

Business Advice

Domains, Search Marketing and Everything in Between

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Why Read This Report?

In today's highly competitive business world the United Kingdom has seen a dramatic rise in new startups. The reasons for this are varied in type, and whilst it is right to suggest unemployment and the global recession played a significant role in this increase, it is 123-reg's belief that increased access to the Internet has empowered the individual to go it alone.

In the UK, 123-reg.co.uk has played a massive role in this. The company has grown in significance over the last 10 years and in 2012 it became the first UK registrar to have registered over 3 million .co.uk domains.

The support 123-reg aims to provide small to medium sized businesses is integral to the company's ethos. As the UK's largest accredited domain registrar, providing competitive pricing and expert product knowledge to all of its customers is a vital part of its day to day business. From the domain through to web hosting; 123-reg is the one stop shop for all business's online needs.

As well as products suited to the individual, the company also provides its customers with a very strong advice forum. Through expert bloggers, 123-reg presents its customers with assistance on the key elements that will help their business develop. The topics covered range from SEO and PPC to Social Media and link building.

The focus of this white paper is to give expert advice about the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in 2013 and to help break down some of the more technical terms. The content of this paper has been taken from a series of interviews with three successful entrepreneurs who now work within the Host Europe Group.



In November 2012, 123-reg spoke with Nick Leech, a search marketing specialist who set up his own agency, helping brands fulfill their true potential online

123-reg also spoke with Matt Mansell, a domain specialist and the founder and CEO of Domainmonster.com. Mansell founded Domainmonster.com in 2006. Prior to founding this domain registrar, he held various Senior Technical Marketing roles in companies including Adobe, Quark and Vertis.

The final interview was conducted with one of the original founders of 123-reg - Jonathan Brealey - who has a wealth of experience after setting up both 123-reg and Webfusion. After leaving Webfusion, Brealey moved into the reseller market, setting up Heart Internet in 2004. The primary topics that will be covered in this paper relate to:

- The increasing trend toward entrepreneurship
- Is the domain still important in 2013?
- What correlations exist between entrepreneurs
- Case Study: How 123-reg supports startup businesses

Please note, this paper is purely educational in its nature and is for educational and advisory purposes.



Introduction

Since the global recession in 2008, there has been a noticeable boom in the amount of people who feel empowered to set up their own business. Whilst it is true to suggest that the global recession has presented a massive opportunity for people, startups across the UK have been on the rise since 2001.

It is companies such as 123-reg who have given entrepreneurs the power to do this by remaining competitively priced and offering a range of products allowing any business to launch online.

UK startups have risen tremendously in the past decade, growth that has rocketed since 2008. According to Start-up Britain, 464,493 startups were created in 2012 alone. According to the same source, 1,401 Startups were registered in the first ten days of January 2013.



According to the Office of National Statistics, 4.2 million people were registered as self-employed in 2012, the highest figure since 1992. When taking a closer look at the data, it is noticeable that there has been a rise in professional workers (including accountants and office administrators) classing themselves as self-employed.



The figures suggest that an increased amount of professionals are moving away from full time employment within one organisation; preferring to take contract work. With a fall in unemployment across the United Kingdom, there is clearly a growing optimism about the possible successes of starting a business in the UK in 2013.

Since 123-reg's founding in 2001, the company has been committed to providing entrepreneurs with the necessary software and skills to go it alone. Before 123-reg, domains were far more expensive and less attainable for the consumer. This meant that creating an online business in the early 2000's was vastly expensive.

123-reg was born with the passion to help entrepreneurs, and being very competitive on price was an organic move. Despite some sections of the media reporting impending doom and gloom for 2013, 123-reg actually believes 2013 could provide one of the greatest opportunities to start a business. There is no doubt that economic uncertainty will hold many back but with the major changes in technology (both internet and mobile), the opportunities are in reality, vast.



The Growing Trend in Entrepreneurship

In 2011, more people expected to set up their own businesses than at any other time according to research from Aston Business School.

