

What U.S. Investors Miss About Europe: A Conversation with Salvatore Iacobelli

November 24, 2025

Salvatore Spencer Iacobelli isn't a household name in the domaining world, at least not yet, but he's one of those quiet operators who's been consistently moving names behind the scenes, boasting 3M+ in brokered names. Based in Italy, Salvatore runs [CTEQ](#) and [CREAFI](#), where he focuses on premium brokerage and brandable domain sales. He's active on Atom (formerly Squadhelp), runs his own landers, and has a growing record of sales across extensions and niches. I talked to him about how the European market really behaves, what end users are buying, and how he approaches pricing in a space that's getting more data-driven and more competitive by the month.

Mike: How did you first get into [domain investing](#), and what pulled you in enough to stick with it?

Salvatore : I entered the domain world almost ten years ago, thanks to [NamePros](#). At first, I had no idea such an industry even existed, but on the forum I met several experienced domainers who were incredibly generous with their advice. They helped me understand the dynamics of the market, the importance of quality, and how domain names sit at the intersection of branding, technology, and opportunity.

What really pulled me in was the community itself.

[Domaining](#) can look like a solitary business from the outside, but behind it there are people with a lot of passion, knowledge, and willingness to help

newcomers. I had my first small wins as an investor early on, and those wins reinforced the idea that with discipline and continuous learning, this could become more than just a hobby. Over time, I expanded into brokerage, which allowed me to see the industry from both sides: as an investor and as someone who facilitates deals.

Domain Tips for you – [sign up for my newsletter](#). It's great!

Mike: What was the first sale that made you realize this could actually be a business?

Salvatore: My first “real” discovery moment came by accident. I had a personal blog, nothing professional, and someone contacted me about buying the two-word .com domain. They offered me \$3,000 for what had been a simple hand-reg. At that time it felt unreal to receive money for something I had barely paid attention to.

I accepted the offer, and that sale completely changed my perspective. It made me realize that domain names could hold value far beyond what I imagined. After the sale, I started researching why someone would pay that amount, and what distinguished a valuable domain from an average one. That small transaction opened the door to a whole industry I didn't know existed, and it motivated me to study, invest, and take domaining seriously.

Mike: How do you balance your time between investing, brokering, and branding projects?

Salvatore: Each part of the business has its own rhythm. For investing, I usually focus on acquiring premium names during a specific period each year. It's a personal strategy based on timing and market behavior, and it has worked well for me. Of course, I always leave room for unexpected opportunities, because in this industry good deals often appear without warning.

Brokering is more unpredictable. It depends on client needs, premium assets entering my pipeline, and negotiations that can take days or months. I try to approach brokerage with discipline because it requires communication,

persistence, and understanding the psychology of both the seller and the buyer.

Branding projects are more creative and give me a break from the analytical side of investing. They help me reset mentally and refine my sense of what makes a name memorable or valuable. Balancing all three activities is not easy, but structuring my time and keeping clear priorities allows me to handle each area effectively.

Mike: What are you seeing in the European market right now that U.S. investors might miss?

Salvatore: Europe is a complex, fragmented landscape. Unlike the U.S., where .com is the dominant standard, European buyers often show strong loyalty to their local extensions. I'm seeing increasing interest in one-word names, not only in .com but especially in local TLDs like .it, .de, .fr, and .es.

What many U.S. investors miss is that some of these markets are still underpriced. At auctions for .it or .de domains, for example, you can still find great premium names at prices that would be impossible in the .com world.

Additionally, European SMEs are becoming more aware of the importance of branding and digital presence, which is creating new opportunities.

Understanding local language, culture, and buyer behavior can give you an advantage that pure data tools won't show. Europe rewards nuance more than volume.

Mike: How often do you deal with Italian end users, and how do negotiations differ from English-speaking buyers?

Salvatore: I deal with Italian end users from time to time, but not as frequently as with international buyers. The Italian market is still maturing when it comes to understanding domain value. Many businesses only recently started recognizing that a strong domain name is a real asset, not just an address.

