

Applying for a Dot Brand TLD— What Should I Tell My Board?

With the upcoming second round of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)'s New gTLD Program, there's the opportunity for organizations to apply to own a .BRAND top-level domain (TLD). Based on CSC's extensive knowledge and experience in managing a third of all global .BRAND TLDs, we've created this guide to help you start the strategic conversations about what the .BRAND program can offer, evaluate the benefits of owning a .BRAND TLD, and answer common questions that may arise.

What might my board ask?

Your board will naturally want to know more information about applying for and owning a .BRAND TLD. We outline some of the common questions you might come across from your board based on their responsibilities. Click the links below to be taken to the sections of interest.

[THE CEO – THE BIG PICTURE](#)

[CFO – THE NUMBERS](#)

[CISO – SECURITY, SECURITY, SECURITY](#)

[CIO and COO – LOGISTICS](#)

[CMO – BRANDING](#)

[CLO, CCO, and GCs – THE LEGAL SIDE](#)

[CPO – PEOPLE IMPACT](#)



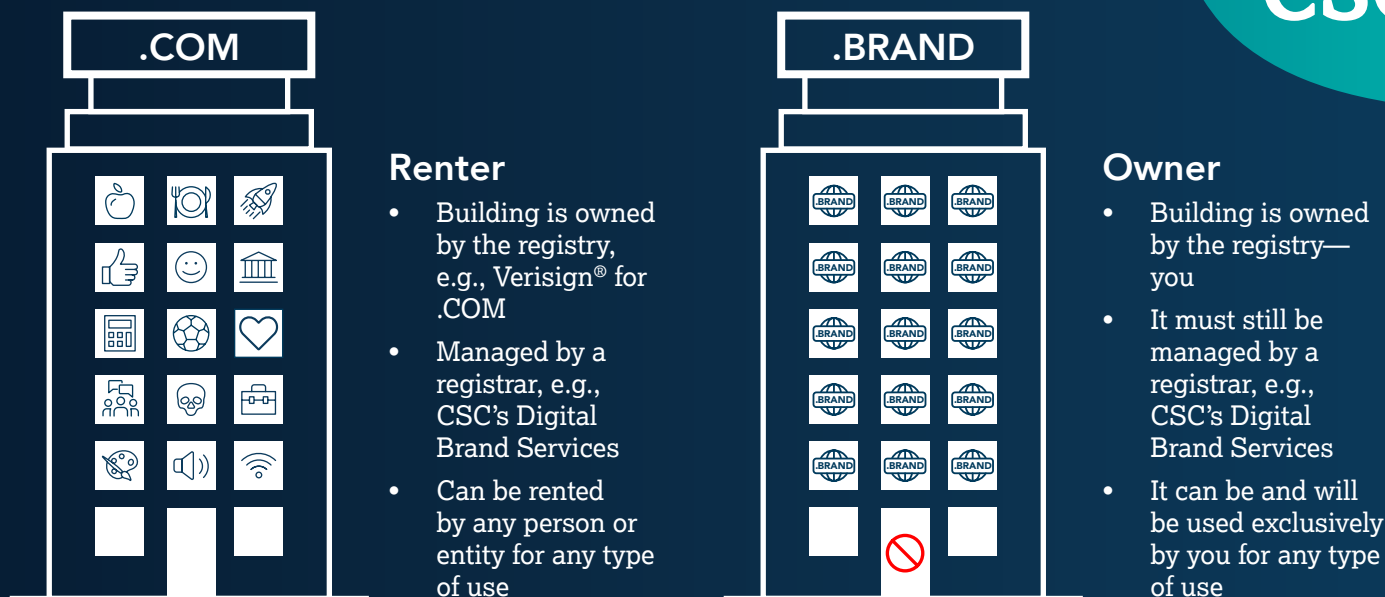
CSC—YOUR TRUSTED .BRAND PARTNER

CSC supports companies that are making significant investments in their security posture.