The (UK) Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report highlighted that for the first time since records began, 20% of the working population either had, or expected to start their business in the next three years. Though many of these have been through necessity (twice as many in 2012 than 2011), a large proportion of those starting up new ventures had spotted a business opportunity.



Below are the results of the Bi-annual Global Indicator Survey released in 2012. The findings highlight that Britain is becoming a trusted hub for entrepreneurs to start their own business with 84% of those business owners surveyed in the United Kingdom stating that they would be prepared to start their own business.

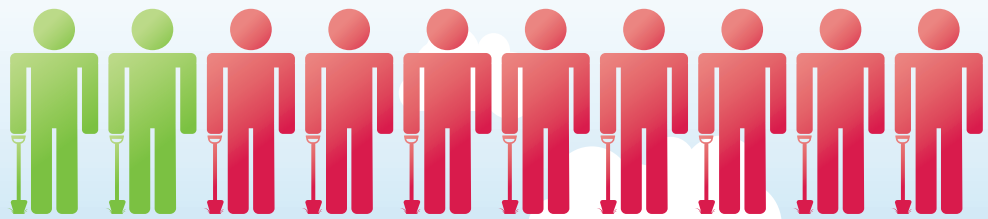
Figure 1: Bi-annual Global Indicator Survey, 2012

Country	% likely to start their own business
United Kingdom	84%
United States	83%
China	79%
Japan	68%
India	59%
Global Average	80%



Historically, in times of high unemployment, the UK generally sees the greatest rise in self-employment. After the Second World War and until the late 1970's, the total of those who classed themselves as self-employed remained stable at around 7%. Since the 1980's, and the rise of global economic hardships, that figure has risen beyond 15%. By 2010, self-employment was higher than at the start of the 2008 recession and by 2012, had reached record levels.

Today, enterprising people or 'everyday entrepreneurs' are key supports to the UK economy. Young people are more likely than ever to embrace entrepreneurship as a career option and embark on this career trajectory from graduation or even as school leavers. It is apparent that the positive effects of entrepreneurs on an economy far outweigh the negative impacts. Job creation, reduction in unemployment levels, increased competition, opening new markets, increasing productivity, foreign income generation and poverty alleviation are just some of the positive impacts that entrepreneurs have on the British economy.



20% of the working population either had, or expected to start their business in the next three years.

Source: The (UK) Global Entrepreneurship Monitor



The Domain: The Glue of the Internet

For any budding entrepreneur the single most important factor to consider is what domain name is needed. Getting the domain name that will set your brand and businesses apart are vitally important. However, that is not to suggest that only those with a strong domain background can prosper.

It is always important to note that having that right domain can potentially be decisive for a business. It can be the creative edge that sets a business apart. What's more, no matter how great the design of a website or how valuable the content may be, the battle will be much more difficult if you do not have the most appropriate domain to deliver your brand.

Almost every business that has started has needed to acquire what is now called the 'monopoly set of domains.' But for new business owners and potential novices, this process may seem rather daunting.

The three most important TLD's are always: .com, .net, .org and of course the local TLD (Top Level Domain). For the UK, this is of course .co.uk. When setting up your own business, it is always important to look to the future and make sure that you are protecting your longer term interests. If a business sees itself expanding into Asia or Europe, it is important to collect the top level domains of those countries.



Despite the fact that the .com is hugely important, local TLDs are pivotal to the efforts of any business looking for local recognition. As well as this, emerging domains have also been successful, including .co and .me. Anybody with aspirations of starting their own business should invest in the future and acquire the right domains as soon as you can and most importantly while you can.

