme even further, my colleague Corey Grant unpacks the benefits of using branded links beyond social media – incorporating them into everything you do as a business to allow greater data and insight, better customer experience and truly embedding your .brand into your daily business practices. Read Corey's article on page 19.

Thanks for reading the .brands Industry Report and as always, we encourage your feedback and input. Reach out to your Neustar representative or contact me on the email above – I'd love to hear from you. ■

2018 By the numbers.

Total domains

15,595

↑ 54% growth

Total domains in use

10,509

↑ 50% growth

Average number of domains per .brand

27.6

↑ 54% growth

Redirecting domains

7,923

↑ 53% growth



Growth is calculated from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2018

Resolving domains

2,586

↑ 41% growth



47

New brands using their TLD in **2018**
(Use is defined as >2 domains registered)



91

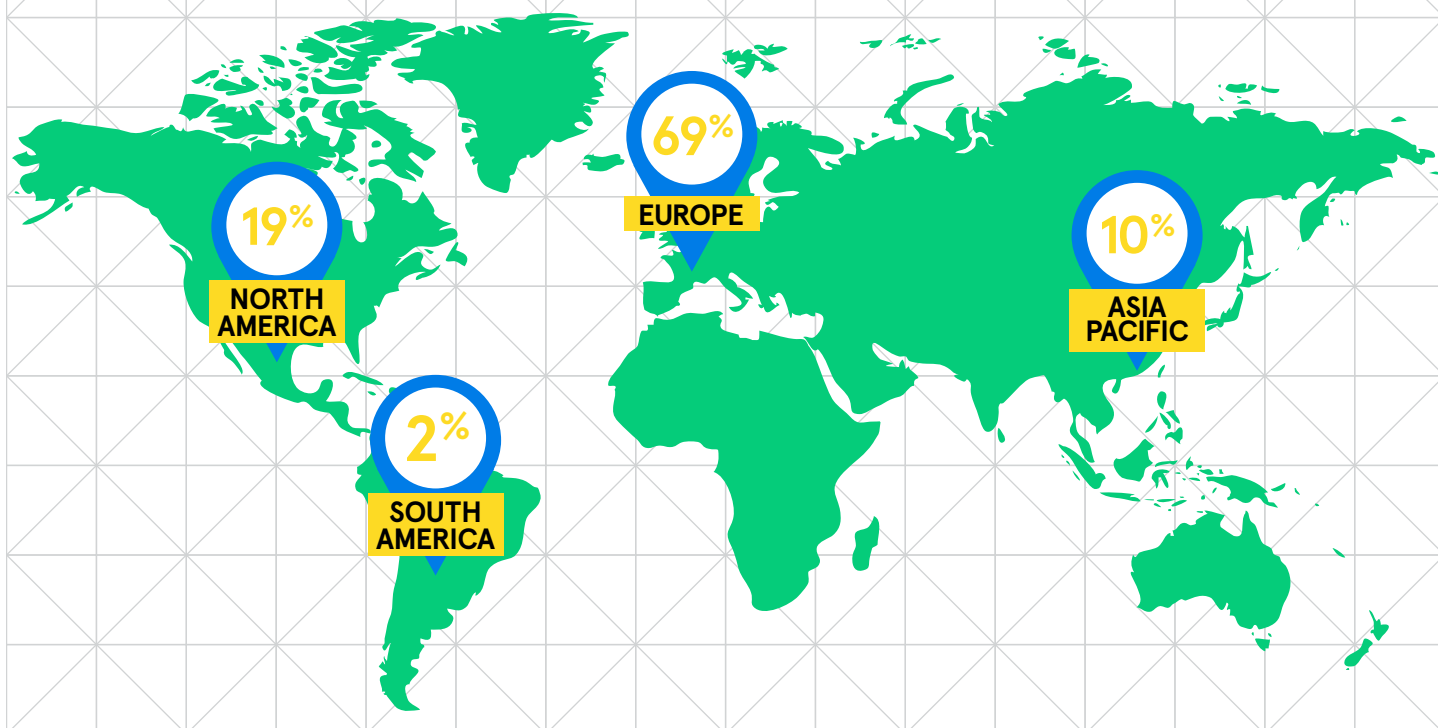
TLDs with >20 domains registered



40%

Growth in TLDs with >500 domains registered

Europe leads the way in .brand domain registrations.