CSC is an ICANN-accredited registrar, and is the provider of choice for organizations with .BRAND TLDs, managing over a third of all .BRANDs that operate today. As the largest provider of .BRAND services in the world, we provide many of the most recognized global brands with a customized, ICANN-compliant, outsourced solution that covers everything from registry technical back-end and registrar services to assistance with technical implementation, naming strategies, deployment plans, and data analysis related to launching and maintaining your new .BRAND assets.

In the first round of ICANN's New gTLD Program in 2012, CSC submitted over 250 .BRAND applications with a 100% success rate. CSC is ready to help you navigate through the second-round application process, as well as help your organization operate a secure and compliant .BRAND. To learn more about our solutions, global reach, and receive updates on the status of Round 2 along with our insights, please [sign up for our mailing list](#).

GO FROM RENTER TO OWNER WITH A .BRAND



QUICK-LOOK BENEFITS OF A .BRAND

Security

- Create a secure online presence totally free from infringement concerns—including fraudulent sites, traffic diversion, cybersquatting, brand abuse, and the many challenges brand holders face with generic top-level domains (gTLDs) and country code top-level domains (ccTLDs)
- Have the opportunity to build your own infrastructure in a safe and secure environment
- Make your .BRAND and domain names under it secure:
 - Registration rules determined by you
 - Registrants approved by you (or are you)
 - Immediate takedown authority
 - Partner compliance simplified for legal departments

Brand and marketing

- A single location uniting your websites and content, allowing you to precisely mirror your brand architecture at the most intuitive internet address possible; this makes it easy for stakeholders and search engines to identify your official presence, improving recognition and traffic, and offering your customers a richer brand experience
- Eliminate consumer confusion and increase consumer trust—you can guarantee if it doesn't end in your .BRAND, it's not your genuine website
- Be as creative as you want with what's to the left of the dot; never fight or bid for generic words, product names, taglines, or other monikers in domain registrations with gTLDs and ccTLDs, or spend money acquiring branded domains from third parties—if you need a domain name, you've got it
- Create short and memorable domain names and remove long, complicated links—quickly bring your audience to the content they're looking for
- The public and the media will learn to come to your .BRAND sites for the official information

Control

- Controlled online presence—limits risk and facilitates compliance
- Gives you complete control over your domain space—with a .BRAND, domains ending in the .BRAND can ONLY be registered by you
- Be in control of your online presence—you can simply switch on and off domains used by agents, distributors, retailers, and other affiliated entities
- Owning and operating your .BRAND means you control everything about your own registry infrastructure



CEO – THE BIG PICTURE



What competitive advantages does owning a .BRAND TLD provide?

The main advantages of owning a .BRAND TLD are:

- Enhanced brand control and authenticity = increased consumer trust
- Improved cybersecurity
- Flexible and creative marketing opportunities
- Streamlined digital presence
- Competitive differentiator—your organization is seen as forward thinking, digitally savvy, and industry leading

How does a .BRAND TLD align with our overall business strategy and vision?

Here are some common business strategies with which owning a .BRAND TLD aligns:



Security

Enterprises today must have a strong security strategy to protect their online presence, keep customers and employees safe, and comply with global cybersecurity and data protection policies. Owning a .BRAND TLD bolsters this by:

- Reducing the risk of cyber attacks like phishing and domain hijacking due to exclusive ownership of the .BRAND TLD and the domain infrastructure
- Ensuring that customers and employees only see legitimate content, reducing interactions with bad actors, and the likelihood of the loss of sensitive data—or at least making infringing content easier to spot, fostering trust



Innovation

If your company has a strong innovation strategy, owning a .BRAND TLD aligns with this in the following ways:

- Positions you as digital innovator, setting you apart from your competition
- Unlocks the possibilities for custom digital experiences
- Allows creativity to flourish, as you can create product- or campaign-specific subdomains instantly



Brand identity and global awareness

The online world is crowded—owning a .BRAND TLD helps bolster your brand's identity by:

- Reinforcing your corporate identity across all digital channels, giving a guarantee that your digital touchpoints are all unmistakably you
- Reducing the impact of threats like domain squatting and other brand abuse inflicted by third parties, making you a trusted provider

How to use your .BRAND: Examples of strategy-related domain strings

Click on the links to be taken to a live page¹ using these strings.

