Using a Domain History Checker: How to Avoid Gaining a Nasty Reputation from an Expired Domain

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A domain name is one of the greatest business assets you can own. If the one you have in mind has recently become available, it may be the right time to buy it. Or is it? You may want to do an expired domain check first to be safe.

This post tackles the pros and cons of buying expired domains and provides recommendations on how to do your due diligence. It talks about WHOIS history, which can help organizations avoid the unwanted consequences of ending up with domains that have a checkered past.

How Important Is a Domain Name?

A domain name serves various purposes. For one, it is an organization's distinct means of online identification. Domains help make businesses stand out from the crowd while usually containing the same or similar terms as their company name. It needs protection from abuse, such as copyright or trademark infringement.

Domain names also build up a company's brand awareness and credibility, as evidenced by its search engine ranking. The more authoritative a domain is, the better. After all, authority can put a website on the first page of search engine results.

Why Use Expired Domains?

While buying a new domain is a good way to cement your online presence, an expired domain has

a few advantages. Old domains whose registrations have lapsed retain their reputation and search engine optimization (SEO) ranking, at least for a while.

Instead of starting from scratch, new owners may need to pick up where the previous owner left off. What's in it for you then?

Be an Instant Authority

Setting up a new site and building up its authority takes time. It requires strategic content creation and effective backlinking. Becoming an authority means using the right SEO keywords, publishing helpful and reliable content regularly, and building backlinks from reputable sites with high domain authority.

Various factors contribute to domain authority, and one of them is age. Older domains tend to perform better on search engines. For that, it has become common practice for entrepreneurs to purchase and use "old" domains. While useful for SEO, this practice can also come with certain risks if an expired domain check is not done.

Use It for Site Redirection

The SEO value of old domains can be transferred to a new domain using a 301 redirect. For instance, if you bought the expired domain sample[.]com but want to put up the new domain active[.]com instead, you can still take advantage of sample[.]com's domain authority by redirecting its traffic to active[.]com.

Sell It for a Profit

Some people these days earn from domain flipping. They typically buy expired domains and sell them to site owners who wish to improve their SEO ranking or domain authority. Domain flippers often buy expired domains in auctions. They then may even increase the domains' value by improving their SEO ranking.

Why Is an Expired Domain Check Important?

While expired domains may offer much to their new owners, some can come with risks. Their previous owners may have abandoned them for a good reason. Therefore, domainers or website owners must take precautions by performing an expired domain check. Ending up with a bad domain may be worse than building up a new one's reputation from scratch.

Below are some hidden aspects of using an expired domain that could hurt your business.

SERP Violations

If you're getting an old domain for its SEO value, make sure it does not have existing search engine results page (SERP) violations. If the site is blocklisted on Google's Safe Browsing Index, no matter how old it is, it will not contribute to your cause because no one can access it.

Cybercrime Association

Any domain with ties to cybercrime has a bad reputation. Such a domain is included in publicly accessible blocklists or those that security solution providers maintain. As such, accessing it is not allowed on most computers.

Hijacked Domains

Not all expired domains put up for sale were legally obtained by their previous owners. Some may have been stolen from their rightful registrants and then left to expire. To avoid possible legal

disputes due to their use, make sure to check their ownership history for signs of suspicious changes.

For instance, when perl[.]com was hijacked in 2020, multiple changes to its WHOIS records were made, while the previous change seemingly made by the legitimate owner was in 2019.

WHOIS record on April 3, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on February 7, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on February 4, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on February 3, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on January 29, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on January 29, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on January 27, 2021 ⌄

WHOIS record on October 21, 2019 ⌄

How Can a Domain History Checker Help?

To avoid the hassle of using a bad domain, domainers and site owners can use WHOIS History API to conduct expired domain background checks before the purchase.

The tool provides information on the domain's entire life cycle and contributes to making sure it does not have a shady past, which can be detrimental to your business later on.

How Can You Access the Domain History of Expired Domains?

Each website comes with its own WHOIS record. Domains with multiple owners throughout their lifetimes would have more than one WHOIS record. Users can access these records in a database through APIs and lookup tools, such as WHOIS History API.

Aside from providing the usual ownership details and contact information, WHOIS History API helps users get all the information about a domain's past, including its previous owners, name servers, and other data points. As such, it is an excellent means to acquire in-depth insights about a domain before buying it.

How to Use Our Domain History Checker

To illustrate, we did an expired domain check on peersme[.]com. An expired domain name search on Domain Availability Check API revealed that it is available for registration.

However, an expired domain name search on WHOIS History API revealed that it has 38 historical WHOIS records. Based on the most recent data, it was last registered on 16 July 2021 and expired two years later.

Digging deeper into the domain's history revealed that it was initially created way back on 16 August 2011 in the Netherlands by a registrant named *****eginga. It was administered by five registrars and had seven different owners, about half of which didn't redact their information, which is viewable via the paid version of WHOIS History API.

This example shows that an expired domain that's available for registration can have a deep history. Businesses interested in such a domain need to perform thorough checks to ensure it is not tainted by cybercrime, violations, and other factors that can negatively affect the new owner.

If you want to perform a similar check, you can register to use our WHOIS History API and get 500 free credits to test the tool.

How Do You Integrate WHOIS History API into Existing Solutions?

WHOIS History API is easy to integrate into existing programs and scripts. We offer developer libraries to make coding easier and faster for languages like Go, Python, and JavaScript. The API can also be integrated into platforms like Splunk and Postman.

A variant of this service, WHOIS History Search, is available on our Domain Research Suite (DRS) dashboard that is ideal for conducting interactive web-based investigations. You can sign up for the tool for free here.

As in real life, having a checkered past can negatively affect one's future online. While age is a factor, it is also essential to check expired domain names to ensure they do not come with problems. Use a domain history checker like WHOIS History API to start digging into any domain's past.