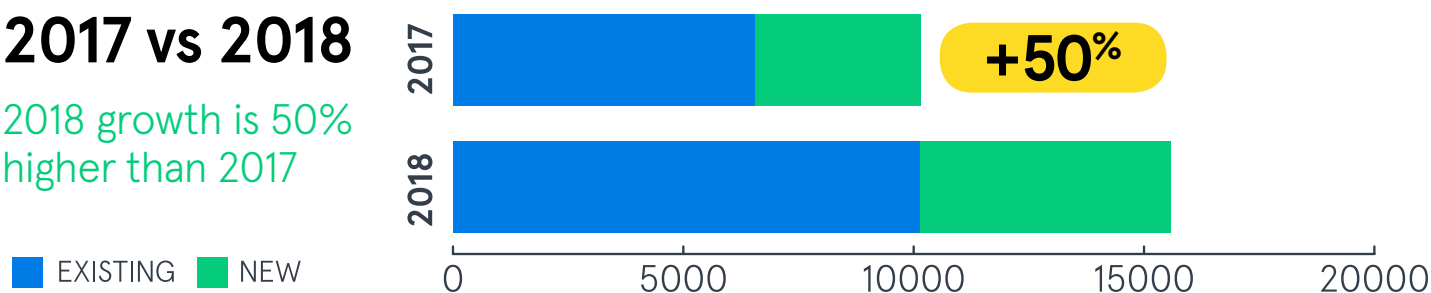
8 out of top 10 largest .brand TLDs by registrations are from Europe, including Audi, DVAG, Allfinanz & Lamborghini

Percentage share of total .brand domains registered.

.brand domain registrations picked up speed in 2018.

2017 vs 2018

2018 growth is 50% higher than 2017



Which sectors grew the most in **.brand** domain registrations?

