



DOMAIN PORTFOLIO GOVERNANCE POLICY

*CSC Best
Practice Guide*

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INTRODUCTION

Only a minority of companies have a written domain portfolio governance policy. In these organizations, employees, managers, and vendors all know the who, what, when, and how of domain name management. They're in a better position to secure, promote, and protect their brands online in a disciplined and accountable way. Using CSC's seven-step process, you can join the growing ranks of organizations that are in full control of their domains.

Why do you need a domain portfolio governance policy?

If you have one, the right people are equipped to make the best decisions for your organization. This means you can take advantage of digital opportunities like new brand or top-level domain (TLD) launches while cutting administrative costs and reducing the risk of fraud and cyber crime.



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ESTABLISH YOUR POLICY'S GOALS

These should be specific and measurable and set by the person managing the policy, together with the three departments that have the biggest vested interests: marketing, legal, and IT. Sample domain portfolio governance policy goals might include reducing the cost and effort of domain recovery or giving all business units online access to relevant domains and data. The more it reflects the input and consensus view of all stakeholders, the more valuable and relevant a domain policy will be.

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To save money and avoid risk, pay attention to daily details. For example, we recommend a policy that requires strategic registration of domain names in conjunction with any public filing or expression of intent to apply for a name or brand. This can prevent the problem of domains being registered by third parties. Third parties monitor the space to monetize these opportunities by registering domains that are being searched for or trademarks that are being applied for.

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What do you want to achieve in the digital world? Brand protection? Brand promotion? eCommerce? Security? Information distribution? Or a combination of these? Being clear about your domain strategy will enable you to devise a policy that's optimized for your organization.

For example, if your priorities include brand promotion and revenue, it's important to know how people search for your brand online. Domain strategies have to be linked to your search engine optimization program. Deciding which branded or generic top-level domains (gTLDs), country code TLDs, or new gTLDs to register or monitor is an unavoidable part of any domain strategy in today's world.

CSC recommends that every organization take the following actions to optimize its domain strategy:

- Audit and streamline your domain name portfolio's domain name system (DNS) and secure sockets layer (SSL) coverage to mitigate security risks and optimize website resolution.
- Ensure your digital IP is centrally managed, resolves to relevant content, and is measured to quantify impact. This should cover the full spread of online properties, from domains, social media usernames, and email addresses to mobile apps and QR codes.
- Release domains that have no value and explore divesting non-core generic domains that do.
- Identify and register available high-impact high-risk domains and social media usernames (including new gTLDs); i.e., properties with high potential for traffic and infringement.
- Audit and monitor the name space to identify high-impact infringing cases in mobile apps, social media, search, domain name, affiliate, and email channels.
- Prioritize and enforce your brand rights with mechanisms such as cease and desist letters, Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy, and content take down requests.

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Who's going to make the policy happen? It's important for your policy to include an organization chart designating a leader and a series of clearly identified roles like administration and security. Depending on how much you rely on external support, your organization chart may well include vendor companies.

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Aspects of your domain policy, like active and defensive registrations, blocking mechanisms, monitoring, DNS used, digital certificates to install, security measures (like registry locks and DNS security extensions (DNSSEC)), and enforcement will cost money. You'll need to decide where budget can be sourced from different departments and where you might need additional funding. If extra funding is necessary, a good domain portfolio governance policy can present a sound business case.

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Standards make your domain portfolio governance policy sustainable and scalable. Start by defining WHOIS templates for all domain names owned by the company and its various business units. This will reduce the risk of the domain being hijacked and allow you to remove single points of failure within the organization. By creating and publicizing a generic contact email for requests or for notices from your registrar, registries, domain resolution policy agencies, and other vendors, you can create a stronger communications chain and better support within the organization for all your digital assets. A centralized enterprise-level management of your domains, DNS, and digital certificates will help you handle digital asset issues consistently and securely.

Ensure you have the right security standards in place, including policies like Sender Policy Framework and DomainKeys Identified Mail, Certificate Authority Authorization, and DNSSEC. For your vital domains, consider using additional layers of security like CSC's MultiLock, IP validation, and additional account restrictions.

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By making clear the type and frequency of reports (and who should produce them), you can ensure effective communication among the policy's stakeholders. For example, a typical report could be a quarterly portfolio review outlining upcoming expirations.

Finally, presetting periodic reviews of your domain portfolio governance policy will help keep it on track. Reviews provide a valuable forum for stakeholders to determine whether the policy is working as intended, whether it is strong enough, and whether it needs new provisions.

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