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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

ENTERPRISE | AUGUST 19, 2010

Dot-Jobs Draws Worry

Site Operators Fear Domain Expansion Will Crowd Market

By SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

Job-site operators are bracing for an influx of competitors as the dot-jobs domain widens its reach.

So far limited to only employers' names, as in [Disney.jobs](#) or [Whirlpool.jobs](#), the dot-jobs Internet domain will begin accepting applications next month for generic names like [hospitality.jobs](#) and [virginia.jobs](#). But the mostly small businesses that run job sites ending in dot-com say they worry how the development will affect their already crowded and distressed sector of the economy.



Matt Slaby for The Wall Street Journal

Eric Shannon, who operates [DiversityJobs.com](#) and other niche job sites says he's worried about competitors.

"I feel threatened," says Eric Shannon, founder of LatPro Inc., a Plantation, Fla., small company that owns [DiversityJobs.com](#) and other niche job sites. Mr. Shannon points out that if someone were to buy the rights to [diversity.jobs](#), they could essentially create a duplicate of his business, which has already seen revenues shrink in half since the start of the recession.

The job-site industry, which relies heavily on the sale of employment postings, has been struggling since the job market began to shrink, says Peter Weddle, founder and president of the International Association of Employment

Websites, a trade group made up of mostly job-board operators. More employers have also been shifting their recruitment-advertising dollars toward newer and less expensive venues, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, he adds.

While anyone could apply to buy a dot-job site with a generic name, the domain-name holder, a small company called Employ Media LLC, is solely responsible for granting or denying approval, according to its agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, a global nonprofit that oversees the Internet. Employ Media was the only organization to apply for the right to operate the dot-jobs domain in 2003, says ICANN's Craig Schwartz.

Dot-jobs isn't an open top-level domain, such as dot-com, which can be purchased by anyone seeking a name that's available on a first-come, first-served basis. Instead it's a "sponsored" top-level domain, meaning it is assisted by a third party, in this case, the Society for Human Resource Management, a trade group in Alexandria, Va. The trade group's role is to ensure that applicants fall into the job-site realm, rather than something unrelated, according to Gary Rubin, a spokesman for the group. The final decision rests with Employ Media.

There are just nine sponsored top-level domains in operation that are overseen by ICANN, compared with 21 open top-level domains, says the nonprofit's Mr. Schwartz.

The fact that dot-jobs is a sponsored domain as opposed to an open one means that Employ Media could reject a request by Mr. Shannon to purchase Diversity.jobs if the company deems his application noncompliant or if it favors another equally compliant applicant's plans for using the domain.

Employ Media has yet to decide how it will go about reviewing applications for generic dot-jobs addresses or how much they'll cost, says the company's chairman and chief executive, Tom Embrescia. The small business says it is encouraging members of the global human-resources community to offer suggestions.

Of course, it can be difficult to convince Internet users to visit a new domain, much less sell it. However, some domains are geared toward niche communities, mostly sponsored domains, and therefore don't expect to generate a lot of traffic or name holders.

There are currently around 9,000 registered dot-jobs domains with company names. Dot-coop, another sponsored top-level domain for cooperatives world-wide that launched in 2002, has roughly 6,800 registered domains. By contrast, dot-com, which launched in 1985, has around 90 million.

But many small job-board operators say they are also concerned about whether search engines will rank job sites with dot-jobs addresses higher than those with dot-com addresses, though there hasn't been any evidence that this will happen.

"Having a search-engine friendly domain is everything," says Harry Joiner, an executive recruiter in Atlanta who owns EcommerceJobs.com.

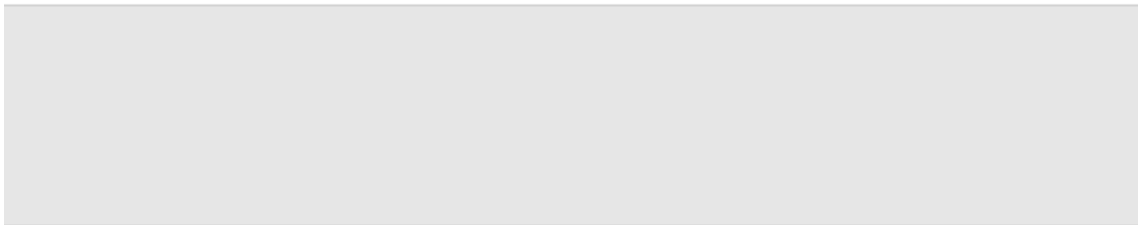
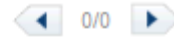
Mr. Joiner says he's apprehensive about what might happen should Employ Media grant someone else permission to purchase Ecommerce.jobs or something similar. "That would hurt because I'm building my business on the back of a generic domain name," he says. "You've got a twin running around out there as you."

Trademark protection, which helps many big brands fend off duplicate sites, is typically tough for job-board operators to obtain if their sites' names are made up of commonly used words, says Enrico Schaefer, a founding partner of Traverse Legal PLC, a Traverse City, Mich., law firm specializing in Internet law. Many dot-com job sites may be unable to stop dot-job competitors from launching sites with similar names, he says.

However, some smaller job-site operators say they don't see any reason for alarm because they've spent years developing brand recognition and loyalty among consumers. "We don't care," says

Eric Martinez, head of business development for SalesJobs.com, which has been listing job postings for sales professionals since 1997. For a dot-jobs site to emerge and try to compete with SalesJobs.com, "it's too late," he says.

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