#1

Banking
& Financial

#6

Construction



#2

Automotive



#7

Business
Services

#3

Internet
Services

#8

Consumer
Electronics

#4

Energy



#9

Retail



#5

Logistics



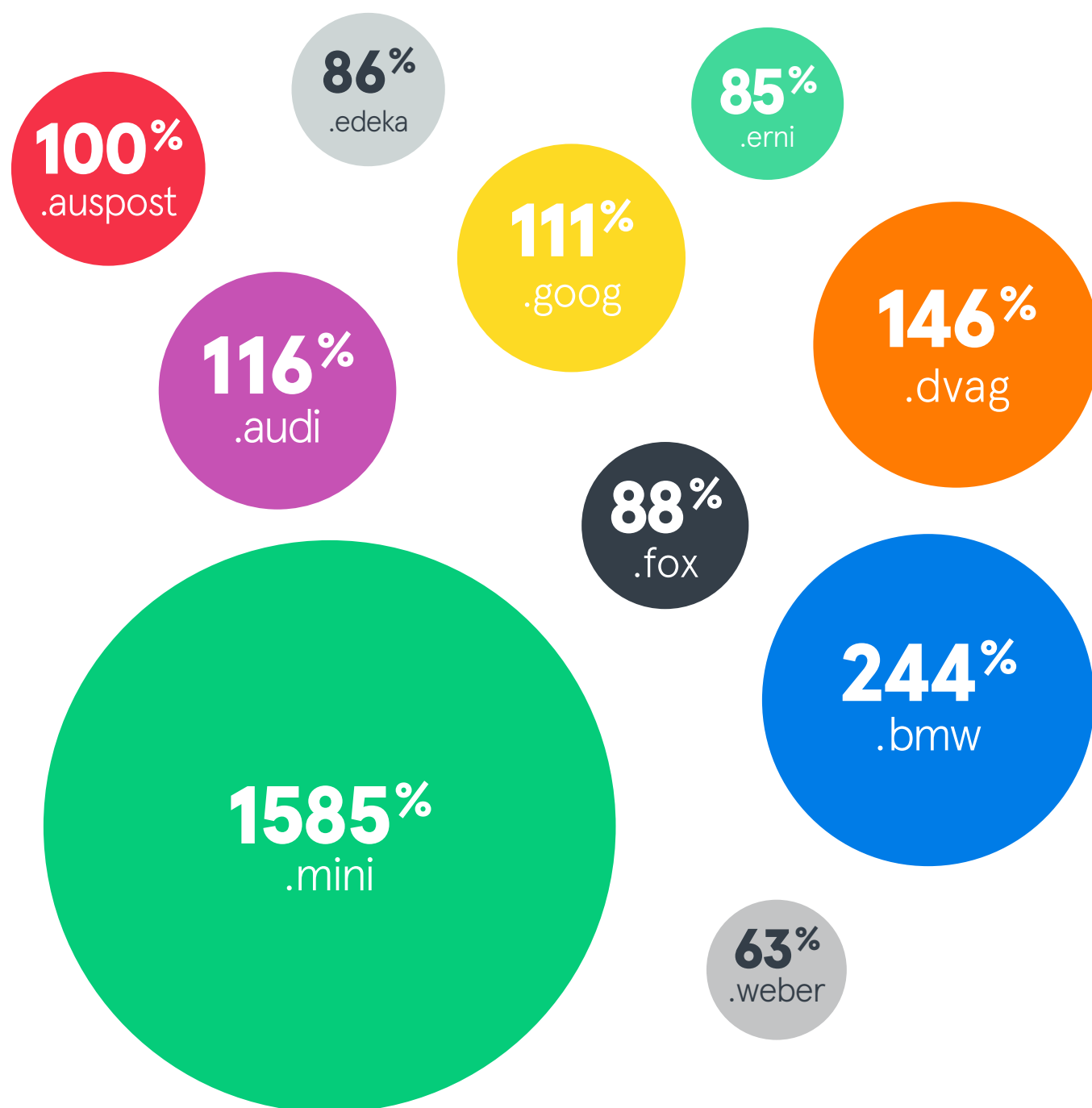
#10

Telecommunications



Growth calculated over 12 months from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2018.

Which brands grew their **.brand** domain usage in 2018?



Growth in active domains calculated over 12 months from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2018. Minimum 20 existing domains to qualify.

Showcase:

experience.apple



.BRAND SHOWCASE

Showcase: experience.apple

Industry powerhouse Apple has been using a select number of redirecting domains on its .apple TLD for some time, however in late 2018 we saw the first of these domains gain media attention.

When launching its new iPhone X, Apple promoted the device on social media, prompting followers to 'experience iPhone', sending them to the site experience.apple. When viewed on a mobile device, this link delivers a unique promotional site, with product information on the

iPhone XS and XR models and a 3D model of the phones that tilts and spins as visitors move their own devices. Incorporating a unique use of gyroscopic technology along with the first major outing of .apple makes this site twice as innovative – which isn't a surprising achievement from one of the most ubiquitous technology brands of our time.

When visitors on a desktop device visit experience.apple, they are instead redirected to apple.com. Not only does this protect the customer experience and avoid sacrificing

desktop traffic, but it allows Apple's marketers to use a single .brand domain throughout its promotions and let the technology behind the site deliver the most seamless experience for every customer, no matter what device they are using.

Since early 2018 Apple has also been using newsroom.apple as a redirect to its corporate news page. In some cases, newsroom.apple links are also generated by social sharing plug-ins, which allows the .brand domains to gain further traction and impressions on social media. ■



.BRAND SHOWCASE

Showcase: Highlights.



web.mit

A resources site for Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



flexspace.jll

A microsite for a new commercial real estate report.



digitaltraining.aws

A portal to access AWS Cloud training courses.



getconnected.rmit

A news and information site from RMIT University.



giftcard.auspost

A site from Australia Post for registering gift cards.



stoppain.abbott

A microsite from Abbott on pain relief technologies.



careers.saxo

A redirect to the careers page for the Saxo Group.