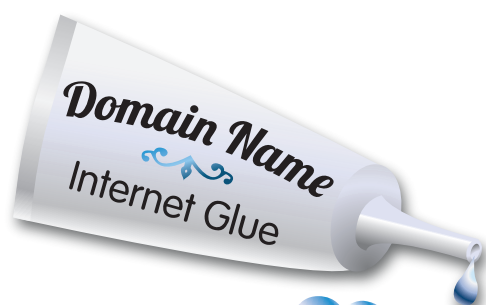
Since 2001, domains have become a much bigger deal. It would be wrong to suggest that the domain market is saturated, and anyone with a business idea should not be put off by this myth. For an entrepreneur, there are many ways to make money; be this mass market or niche. The most important decision that you will make is protecting your property rights and that begins with your domain. At the beginning, you may not get the exact domain you want, however, as many businesses before have proven, it is important to actively acquire, defend and develop your brand with your domain portfolio.



The Rise of Search Marketing

An entrepreneur will spend a great deal of time getting the design of their website right and ensuring that the domain is the best fit for their business. Having achieved that, obtaining business exposure becomes fundamental, which means getting the right visitors to their website.

For most business websites, search engines are the single most important source of visitors. In the UK this means Google, whose market share is over 90%.



The process of changing your website to make it rank highly on Google for searches relevant to your business is called Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). The rise in SEO has been vast. On average, according to Search Engine Marketing Professional Organisation (SEMPO), companies are devoting twice as much time to SEO now, than they did in 2010. For any entrepreneur that is looking to set up their online business, learning about SEO is a no brainer.



Any entrepreneur that is thinking about setting up their own business has to think about their presence on search engines. From the offset, having a good understanding of how to rank well on Google is extremely important. The sooner this potential is realised, the better for your business. There is a vast amount of potential still online, and not all opportunities have been taken by large corporations. Upstarts are constantly finding new and inventive ways of challenging these organisations in search, and in many cases, defeating them.

The first purpose of search engine optimisation is to be positioned high up the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) for searches made by people who are looking for your products. The second purpose is to make your website listing stand out more strongly than your competitors in these places. The higher up the SERPs, and the more your listing stands out, the greater the probability that an individual will click on your link. While this figure varies by engine, recent search data has shown that approximately 70% of users, if they click, will click on one of the first three listings in a search engine.



The following is a checklist of the things you need to be aware of:

- Perform keyword research so you know the keywords people use when they're searching for the products that you sell
- Help Google understand what each page of your website is all about by adding at least 200 words of text to each page.
- Opt for narrow themes for each page, rather than trying to write about everything on one page. Your theme should be repeated in the page titles, on page titles and other elements of the page
- It's not just about search engines, it's about people. Once you've written and designed each page, as a friend to let you know – after having looked at the page for only 5 seconds – what that page is all about.
- Help promote your page by linking to it, from other pages on your site and from other websites.
- Monitor your search engine rankings so you know how successful your efforts are.



British companies are devoting twice as much time to SEO than they did in 2010



123-reg and Startups

Case Study: ISA Hunter



Whether an entrepreneur is born or whether an individual becomes one through the experiences of their lives, having the support of a company with vast experience in helping businesses get online is imperative. 123-reg suggests that anyone looking to start their own business should put the domain at the heart of their operation and build other services like Website Builder and hosting around this.

See how one business found the challenge they'd always been looking for - and then turned to 123-reg for support. Learn how 123-reg is developing its own infrastructure to support entrepreneurs in 2013.

As has been alluded to, any growing business must look at acquiring the most fitting domain name. A clear and distinct advantage of using 123-reg's services is the ease and speed that a domain name can be purchased in. 123-reg spoke with David Gerrish, the founder of ISA Hunter and learned how in a matter of minutes, the most important element of ISA Hunter was ready.



‘Our business was inspired by the frustrations of our friends and family and in part, personal experience. The current financial climate means that more and more people are looking to save using lower risk investments. A Cash ISA is a great place for somebody to start.

‘The business name ISA Hunter was born first, and the first thing we did was check 123-reg.co.uk to confirm the domain was available. This was easy to do with 123-reg and we found the full range of domain names that we required all available. The whole process took just a number of minutes.’

