Jon, Rebecca, Wade, Jon, Becky, Phyllis, Orville:

I am hoping that after the logo discussion that we can also discuss the web site process.

Here is some background information on the process that you can review before the meeting if you want to.

There are several decisions that will need to be made.

I pasted some information at the bottom of this email from <http://zolmedia.com/TechVille/2004/WHOIS-Ownership.htm> on some legal issues.

I have had very good service and support from HostMonster.

Their information is at <http://www.hostmonster.com/>

All of the Oscar Zero web site files would be located on the HostMonster computers. They do daily backup on all files.

One example is one of my sites at [www.webfamilytree.com](http://www.webfamilytree.com) which is hosted by HostMonster.

The domain name oscarzero is available. No space between oscar and zero allowed. Only lower case is allowed.

However, my site (or any site) can be reached with [www.webfamilytree.com](http://www.webfamilytree.com) or [WWW.WEBFAMILYTREE.COM](http://WWW.WEBFAMILYTREE.COM) or [www.WebFamilyTree.com](http://www.WebFamilyTree.com)

When the site comes up, it is just listed in lowercase as [www.webfamilytree.com](http://www.webfamilytree.com)

My suggestions are:

1. We register the oscarzero domain name and have it hosted on HostMonster.
2. The "Friends of Oscar Zero" legal name should be listed as the Registrant, Administrative Contact, Technical Contact and Billing Contact.
3. HostMonster will assign us a username and password after we register the domain name and sign up for hosting services.
4. The username might be something like oscarze1 or the first 7 letters of the domain name followed by the number 1. We have no choice in the username.
5. Whoever sets up the site can set the password.
6. We can give access to anyone we want by telling them the HostMonster login username and password.
7. We could later hire a web design company to build the site and just need to tell them the hostmonster username and password.
8. If a future dispute arose, only the Friends of Oscar Zero legal entity would be authorized to call HostMonster and have them reset the password.
9. Upon direction of the Marketing team for the page content and page design, I would be happy to upload the htm pages to hostmonster, if I am given the password.
10. Any one of us with the HostMonster username and password could make changes to the web site at any time, which should not be a problem.

A 2 year contract with HostMonster would cost about $4.95/month x 24 months or $118.80.

HostMonster advertises "Free domain included with qualified plans!" That is something new to me. I had to pay about $80 to "register" my domain name for 10 years. HostMonster doesn't say the "registration" costs are included in the free domain name, so I think it might be about $80 more to register the domain name for 10 years.

I am planning to be at the Thursday Feb 12th at noon meeting.

I will be happy to try to answer any questions either before or at the meeting.

Thanks,

Ron Dahl (cell phone: 701 789 1464)

# "WHOIS" the legal owner of your website's address?

Do you have a website? And does it have its own web address (something like "www.YourCompany.com")? If you didn't personally register that web address, you should check to make sure you're really the legal owner of it.

All too often businesses discover, after investing significant time and money in using the web address, that their web designer actually owns it, not them.

Technically speaking, the thing you're worried about owning is actually called the domain name, which consists of the last two portions of the web address. For example, if your web address is "www.YourCompany.com," then your domain name is "YourCompany.com."

## Make sure you're the "Registrant" of the domain name

Every domain name has a Registrant, Administrative, Technical, and Billing contact listed for it. The Registrant is the legal owner of the domain, so you want to be sure that you (or your company) are the Registrant. Also make sure that the mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address listed for it are yours too.

## Use "WHOIS" to check if you're the Registrant

All domain registration companies, such as www.Verisign.com, www.GoDaddy.com, and www.Dotster.com to name a few, are required to make a "WHOIS" page available to the public, so that anybody can look up the details about a domain. Among these details are the contacts for the domain.

Go to any of these registration companies' websites and look for the WHOIS link - it's often at the very top or bottom of the web page.

## Why wouldn't you be listed as the Registrant?

Most business owners are shocked to learn that they don't legally own their own domain names. After all, they paid to have the website created in the first place, plus pay ongoing fees for web hosting and domain registration. How can they not be the owner if they're footing all the bills?

What commonly happens is that when your web design company created your website, they took care of registering the domain for you. While registering the domain however, they listed themselves, not you, as the Registrant (i.e. owner).

Why would they do that? Giving them the benefit of the doubt, I suppose it's possible that they just don't know better. A more cynical view, however, would be that they do it to keep you "hostage" to using their services forever (or at least make it difficult for you to switch).

## The Administrative contact - "hands-on" power

Aside from the Registrant, you also need to be aware of who is listed as the Administrative contact. The Administrative contact is the one who approves any requested changes to the domain – including changing the Registrant. So, although the Administrative contact is not the legal owner, it does wield substantial power.

There is a bit of an argument to be made for the web designer being the Administrative contact (there is no argument I can see for the web designer being the Registrant, however). Oftentimes when a website is first being created and tested, it's located at a private location that is NOT affiliated with the domain name. After the website is ready to be made public, special directories for the domain, called "name servers," need to be updated to make the private location become associated with the domain. This process can be easier for web designers if they're listed as the domain's Administrative contact.

## Would you give a construction company the title to your land?

If all this talk about domains and contacts is still a little fuzzy, let's compare it to a more familiar situation. Say you're having a house built. Imagine that the builder said to you, "Hey, just sign your deed over to me so that I can take care of all those annoying details like applying for permits, etc. But don't worry, I'll let you live on the land after the house is built and use it just like you still legally owned it." You'd think that was a ludicrous proposition of course, regardless of how well you knew and trusted the builder.

Well, the same goes for letting somebody else own your domain, regardless of how much you trust them.

## User name and password

There's one more element to be worried about. When a domain name is registered, most registration companies will assign you a user name and password. You use these to log into your account at the registration company in order to make changes to your domain. So, even if you're listed as the Registrant and Administrative contact, if somebody knows your user name and password (like a disgruntled or ex-employee), they can still wreak havoc with your domain.

## What do you do if you're not the Registrant?

If you're not listed as the Registrant, but are on good terms with the person or company that is, just ask them to make you the Registrant. It's an easy process if they know what they're doing.

However, if your relationship with the Registrant has become adversarial, all hope is not lost. The organization that oversees domain names, [www.ICANN.org](http://www.ICANN.org/), has developed a "Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy" for such cases. Under this policy, a company that owns a domain name that's completely unrelated to its core business may have a hard time holding onto it.

So, if you need to reclaim ownership of your domain name, investigate this dispute resolution policy. Of course, it might also be a good idea to consult with an attorney who specializes in Internet law.

## An ounce of prevention

As with most things, the best solution is to avoid the problem in the first place. This means registering the domain name yourself. Just go to a domain registration company, pick the domain you want, and choose to "park" the domain for the time being. For more information on how to do this, read my [*ISPs and Web Hosts and Domains, oh my!*](http://zolmedia.com/TechVille/2003/WebHostingISPsAndDomainNames.htm) article.