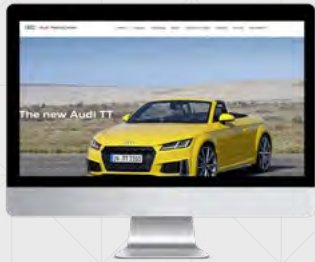
finals.afl

A site for the Australian Football League's Finals series.



safety.google

A website for Google's Safety Center.



tt.audi

A promotional site for the new Audi TT.



alwaysunny.fox

A redirect to a microsite for FOX's new mobile game app.



sustainability.temasek

A redirect to Temasek's Sustainability Journey page.



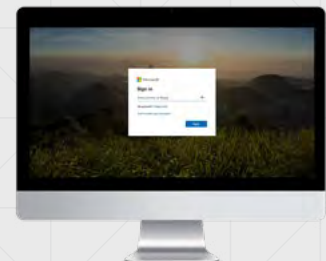
mediazone.axa

A press room information site from AXA.



europeanstrategy.cern

A site on CERN's European Strategy for Particle Physics.



passwordsetup.deloitte

An internal password management tool for Deloitte employees.



tech.mango

A microsite showcasing the intersection of fashion and tech.



medical.canon

A new homepage for Canon Medical Systems.



gt-r50.nissan

A campaign page for Nissan's GT-R50 prototype vehicle.



.brand insights.

Advice and guidance for your .brand



Insights: How .hsbc is driving increased social engagement.

Recently, HSBC rolled out branded '.hsbc' links across all its social media channels, leading to higher engagement and click-through rates. Tony Kirsch speaks with HSBC's Kevin Audritt to find out more.

Insights: How .hsbc is driving increased social engagement.



Kevin Audritt – Global Head .HSBC TLD Programme

Tony Kirsch recently spoke with Kevin Audritt, Global Head .HSBC TLD Programme, to get some more insight on how one of the largest banking organizations in the world started using its .brand TLD to create branded links in social.

Tony Kirsch: *What were the first .hsbc initiatives you looked into?*

Kevin Audritt: Our original launch proposition back in 2015 was going to be a marketing, brand based microsite to celebrate the 150 year anniversary of HSBC.

Unfortunately due to issues outside of our control, we were unable to launch the site but out of adversity comes opportunity, and so we explored other potential opportunities, which of course led us, amongst other creative workstreams, to the URL shortener.

TK: *Having grp.hsbc as your global URL shortener is a noticeable change for the organisation. How did you manage to obtain support within an organisation the size of HSBC?*

KA: Without question this has been a major success story for the Group, and again it comes down to being close to what is happening across the Group.

I was aware that our global social media team were onboarding a new platform. We have a great leadership team in our social media operation who at the time were keen on acquiring a unique URL shortener. However, I briefed them on the issues and risks of purchasing a commercial domain and was then in a position to offer them the opportunity of securing the unique grp.hsbc domain.

To try get an understanding of how significant this was for the Group, it's important to recognise that we have a social media team in each of the countries where we have a business presence. Those teams operate across both core global and local social media platforms, in local language, and so the application of the grp.hsbc shortener

complements the socialisation of the post, builds affinity with the HSBC brand and enhances the user's familiarisation with the .hsbc TLD.

The demand to roll out the new platform and new grp.hsbc shortener was phenomenal and it is now the Group's global default shortener.

But the social media team did not stop there. They have since developed customised URLs, the first being used to announce the Groups sponsorship of the BWF Badminton World Tour (see below) and they continue to innovate the customer experience in this space and also across other channels outside of social. Their MI reports a global uplift in users clicking dedicated HSBC TLD links within our social media posts.

TK: *How have the .hsbc initiatives been received internally? What statistics might you have that could demonstrate any uptick in customer engagement?*

KA: We recognise that we are only a few footsteps in to our TLD journey.

Internally, where there has been .hsbc engagement the response has been fantastic, from executive management through to front line staff, and it is true to say that 'word spreads fast'.

Statistics and feedback in respect of those deployments has been excellent and this is in part down to the review and selection process initially undertaken in order to ensure the continued success of the .hsbc TLD.

TK: What are the key benefits you see that .brands can bring to organisations?

KA: Our TLD team mantra is simpler, better, faster, safer and I think that echoes the key sentiments of what, at a high level, a .brand can deliver.

From a domain IP perspective you are totally in control of your brand online, including access and ownership of the associated data.

