**CHECKLIST**

**CHOOSING A DOMAIN NAME FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

Whether you are starting up a business or expanding into new markets, it is essential to do so with the Internet in mind, even if your business is not web-based. The Web can serve as a very effective advertising channel for your products/services and has the capacity to reach more customers than any other medium. If your business is entirely web-based, its presence, and therefore its name, on the Internet are of the highest importance. These guidelines can help you to choose a business name with an Internet presence in mind.

* On the web, you have the ability to reach prospective customers all over the world, so you will need to compare business names in a much greater geographic area to avoid the possibility for confusion and trademark infringement.
* Once you have come up with a few ideas for business names, think about what your domain name could be. The closer it is to your actual business name, products, or services, the easier it will be for your customers to find you.
* Domain names cannot be issued to more than one person or business, so if someone else has already registered your idea, you will have to come up with a new one.
* Although using your actual business name or some variation thereof will attract existing customers or prospective customers who have already heard about your business, using a product or service descriptor, like “window-washing.com”, may more effectively attract new or prospective customers.
* Domain names must be registered using an online accredited registration service.
* If possible, consider registering both your business name and a product type designation to attract as many people as possible to the site.
* Consider possible mistakes that prospective customers could make when typing in your web address. If mistakes are likely, consider simplifying the name, or perhaps registering multiple names so that even if a common mistake is made, the user will still get to your site.
* Although domain names are available with a variety of suffixes – the letters that follow the period after your chosen name – the one that most people are used to is “.com” so it may be best to use those letters, rather than an alternative like “.net,” to attract as many visitors as possible.
* The “.com” suffix can be used for commercial and personal sites; “.net” is recommended for companies involved in Internet infrastructure; and “.org” is recommended for non-profit companies.
* For all of those suffixes, only letters, numbers, and hyphens can be part of the domain name, but the name cannot begin or end with a hyphen.
* Using any of those three suffixes, the name is limited to sixty-three characters not including the suffix, but some web browsers, email programs, and other applications may not support anything over twenty-six characters in length, so it may be best to keep the name short.
* Domain names should follow the same general rules as business names in general.