

On Becoming an e-Agent—Domain Names Part VII

By Jo Becker, GRI, BA

A few months ago I discussed setting up a free e-mail account for those who didn't yet have e-mail and were wanting to get started. I suggested in that article first signing up with one of the free e-mail services such as Yahoo. In this case your e-mail address might be `janesmith@yahoo.com`. Similarly, if you already have a full-fledged e-mail account through your phone company or other ISP (internet service provider) such as AT&T or Verizon, your e-mail address may be `janesmith@att.net`.

In both of these scenarios you're inadvertently promoting Yahoo, or AT&T or Verizon, not your business. As a quick fix I suggested contacted your corporate office to see about setting up a forwarding address that would read something like: `janesmith@abcrealty.com`. This will go a long way in making your online presence appear to be more substantial and impressive, but there's a catch. Typically, when someone sends you a message at `janesmith@abcrealty.com`, and you hit the "Reply" button, your return address on the reply message will show your Yahoo or AT&T address. This may confuse those you correspond with, and will dissolve the fancy impression given by your corporate address.

In addition, an address of `janesmith@abcrealty.com`, again, is promoting your firm, not necessarily your own practice. The next step in becoming an e-Agent is to choose your own domain name. A domain name is a personalized string of letters and/or numbers used for your e-mail and/or web address. For example, my domain is "TheBeckersOnline.com." I use the domain name in my e-mail address: "Letters@TheBeckersOnline.com," and in my website address "www.TheBeckersOnline.com."

Most people receiving e-mail these days are savvy enough to see the e-mail address "Letters@TheBeckersOnline.com" and surmise that there's likely a website at the "www.TheBeckersOnline.com" address.

So with a custom domain name you not only look more professional with each e-mail message you send out, you also automatically promote any website you have with the same domain name.

How do you get a domain name? The most straightforward thing to do is to contact your current ISP for assistance. (Note: If you're currently subscribed to a free service such as Yahoo, I would personally suggest moving to a ISP vendor at this time. As you search for a domain name and begin to think about hosting a website, etc. an ISP will be able to provide you with technical assistance you simply can't get from free services.)

Your ISP will be able to help you determine if the domain name you want is available. For example, Jane Smith is such a common name that `janesmith.com` may already be registered by someone else somewhere in the world. It may take some creative thinking to come up with a domain name you like, that is memorable and not too long, and which isn't already taken.

Once you find the domain name you want, your ISP will register it for you for a fee. Domain names typically need renewing (reregistering) every couple years. I believe I pay about \$60 every two years for TheBeckersOnline.com. Once your ISP has registered your domain name, they can set you up to receive e-mail at your new address (`jane@janedoe.com`, or `info@janedoe.com`, etc.). If you don't yet have a website to post at your new domain name, that's the next step... Watch for next month's article on launching a website.

If all of this seems too overwhelming, ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you will get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang it there!*

After being approached by fellow agents from Oregon Realty's Portland West branch last year, I have begun offering technical and marketing assistance to interested agents. If you need help finding an ISP and registering a domain name, give me a call.



Jo Becker, GRI, BA, is an Associate Broker with Oregon Realty Company's Portland West Branch. As a fellow agent, she knows how important, and sometimes scary, technology can be. After being approached

by fellow agents for assistance, Jo has begun to offer technical and marketing assistance to interested agents. Jo can be reached at: 503/493-6918 Ext. 3 (voicemail/pager); or Letters@TheBeckersOnline.com