



DOMAINING – FSB POSITION PAPER

Introduction

Domaining is a growing industry with many small businesses and sole traders making their living from it. As long as there is supply and demand this is likely to continue. Whilst we have to acknowledge that buying and selling domain names can be a very lucrative enterprise, there is an issue of protecting the vulnerable. This is most effectively done by information campaigns on what small business can do to protect themselves.

There are implications which may affect a small business' relationship to its customers. A business may get one version of the domain name, but as several domain names may exist, there is a risk that potential customers will mistakenly go to one of the other alternatives and think they have got the right web site. From an end-users perspective there is little advantage in for example www.fredbloggs.co.uk being a different company to www.fredbloggs.net

Information and knowledge deficit is the major issue for small business

As with IT security issues in general many small businesses are not sufficiently equipped to protect their domain name. There is a lack of understanding, as well as what measures are needed protect a domain name. Most members know very little about domaining and where it is safe to buy domain names and what is a reasonable cost. Issues that should be taken into consideration such as; Do you retain sole ownership of the domain or does the registrar keep some level of control over it? Does the registrar allow you to transfer the domain to another registrar and how easy is the process? Is there an online control panel for domain administration? Do they offer telephone support? Issues like these are not always taken into consideration.

How would domaining be policed?

The practice of domaining is at present not illegal. As long as it is not an illegal activity it is difficult to police and legislate against it. Many would argue that if the name that you had set about registering belongs to someone else, who is either not willing to sell it, or will sell it to you at a much higher rate than the average £15 that it costs to register a domain, then that is bad luck.