

Domain name audit

Given the significant role the internet plays as it relates to corporate branding, focused domain name management is arguably just as important to a company's success as other brand protection and growth strategies. For this reason, companies should implement the same IP management approach as used for trademarks for their domain names – starting with a thorough audit.

A deeper understanding of your portfolio

A comprehensive business-oriented domain name audit helps companies fully understand what they have, where cost savings can be realised and how to address ongoing maintenance, gaps in protection, and registration decisions in order to put the right domain name policy and strategy in place.

Few businesses have an articulated approach for registering and renewing domain names. Therefore, it is essential to take inventory of what domain names are currently registered and map them to your company's brand portfolio. By linking domain name registrations to corporate brands and product lines, Novagraaf can help you make informed business decisions and begin to determine if:

- Domain names accurately reflect the brand names and associated trademark registrations
- There are any gaps in coverage (e.g. core brands, product lines or trademarks that do not have equivalent domain name registrations)
- Domain name registrations are maintained for products or trademarks that are no longer in use
- There is consistency in the registries used to register the company's domain names (e.g. in terms of the choice between top-level (gTLD) or country-code (ccTLD) registrations).

A single domain name registration may not seem like a major expense when compared to other brand assets. However, a poorly managed portfolio can be quite costly as unnecessary annual fees accumulate. That is why it is a good business practice to rationalise your domain name portfolio to maximise protection while at the same time reducing aggregate and yearly renewal costs for domain names accrued over the years.

How it works

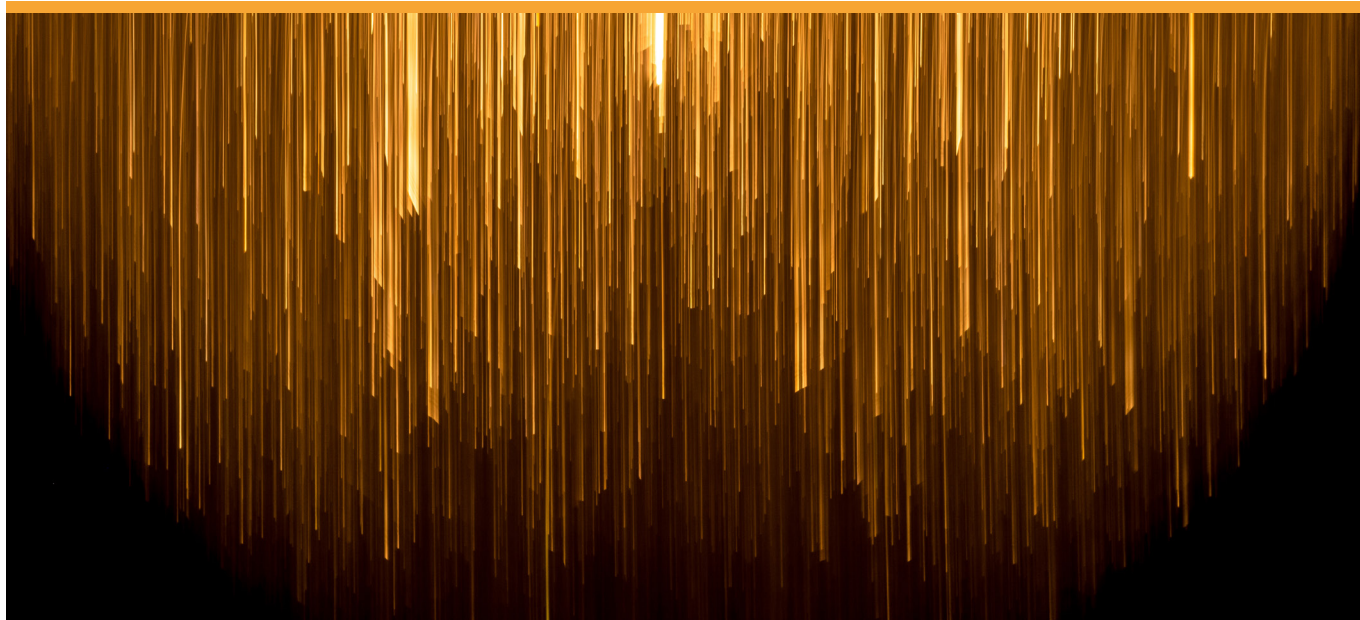
Novagraaf employs a three-step process that analyses existing domain names to identify risks and opportunities; delivers the results in a way that is accessible for the entire business; and designs an implementation strategy that tackles identified vulnerabilities and establishes ongoing guidance via a domain name policy. To achieve this, your audit is expertly handled by a seasoned Novagraaf attorney who has the requisite IP, legal and specialist marketing skills.

STEP 1: Analysis

Assess and present an accurate picture of your domain name registrations to establish key patterns; for example, are some gTLD or ccTLDs more popular than others? Are some brand names better protected? Are some trademark assets covered by domain name registrations at all? Are there any domain name registrations that are active but barely used?

In short, your domain name portfolio is analysed against your online presence and against your trademark portfolio during this phase.





STEP 2: Coordination

Domain name registration and maintenance decisions are not the sole responsibility of the IP department. That's why we deliver our results in a way that also involves key stakeholders and associated departments, such as IT or marketing. Their involvement is essential especially when designing future registration strategies which require alignment with marketing and IT to achieve their potential online.

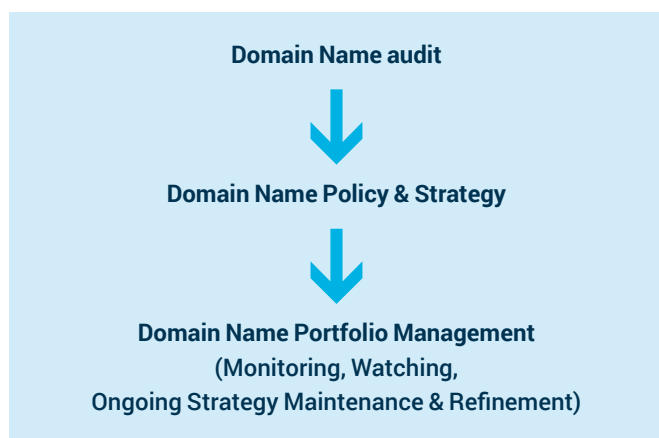
STEP 3: Implementation

In this final step Novagraaf delivers a clear and comprehensive domain name policy and strategy that establishes short- and long-term goals and deliverables and identifies priorities for action where vulnerabilities have been identified during the audit stage. This includes a general defence strategy as well as specific recommendations on abandoning obsolete domain names or acquiring new ones.

Looking ahead

With the audit complete and a domain name policy in place, you should also consider other best practices maintenance activities to ensure ongoing protection of your portfolio and the integrity of your newly established strategy. This can include putting in place a **domain name watching process** in order to monitor core rights online, as well as determining a defence strategy for prioritising action. Depending on the size of your portfolio, you may also wish to consider implementing a global or localised **domain name monitoring service**.

Our monitoring and watching services are a complement to the more general domain name management services we offer through our dedicated department. This includes not only filings and renewals, but also specific technical solutions. With Novagraaf, these services are all delivered by a team of experienced IP attorneys uniquely able to provide legal, administrative and commercial insights and recommendations. ■



Further information

To learn more about Novagraaf's domain name audit or other brand services, please contact your consultant at info@novagraaf.ch.