Your brand is operating at the highest level of the Internet and so you now have the ability to engage customers, prospects and staff at that level and really make the unique nomenclature work for your organisation.

Socialising the brand – it's something I keep referring to and it's certainly part of our strategy, but there are two layers to this. There is the socialisation of my brand, HSBC, where I want users to engage at a HSBC level but there is also the socialisation that is happening with other .brands and their audiences and so together we are encouraging awareness of .brands and developing a mindset where, in terms of online behaviour, . brands become the accepted norm.

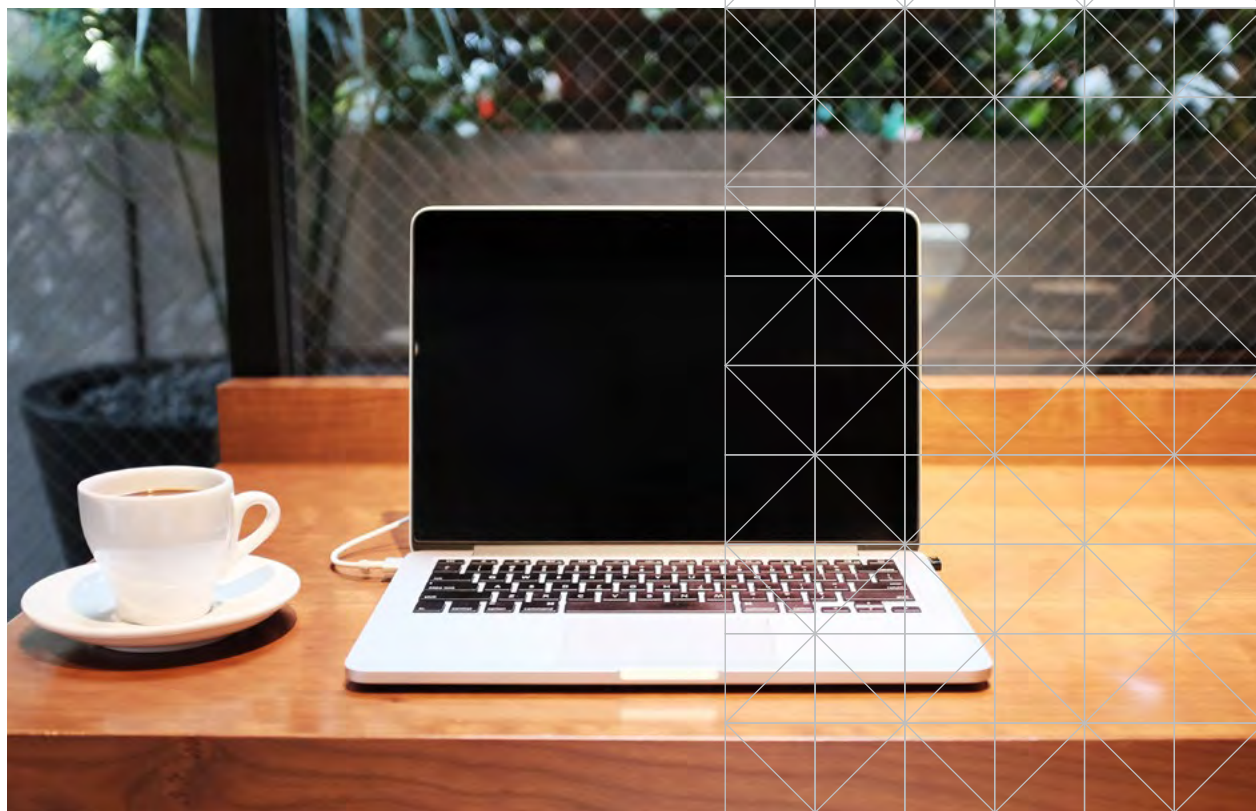
The core benefits of security and trust in the brand TLD space have been well documented and by applying additional security protocols and policies at a registry level it will enable you to grow your business whilst keeping it safe. ■

An extended version of this interview is available in [MakeWay.World](#)

Top tips for launching your .brand TLD – *from Kevin Audritt, Global Head .HSBC TLD Programme*