The ease and flexibility of 123-reg has helped ISA Hunter take the first of many steps and the domain registrar will continue to support the business as it expands.

‘All in all, 123-reg has been terrific. The speed of domain name purchases and transfers has helped us enormously. The service 123-reg has provided us has been transparent, fast and problem free.’

Anyone who is looking to set up their own business should aim to take as much advice from those who have set up on their own. So, what advice would Gerrish offer an entrepreneur looking to set up a business from scratch in 2013?

‘You should of course do some research to ascertain if your business idea is a credible one. Above all, if you are passionate and hardworking and you believe in yourself you give yourself a greater chance of being successful. 123-reg is a great place to start.’



Case Study: my1login



To say that my1login has grown rapidly since its founding in March 2012 is an understatement. The Scotland based password protection company solves the problem that we all have: having too many passwords. The password protection

company provides a highly secure vault, allowing users to safely store and secure access to their login details. Since March 2012, my1login has experienced fantastic traction in their user numbers and are already protecting in excess of 10,000 online accounts

As the startup has grown, so has the service that it requires from 123-reg. The password protection company uses 123-reg for domains, hosting and email services. CEO Mike Newman explained that 123-reg was the first point of call because of the reliability of the company's services.

'We chose 123-reg because we needed a provider with an excellent reputation,' Newman said. 'Any reliability issues with domains or email provision would have been a huge obstacle for us. Due to 123-reg's high availability, this has never been an issue'



Since March 2012, my1login has grown experientially. Newman and his team have been making serious strides in the technology sector and in 2012 my1login were featured on the BBC's online technology section. Such development puts extra pressure on 123-reg to continue to provide the simple, flexible and reliable service that my1login expects. If there have been any hiccups, Newman has been able to work with the 123-reg support team and his access to senior members of the support team is an additional bonus.

'Having access to senior real-time support is very important to us. As we are an always-on cloud based password manager, it is vital that my1login services are always available for our users. The reliability of 123-reg's email and domain services is of great value in enabling us to provide an uninterrupted service.'

As my1login expands, 123-reg will continue to provide exceptional support to the company. Additionally, Newman points out the effectiveness of working with 123-reg. 'We would be delighted to recommend all of the 123-reg services that we use for our business. The 123-reg control panel enables us to have complete control over our services and the ease with which email can be setup and accessed across multiple devices is ideal. '



Conclusions

Many domain and hosting providers have targeted startups with business advice over the last couple of years. The market has become somewhat saturated and there is a whole host of advice articles out there which are aimed at helping people set up their business online. Whilst these are informative, what sets this paper apart is its ability to give advice on the fundamentals a self-starter will need to know.

This paper does not offer self-starters generic advice about what could be done. This paper has gone much further than that, taking experiences of three successful entrepreneurs and applying this to a real journey.

It is 123-reg's belief that every startup business needs to have a strong presence online. The interviews with Jonathan Brealey, Nick Leech and Matt Mansell have shown 123-reg's commitment to providing expert advice on the things that will actually help a business grow. Whether this is determining what domain name to buy or expanding into new markets, 123-reg gives entrepreneurs valuable insight into the online world.



The company understands that startups have so many competing demands on them in 2013 and it may seem daunting as to where to begin. This paper is a starting point, looking more at the nuts and bolts that every startup business needs to consider as they evolve and grow. 123-reg is a one stop shop for all things entrepreneurial. With 123-reg, a business starter can purchase their domain, can build their dream website and glean advice through various channels all hosted by 123-reg.

Finally, this paper should give people the confidence that they are able to succeed. The case study interviews further demonstrate that 123-reg is a reliable and supportive partner to begin a business journey with. From helping a startup who has just gone live or supporting a company who has experienced considerable growth in a year, 123-reg is committed to providing this support to whoever may need it. The prevailing message from 123-reg is anybody that has a business idea should believe in it and have the confidence in themselves that it will succeed, for your greatest resource is yourself.



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