1. innovation.brand – [innovation.airbus](#)
2. sustainability.brand – [sustainability.google](#)
3. home.brand – [home.sandvik](#)
4. global.brand – [global.toyota](#)
5. about.brand – [about.cern](#)

1. Pages live at time of publication.



What’s the total cost of ownership for a .BRAND TLD?

The below table shows some of costs involved in applying for and operating a .BRAND based on current released information from ICANN. More detail will become available when ICANN’s Applicant Guidebook is released.

Application fees

One-time application fee of \$227,000 USD per .BRAND string
Additional one-time .BRAND fee (TBD by ICANN) per .BRAND application

Technical back-end registry services (exact fees provider dependent)

One-time technical set-up fees
Annual operational fees
Data escrow services

Annual fees to ICANN

Annual registry fees of \$25,750 ² per .BRAND string

Legal and consultancy fees

Application support fees – exact fees are provider dependent
Legal support fees – exact fees are provider dependent
Registering trademark(s) with the Trademark Clearing house ³ (TMCH) – variable, dependent on term that ranges from a few hundred dollars to just under \$2,000 per brand registered

Is there any projected return on investment for adopting a .BRAND TLD?

The benefits of owning a .BRAND TLD are often more strategic and long term rather than shorter-term financial gains. By owning a .BRAND, you own a core piece of the internet and have the opportunity to create your own infrastructure, giving you higher levels of control and security. That said, owning a .BRAND could offer the following:



Increased revenue

- Increased brand recognition and trust could lead to:
 - Higher online sales
 - Increased online conversion rates
- .BRAND domain strategies can lead to increased conversions and sales, for example, strategic registration of keywords to the left of the dot and setting up redirects allows you to shorten the customer journey to your main sites—this increases direct traffic, and bypasses users seeing search engine results for your competitors, all of which increases the likelihood of conversion to sales



Money saving

- Reduction in fraud-related losses
- Fewer defensive domain registrations on other TLDs
- Lower channel-related costs, for example, with SMS marketing, where you’re charged based on the length of the message; .BRAND domains provide shorter URLs, meaning your content will likely take up fewer characters, saving money
- Lower PPC costs, for example, registering generic keywords to the left of the dot to bring in traffic reduces the need to bid for search terms and keywords on search engines

Would we lose our full ICANN application fee if another organization applies for the same TLD?

ICANN has a refund policy and schedule in the event of contention over a .BRAND TLD from two or more organizations. In this instance, there’s an opportunity for the unsuccessful applicant(s) to receive a partial refund of the ICANN application fee.

2. Current known fees
 3. Current known fees



How does a .BRAND TLD improve our security posture?

Owning a .BRAND TLD offers the following security benefits:



Registration security

- Minimizes domain security risks—only the .BRAND owner can register domains using the .BRAND. This removes the risk of:
 - Illegitimate or infringing domain name registrations
 - Lost domain names due to expiration
 - Unauthorized domain transfers



DNS infrastructure security

- Gives your organization full control over the DNS infrastructure, meaning you can add DNS security extensions (DNSSEC) across all domains, be in control of access and change protocols, and align domain operations with internal security policies. This is much harder to do consistently across different .COM domains, especially if they're managed through different registrars.



Web browser security

- Pre-loading your entire .BRAND TLD into a web browser's HTTP Strict Transport Security (HSTS) preload list guarantees HTTPS in web browsers.
- Verifying your TLD with your certificate authority means all secure sockets layer (SSL) certificate requests for your .BRAND can be pre-verified, saving time and ensuring all domains under your .BRAND can be automatically encrypted.



Email security

- Improves email security – if it's not from your .BRAND, it's not you.
- Reduces risk of phishing attacks.
- By adding email authentication protocols like domain-based message authentication, reporting and conformance (DMARC) to the .BRAND, you automatically add DMARC to all of the domains in your zone.



Security compliance

- Keeping certain user experiences isolated in their own domain space establishes a clean security boundary for compliant authenticated experiences and enables simplified endpoint allow-list management for admins.
- From an operational point of view, owning a .BRAND drastically reduces the complexity of the allow-lists required to help your tenant stay secure, while enabling users to access the apps and services they need to do their work.

