

CUSTOMIZED INTERNET EXTENTIONS



An opportunity to promote
your brand via a controlled,
innovative online presence

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Afnic (the French acronym for "Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération" i.e. the French Network Information Centre), is a non-profit association created in 1997. Appointed by the French government to manage domain names under the .fr TLD, it promotes use of the namespace by entrepreneurs and individuals.

As the incumbent manager of the .fr TLD with more than 3.2 million domain names in the .fr namespace to date, Afnic is also positioned as a provider of technical solutions and registry services: it currently manages 14 new gTLDs, including .paris, .bzh, .leclerc and .snf.

Afnic is located in Saint-Quentin en Yvelines, where its staff of 80 work for the common good of the French Internet.

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On 6 December 2017, SNCF launched its new online booking platform, **www.oui.sncf**, which is a complete overhaul of its platform **www.voyages-sncf.com**, the first e-commerce sites in France ⁽¹⁾.

At the heart of this overhaul, the SNCF chose to change domain names and now communicates with its own custom internet extension. While developing new services, the SNCF is promoting its brand in a new and innovative way through the .sncf.

Brand TLDs (.brand) provide multiple levers for rethinking your company's digital strategy. At Afnic, we have had the good luck to support some fifteen clients in deploying a number of ambitious projects. That supervisory role has allowed us to identify the many opportunities that a custom extension can create for a brand and to understand the issues facing the organizations that set out on such a venture.

With the next call for applications organized by ICANN ⁽²⁾ in sight for 2021, the purpose of this white paper is to show the many advantages of .brand TLDs and give you advice and concrete information based on our experience so that you can start analyzing the issues involved.



.brand

A .brand is an internet extension corresponding to a trademark (such as .leclerc, .mma, or .orange).

It is a digital namespace that belongs to you, which can be used to differentiate all of your digital services (website, e-commerce site, intranet, email addresses, etc.).

As the owner of the extension, you define the rules of use according to your needs and your project.

- (1) In single monthly visitors, according to the audience barometer Fevad / Médiamétrie [https:// www.fevad.com/](https://www.fevad.com/)
- (2) ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is an international cooperation organization whose main task is to regulate IP addressing and the domain names used on the Internet.

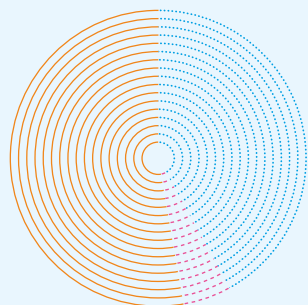


OVERVIEW

OF .BRAND TLDS IN 2018: EVOLVING USES AND EXPANDING AMBASSADORS

In 2012, against a background of liberalization of the domain name market, ICANN authorized the creation of new custom extensions. The call for applications helped launch 3 types of extensions:

NUMBER OF EXTENSIONS CREATED DURING 2012 CALL
FOR APPLICATIONS PER TYPE OF TLD SUFFIX



≡≡≡ **645**
Brand TLDs

≡≡≡≡≡ **508**
Generic TLDs
and community
TLDs

≡≡≡≡≡ **63**
GeoTLDs

The .brand TLDs were the most requested extensions, far ahead of geoTLDs.

To date (2018), there are 645 brand TLDs worldwide, including 28 in France. These brand extensions remain, with rare exceptions like .ovh, the exclusive use of the brands that hold them.

HOW THE EXTENSIONS ARE USED

A defensive approach at first ...

Of the 645 registered .brand TLDs, only 388 have been launched to date.

The difference can be explained by the defensive use that has been favored by many companies. Their first concern was to ensure that no third party would register the extension in their place.

In addition, rethinking a digital strategy by including a custom extension is a medium-term project, which takes time and involves many stakeholders within an organization.

As a result, brand TLDs were less visible than other extensions at first, but this situation is changing.

... and thereafter, redesigned digital strategies

Still emerging, .brand TLDs are becoming increasingly popular and increasingly visible in companies' digital strategies, regardless of the sector of activity.

The French Railway Board SNCF, the BNP Paribas banking group, the E. Leclerc retail chain or the MMA insurance network, to name but a few, have chosen to organize their online presence and communicate based on their own brand TLD.



« From now on we are taking part in the creation of the new internet »

Bertrand Realini

Domain Name Manager

.bnpparibas - BNP Paribas Group

These custom extensions are used by pioneers with advanced digital maturity as the leaders in their market sector. This makes them inspiring ambassadors who will move .brand TLDs from "nice to have" to "must have".

