

chipchat

This month I've mostly been trying to register internet domain names. It's great fun: simply think of a name, submit the request to the official bodies, then wait thirty seconds to be told that it's gone. So you try again, perhaps modifying what you thought was already an obscure or unique name by tagging, say, a number on the end. Submit again, then, surprise surprise, be informed that it's also already been registered. After a while, your initial excitement of registering a domain name begins to flag when you discover that everything has gone – and that includes everything.com.

You could argue that I've left it a bit long in the first place and should have known better, particularly being in the IT business and all. If you've been putting off domain registration, then don't hang around – recent reports have claimed as many as 50,000 a day are being snapped up! The biggies – com, net and org – are managed by Network Solutions <www.networksolutions.com>, while anything dot-uk is down to Nominet <www.nominet.org.uk>.

Tell you what, I'll save you the bother. Almost everything ending in dot-com has already gone, but here's the rub. You see, there are plenty of alternative top level domains to choose from, such as net,

org, and of course co.uk. A handful of half-decent domain names remain available with these endings, and if you're happy with an org.uk, then your options

The trouble is that the whole world knows this, and despite new top level domains being created for specific purposes, such as gov, net and org, the fact remains that everyone wants a dot-com. Plenty of people have registered dot-coms who should really have gone for one of the other top-levels. Forget online porn; this is real net-naughtiness. That people would prefer a country-ambiguous net or com really does illustrate their desirability.

Then again, perhaps I'm taking this far too seriously and should plump for the perfectly reasonable org.uk. The fact that no-one else wants it shouldn't put me off what could become the perennial internet bridesmaid. Maybe I should save my registration fee and just be ivor@some-free-cheapy-ISP. Would you think any less of me? Perhaps it's worth just one

more go on the Network Solutions one-armed-bandit. Damn. I can't believe it: nothingleft.com has also gone... Hello, is that FreeServe?

• *Ivorbugbear.com is currently unregistered.*

Online snootiness means that the best-sounding domain names are something short, ending with a dot-com. It's no different from a business wanting a memorable phone number like 0800 654321, or London-dwellers preferring 0171 to boast their exclusive central location. It all boils down to memorability and perception of quality. Web browsers don't help by assuming that single words typed into the address window start with www and end in dot-com.

➤ The number printed for NetObjects in the May issue of PCW was incorrect. The number should have read 01189 829822.

➤ On page 59 of the May issue, we stated that technical support calls to Telinco were charged at local call rate. They are, in fact, charged at £1 per minute.



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next month

PDA's

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OS group test

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K6-III

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