Why would we use a .BRAND TLD over a .COM?

Exclusive ownership of a .BRAND TLD enables enhanced security protocols and governance controls, and the value of security investments done at the top-level domain seamlessly accrue associated domains and applications. All experiences hosted on a .BRAND TLD can be assumed to be legitimate and authentic—anyone attempting domain spoofing would have to go through your brand, as your organization would be both the registry operator and sole registrant.

Dot com domains usually host a wide variety of content. Keeping specific experiences isolated in their own domain space establishes a clean security boundary, particularly pertinent for any authenticated experiences. There are also anti-spoofing and integrity benefits to hosting such experiences on an exclusive, purposefully managed .BRAND TLD vs. a generic TLD like .COM.

How to use your .BRAND—examples of security-related domain strings

1. security.brand – [security.tui](#)
2. cybersecurity.brand – [cybersecurity.abbott](#)
3. platformpartner.brand – [platformpartners.vig](#)
4. contact.brand – [contact.allstate](#)
5. mail.brand – mail.canon (firstname.lastname@mail.canon)



How complex is it to own and operate a .BRAND TLD?

When your application for a .BRAND TLD is accepted and approved by ICANN, you own the .BRAND in perpetuity.

ICANN oversees and regulates the compliance of all technical and policy implementation towards the New gTLD Program. Once you've successfully applied for a .BRAND TLD, as a registry operator, you'll have an agreement with ICANN pertaining to rules you'll adhere to.

As the registry operator, you can outsource the support and daily management of your .BRAND TLD to a trusted provider like CSC. CSC is an ICANN-accredited registrar that can not only register, renew, and manage domains, but also act as an outsourced consultant that can manage all the policy and compliance requirements needed within the New gTLD Program. This includes the technical elements and infrastructure support of the program, the setup of root zone management, as well as other critical technical functions that comply with ICANN's rules of running a registry. In short, we can tick all the ICANN compliance boxes on your behalf, so you can focus on running your business and deriving the benefits of a .BRAND.

How complex is it to integrate .BRAND domains into our existing domain portfolio?

By using CSC as your provider, management of your .BRAND domain portfolio will be integrated with your existing domain portfolio via our online domain management system, CSCDomainManagerSM. You can set granular permissions across your portfolio, allowing only specific users to view, register, modify, and report on your .BRAND.

How will this impact our existing IT infrastructure and applications?

By choosing CSC's fully outsourced .BRAND solution, your IT infrastructure team does not need to do anything to stand up the infrastructure needed for your TLD to operate on the internet. However, once your .BRAND is operational, your IT infrastructure team can have full use of the .BRAND TLD to build and host company infrastructure and applications on it, keeping a safe and secure environment for all your stakeholders, clients, and prospects.

How to use your .BRAND—examples of IT-related domain strings

1. apps.brand or app.brand – [apps.audi](#)
2. it.brand – [it.abbott](#)
3. email.brand – email.mango (firstname.lastname@email.mango)
4. helpandsupport.brand – [helpandsupport.auspost](#)
5. portal.brand – [portal.sandvik](#)





Will this improve SEO and discoverability in search engines?

There are a number of search engine optimization (SEO) benefits from using .BRAND domains, including:

- Increased brand authenticity from a .BRAND TLD could lead to higher click-through rates, as customers are more likely to click on links they trust are from your brand.
- Creating short, memorable domains like support.brand or home.brand improves URL readability, and can also enhance consumer trust, which will also positively impact SEO.

Provided things like 301 redirects, backlinks, and sitemap updates are all handled effectively, owning and using a .BRAND TLD can have a positive impact on search engine rankings. Realistically, it's your content that's doing most of the heavy lifting when it comes to search engine optimization.

There are certain strategies that can be used to increase click-through rates, for example, the strategic registering of keywords to the left of the dot on your .BRAND TLD and then setting up redirects to your key sites. This takes advantage of the common mistake made by phone users of hitting the "." key instead of the space bar when typing a search into a browser. For example, an entertainment company registers "film.brand" and redirects it to their main .BRAND site. If a user accidentally types in the search term "film.brand" instead of "film brand," they're automatically taken to their site. This allows for:

- Shortened customer journeys to your key sites, meaning less lost traffic
- Increased direct traffic to your site
- Reduced likelihood of customers seeing competitor results, as it side steps the usual route of a search term in the browser directing to a search engine
- URL shorteners helping to reduce dependency on small, unstable ccTLDs like .LY and .IO

How will this impact customer experience and trust?