- 1 Spend some time researching what brands are doing in the .brand space. Don't just look within your own industry segment or traditional competitor groups. See the diverse range of creativity and application on display and be inspired to the extent that you too can contribute to this growing, unique group of businesses.
- 2 Reach out to brands, vendors and organisations, such as the Brand Registry Group, that are active in the TLD space. Remember, it's not just about websites and the services that you can see online. A lot more happens 'under the hood' in terms of infrastructure and the application of sub-domains and this is where the real benefits of owning a TLD can be leveraged.
- 3 You cannot do this on your own. Secure support and sponsorship from a senior executive, form a small, but active, TLD working group of key stakeholders from the core departments within your organisation who can drive the initiative through their own channels. Finally, always welcome .brand interest, creativity and innovation from wherever it comes from within the organisation.
- 4 Review ownership of the TLD within the organisation. Is it easily accessible in terms of activation and being able to explore potential development and innovation opportunities?
- 5 Focus initial releases on low risk, low cost but high interest/return propositions. This is where you will get the momentum, resource and investment to further develop your TLD programme.





Insights: Why you should use branded links everywhere. ■

Branded links give organizations the opportunity to tap into greater data and control, consistent branding and a better customer experience. Corey Grant explores the possibilities of a .brand strategy that spans company-wide.

Insights: Why you should use branded links everywhere.



Corey Grant – Senior Advisor, Professional Services – Neustar

Many brands have discovered the benefits of making social media the launching point for getting started with their .brand TLDs, including global banking giant HSBC (read our interview on page 15).

The ability to create trustworthy, adaptable and consistent links to improve customer experience is a clear advantage, and the minimal risk involved makes it a perfect place to start.

But there's a bigger picture to this approach. If we fiercely protect the way our brand appears in social media and reinforce this through branded links that provide better trust and insight, why don't we apply the same logic everywhere we use links?

Managing branded links: the easy way

When we think about creating new web content, many of us default to creating a new microsite too quickly. But marketers at organizations with a .brand are now working out that redirects can be even more powerful (see 'By the numbers' on page 06, where we note that redirects now make up more than half of all .brand domains registered).

A redirect simply diverts traffic to a different location, so you can create content on a deep link within your main company site, promote it on a short and memorable branded link, and still receive all the SEO benefit from the traffic. Sometimes we also forget that link management tools like Bitly or Rebrandly use this redirect process also, albeit with powerful technology built around it.

When you create new content, if it changes, or goes out of date, you risk the domains not resolving or taking visitors to irrelevant sites. To simplify this, .brand owners can take advantage of link management tools (often free to an extent) to create branded, shortened links that can be easily managed and edited as needed.

Not only does this allow for dynamic management, where the end destination of a link can be changed and redirected as quickly and often as needed, but it's also infinite – with the ability to instantly create and use as many links as you please. In addition, these tools provide built-in security and the ability to monitor and analyze your domains through a single tool.

Some tools mentioned above even have smart features that allow you to vary the destination of a link depending on the incoming user's information – such as language or location.

Not just in public: branding links internally

The value of including branded links in all our external communications is clear: it provides a fast, direct path to reach content, avoids middlemen like search, and reinforces the brand and the message in the call-to-action itself.

Additionally, the wealth of data you generate and accrue means your CIO and your marketing team will have a field day – analyzing the results for insights on customer behavior, profiling and performance.

But if going public with branded links seems like a big step, why not start internally? Not only does this reinforce your brand internally and provide valuable data and insight into content and campaign performance, but in the case of a .brand, it is a valuable and simple way to encourage awareness, uptake and acceptance of your TLD.

Even in the seemingly 'hidden' or 'meaningless' links we share – be it in sending a document, sharing resources or even as a call-to-action in our promotions – there is an opportunity to include the brand, capture useful data, or provide a more trustworthy experience. ■

The journey of a branded link.

Let's look at an example of how a branded link can be used throughout an organization. This could apply to any kind of content – from a news article or press release, to a marketing campaign or promotion, to an annual report or research paper. Consider how this could work at your business!



At all stages, that link is recognizable, trustworthy, short and memorable – all by keeping it branded.



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More information is available at

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