Negotiations with English-speaking buyers tend to be more direct, faster, and driven by clear business reasoning. They typically know the market value and

the role a domain plays in branding and conversion.

With Italian buyers, conversations often require more education and more patience. You need to explain why the domain is priced a certain way, how it benefits their business long-term, and why alternative names are not equal. The positive side is that things are changing: interest in .it domains and in premium brand names is growing steadily.

Mike: What role does outbound still play in your business today?

Salvatore: Outbound still has a place, but I approach it strategically. It's a time-consuming process and very much a numbers game, so I don't use it for my entire portfolio. Instead, I reserve outbound for premium domains that clearly match specific companies or industries, and for names I handle on behalf of clients.

Well-executed outbound can create great opportunities, but it requires precision, research, and timing. Sending hundreds of generic emails doesn't work. Targeted outreach, on the other hand, can produce amazing results, especially when the domain is a perfect fit for the recipient.

Mike: You've listed and sold on Atom. What's working for you there, and what's not?

Salvatore: Atom is excellent for brandable domains. The platform's strength lies in its ability to present names creatively with logos, descriptions, and a curated marketplace that attracts buyers who already expect to purchase a ready-made brand. This increases conversion potential for certain types of names. What works less, in my experience, is selling pure premium names. High-end buyers often prefer direct negotiation, confidentiality, and platforms designed for enterprise-level transactions. Still, for brandables, Atom remains one of the strongest marketplaces in the industry.

Mike: You've sold names like ScentGPT.com—what was the thinking behind that purchase and sale?

Salvatore: ScentGPT.com came from analyzing market trends. During that period, GPT-related names were gaining momentum, and I was selectively

acquiring keyword plus GPT or keyword plus AI combinations with long-term potential.

I liked the idea because it connected two fast-growing worlds: AI and sensory technology. Even if the specific niche is still emerging, I believed that eventually companies would experiment with AI-driven scent personalization or virtual fragrance experiences. It was a name that felt both futuristic and intuitive. The sale confirmed my instinct.

Mike: How do you decide what goes on Afternic versus what stays on your own landers?

Salvatore: Afternic is one of the best distribution networks available. It builds immediate trust with buyers and reaches a huge number of registrars worldwide. I've even had situations where my own landers offered a lower price, yet the buyer still completed the purchase through Afternic because of the familiarity and security of the network.

I generally list around 60 to 70 percent of my portfolio there, especially domains priced up to about \$125K. For higher-value names, I prefer custom landers where I can control the narrative, negotiation, and presentation.

I'm also watching **Spaceship** with interest. Their interface is clean, fast, and the fees are very competitive. They are clearly innovating, and I expect they will add more advanced selling features soon.

Mike: What's your current process for evaluating new AI or Web3-related keywords?

Salvatore: When I look at new AI or Web3 keywords, I try to keep things simple. The first thing I consider is whether the term has real momentum or if it's just a temporary buzzword that will disappear quickly. Then I look at what's happening in the real world: whether companies are actually building around that concept, if there's funding or real interest, and whether the idea has some practical direction.

But the most important part for me is always the name itself. Even in a technical space, a keyword needs to feel like a brand something easy to say, easy to

remember, and with enough personality to survive long after the initial hype fades. A mistake I see often is chasing every new technical term that appears. Most of them burn out fast. I prefer names that are connected to a trend but also strong enough to hold long-term value.

Mike: What's a mistake you see newer domain investors make over and over again?

Salvatore: The number one mistake is registering too many low-quality names. While it's possible to make money from hand-regs, it's extremely difficult to build meaningful success that way. It's much better to buy strong, undervalued names in the \$50 to \$250 range than to accumulate dozens of weak registrations.

Another common mistake is treating domaining lightly. This is a niche industry that requires constant learning, market awareness, and patience. The more you study successful sales, buyer behavior, and branding principles, the more your results improve. Luck plays a role, but strategy is what determines long-term success.