

VeriSign Steps Up, Takes Lead in Managing Domain Names

Ted Chamberlin

VeriSign will help enterprises manage their Internet domain names and protect their brands against theft and misuse. However, enterprises should understand exactly what these services can and cannot guarantee.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 6 December 2001, VeriSign announced Digital Brand Management Services, a suite of services that offer companies a way to establish, manage and protect their brand names on the Internet globally. To buttress its new line of products, VeriSign said it will acquire 1GlobalPlace, which provides international domain name registration services, and NameEngine, a service for managing intellectual property and domain names. The transactions totaled \$11 million in stock and cash.

Analysis

VeriSign trumpets its intent to fill a significant market gap. The Web domain name management market has from the beginning been fragmented. Mostly start-up companies have introduced service offerings that fill niche needs — e.g., international domain name registration, and name search and protection services. No one provider has addressed in a comprehensive manner the issue of digital brand management. Now VeriSign will package such disparate services into a single suite or product line that one provider will deliver. Domain name customers then would not need to manage multiple vendors.

VeriSign's prominence also brings a well-known player to the fore in this new market, which will likely reassure large enterprises that hold many valuable brands. Digital brand management services such as VeriSign's will primarily benefit such large global marketers as Anheuser Busch, Kraft Foods and Procter & Gamble — companies with hundreds of individual brands registered throughout the world that wish help in safeguarding their brands from Web tampering or theft.

Quality of service will be key. Internet brand management involves a complex web of issues, including government regulations, legal issues and the evolution of naming-system policy. Enterprises should understand exactly what these services can and cannot guarantee since no one entity controls all of the activities in this arena.

Enterprises looking for outsourced digital brand management should evaluate VeriSign's suite if they:

- Own or manage more than 150 domain names in multiple top-level domains (e.g., .com, .biz or .net) and country code top-level domains (e.g., .jp or .uk)
- Regard their Internet brand as critical to their financial success, and not only seek to defend the names they have but also want to know about activity related to their brands in undeclared namespaces and combinations
- Prefer to consolidate digital brand management services into a single vendor

Analytical Source: Ted Chamberlin, Enterprise Network Strategies

Written by Michael Gomez, gartner.com

Need to Know: Reference Material and Recommended Reading

- "VeriSign Keeps Control of .Com but Loses Total Domain Control" (FT-13-7745)
Reassignment of domains and the looming launch of new ones put pressure on VeriSign to find growth opportunities. **By Ted Chamberlin**

- "Domain Names — The E-Sign to Your Business" (DF-14-1452) A plethora of domains and country-codes makes vigilant management of domain names an essential enterprise. **By Ted Chamberlin**

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