Owning a .BRAND gives you exclusivity to your domain space, which increases brand authenticity. As your organization would be the only one able to register domains under a .BRAND, making you a brand that your current, and potential customers, can trust.

It's important to create awareness among your customer base around your new .BRAND TLD, how it will be used, and the safety they can feel when interacting with your brand through a trusted .BRAND domain.

When a brand is impersonated through phishing or brand abuse, consumers see it as the brand's responsibility to protect them from harm. Owning a .BRAND enables you to say with confidence "if it's not our .BRAND, it's not us," adding an extra guarantee of their safety against bad actors.

How to use your .BRAND—example marketing-related domain strings

1. events.brand or event.brand – [events.abb](#)
2. social.brand – [social.bbc](#)
3. blog.brand – [blog.youtube](#)
4. my.brand – [my.amazon](#)
5. reviews.brand – [reviews.lundbeck](#)
6. product.brand – [product.sew](#)
7. service.brand – [service.aco](#)
8. refer.brand – [refer.saxo](#)



What legal risks are involved in owning and managing a .BRAND TLD?

When you apply for a .BRAND, you essentially become a registry operator, and therefore you need to comply with ICANN's regulations and your ICANN registry agreement.

Other things to consider:

- **IP** – Ensure your .BRAND string exactly matches a trademark of national effect that you own and that the trademark is registered with the TMCH.
- **Security** – Being a registry operator requires stringent security practices, ensuring you deploy security protocols to avoid cyber attacks is essential.
- **Compliance** – If your company chooses to outsource registry operator responsibilities to a third party, make sure it's up to the task. Not all outsourced partners are equipped to handle the unique requirements and support needs of large corporations.
- **Languages** – The second round of the Program gives businesses, communities, governments, and other organizations the chance to apply for new TLDs tailored to fit their organization, community, culture, language, and customer interests. This opens the opportunity for speakers of non-Latin-based languages to access the internet using their own language or writing system, meaning broader access and more online identity choices, promoting competition and innovation.

How does this affect trademark protection and intellectual property rights?

Owning a .BRAND TLD can enhance control, visibility, and enforcement capabilities around your trademarks where they appear online. That said, it doesn't replace the need for comprehensive trademark registration and intellectual property (IP) management across jurisdictions. It's important to integrate your .BRAND strategy with traditional IP enforcement, monitoring tools, and global trademark registrations. Dot BRAND TLDs can decrease instances of fraud and IP infringements.

Can other companies apply for a TLD with our brand name?

In short, yes. ICANN creates equal access to all, so anyone who provides an application based on a trademark of national effect that's also registered with the TMCH could be granted the .BRAND TLD. ICANN will apply contention set rules that must be adhered to if there's more than one qualified applicant for a TLD with a registered trademark. However, it's important to note that ICANN rules give no deference to the age or number of trademark registrations a particular brand owner holds. It's therefore important to review your trademark portfolio and understand what trademarks your organization may be interested in applying for as a .BRAND. You should also understand where you have competing trademarks and ask how your company would react if the competing trademark holder applied for it as a .BRAND and your company did not. If there's a chance you'll apply for any of your trademarks as a .BRAND TLD, it's important to ensure you have those trademarks registered in the TMCH in advance of the application process opening.

How to use your .BRAND—example legal-related domain strings

1. legal.brand – [legal.gea](#)
2. corporate.brand – [corporate.sener](#)
3. policies.brand – [policies.kpmg](#)
4. dpo.brand (data protection officer) – [dpo.pfizer](#)
5. partnerships.brand – [partnerships.abbvie](#)
6. investors.brand – [investors.target](#)



Will this domain impact employee email addresses and internal communications?

If you decide to use your .BRAND as the main domain for your email servers, then yes, email addresses will be impacted.

Initially, there will need to be some internal training and communication to ensure employees understand the reasoning behind switching to a .BRAND and what it means in practice. It may be advisable to do a phased migration, with a period when old and new email addresses are both accepted.

Essentially, though, the main benefits from a people perspective are a more consistent, secure, and manageable communications framework, a unified brand identity, and enhanced security—owning a .BRAND domain makes it easier for staff to spot phishing attacks and report them

How will it affect employer branding and recruitment efforts?

The long-term benefits of HR-related applications of a .BRAND TLD include increased brand credibility, better candidate engagement, and competitive differentiation. A well-executed strategy around use of a .BRAND for recruitment efforts that's supported by clear messaging and solid analytics means it can become a cornerstone of enterprise talent attraction.

How to use your .BRAND: Example people-related domain strings

1. careers.brand or career.brand - [careers.bnpparibas](#)
2. jobs.brand or job.brand - [jobs.chase](#)
3. hr.brand - [hr.kfh](#)
4. join.brand - [join.lundbeck](#)
5. education.brand - [education.afl](#)





CSC's GLOBAL OFFICE LOCATIONS

CSC has unmatched global reach, and capabilities in more than 140 global jurisdictions. Wherever our clients are or want to be, we're already there.



AMERICAS

1. Wilmington, DE, USA
2. Albany, NY, USA
3. Austin, TX, USA
4. Baltimore, MD, USA
5. Boston, MA, USA
6. Buffalo Grove, IL, USA
7. Campbell, CA, USA
8. Chicago, IL, USA
9. Dallas-Fort Worth, TX, USA
10. Ewing, NJ, USA
11. Gaithersburg, MD, USA
12. George Town, Cayman Islands
13. Harrisburg, PA, USA
14. Houston, TX, USA
15. Logan, UT, USA
16. Madison, WI, USA
17. Nassau, Bahamas

18. New York, NY, USA
19. Sacramento, CA, USA
20. Salem, OR, USA
21. São Paulo, Brazil
22. Sherman Oaks, CA, USA
23. Springfield, IL, USA
24. Tallahassee, FL, USA
25. Tortola, British Virgin Islands
26. Washington, DC, USA
27. West Orange, NJ, USA
28. Willemstad, Curaçao
29. Yarmouth, NS, Canada

EMEA

30. Abu Dhabi, UAE
31. Amsterdam, Netherlands
32. Athens, Greece
33. Brussels, Belgium
34. Cambridge, U.K.
35. Copenhagen, Denmark
36. Dubai, UAE
37. Dublin, Ireland
38. Frankfurt, Germany
39. Geneva, Switzerland
40. Gorey, Ireland
41. Helsinki, Finland
42. Limassol, Cyprus
43. London, U.K.
44. Luxembourg
45. Maarsbergen, Netherlands
46. Madrid, Spain

47. Malmö, Sweden
48. Oslo, Norway
49. Paris, France
50. Sophia Antipolis, France
51. Stockholm, Sweden
52. St Helier, Jersey
53. St. Peter Port, Guernsey
54. Wiesbaden, Germany
55. Zug, Switzerland
56. Zurich, Switzerland

ASIA-PACIFIC

57. Auckland, New Zealand
58. Beijing, China
59. Bengaluru, India
60. Chennai, India
61. Guangzhou, China
62. Gurugram, India
63. Hong Kong
64. Melbourne, Australia
65. Mumbai, India
66. North Sydney, Australia
67. Shanghai, China
68. Shenzhen, China
69. Singapore
70. Tokyo, Japan



CSC supports companies that are making significant investments in their security posture by exposing oversights that exist within fundamental internet assets such as domain names, DNS, and digital certificates. By leveraging our proprietary security solutions, CSC secures companies from cyber threats to their digital assets, helping them avoid devastating revenue loss, brand reputation damage, or significant financial penalties as a result of policies like GDPR. Along with internet assets, CSC protects online brands that are being exploited via counterfeit websites, fraud, and IP violations, and helps monitor and mitigate this, providing enforcement and advisory services to protect many of the world's largest brands.

Learn more at cscdbs.com.

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