.BRAND TLDS, AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUSTAINABLY BOOST YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY



Your brand is a valuable asset, an essential lever in your marketing and sales strategy. It has been built up over time and enriched with features that have created its DNA.

That solid foundation is at the heart of the relationship you have with your customers and prospects.

The online experience that you propose must use and strengthen that DNA, in order to increase the effectiveness of your work and bring more value to your audiences.

A .brand TLD is a vital ally in achieving that goal by the many benefits it brings to your business.



4

AERAS OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE





01



GREATER
HOMOGENEITY

02



GREATER
AUTHENTICITY

03



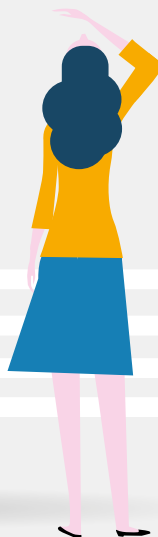
GREATER
PROXIMITY

04



GREATER
SECURITY

AN OPTIMIZED
CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE THANKS
TO YOUR **.BRAND TLD**



A COHERENT AND HOMOGENEOUS DIGITAL OFFER



With your Partners

You decide who can use domain names under your extension. This is particularly useful for all groups with business models based on partner networks (resellers, agents, franchisees, etc.). The network will only be allowed to use domain names under your .brand TLD. Not only are all of the addresses in the same format, but most importantly you control their creation and deletion.

For your products and services

Are you launching a new product or service?

With your .brand TLD, you free yourself from any concerns as to the availability of the domain names for your future products under this or that TLD suffix. Being able to create all the addresses of your choice with your own TLD suffix saves you a lot of trouble and high buy-back costs.



CASE STUDY

.MMA, A DEDICATED ADDRESS FOR THE WHOLE NETWORK

MMA (Cov ea group) is one of the leading insurance networks in France with more than 1,700 branches spread throughout the country. Each agency has its own internet address under the .mma namespace with a web page dedicated to the agency, bringing it closer to its customers.

In addition, the zerowww.zero) and the website of the MMA Entrepreneurs of the Future Foundation (www.fondation-entrepreneurs.mma) are now under the .mma brand TLD.

02

A UNIQUE AND AUTHENTIC DIGITAL NAMESPACE



Your own TLD suffix allows you to apply your brand strategy effectively on the Internet (product brand, umbrella brand, etc.).

Your brand equity will increase over time around your TLD suffix by creating a unique and infinitely expandable namespace according to the needs of your business.

The exclusivity of your .brand TLD guarantees the authenticity of your online products and services for your customers and prospects.

CASE STUDY

THE .LECLERC TLD, CONNECTING THE IN-STORE AND ONLINE EXPERIENCE

In the large-scale retail sector, E.Leclerc uses its own brand TLD to enhance its product and service offering while showcasing the trade name.

The group's flagship para-pharmaceutical business line is the subject of a dedicated e-commerce site (www.parapharmacie.leclerc), as is the new portal for sports goods (www.sport.leclerc) launched in 2016.

Finally, the group has switched its "Who is the cheapest" service from a .com to a .leclerc brand TLD (www.quistlemoinscher.leclerc), thus making it possible to promote the brand behind this highly popular comparator. Promotional campaigns are also relayed online with a .leclerc brand TLD.



A SPRINGBOARD TO INNOVATE AND KEEP CLOSER TO YOUR PUBLIC

A .brand TLD provides an opportunity to enhance your products and services by adapting to new uses and offer an online experience closer to the behavior patterns of your audiences:

- Virtually systematic use of search engines
- Browsing via mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.)
- Community development via social networks
- Securing online purchases
- Etc.



CASE STUDY

THE .BNPPARIBAS, A TLD SUFFIX TO SERVE INNOVATION

BNP Paribas has redesigned its digital offering based on its customized extension.

The bank adapts its online services according to its different targets with two main portals:

- <https://mabanque.bnpparibas> for private customers in France;
- <https://entreprises.bnpparibas>, <https://wealthmanagement.bnpparibas> or <https://cib.bnpparibas> for other market segments.

The .bnpparibas URL serves to focus on a target with a pledge of trust and authenticity, essential in this sector of activity.

In the world of products and services, the bank has also launched an

application for associations and large foundations:

- <https://associationsetfondations.bnpparibas> ;
- and a real estate energy audit: <http://audit-energetique.bnpparibas>.

The group's institutional website <https://group.bnpparibas> now uses the brand TLD, as do others of the bank's internal and external communication sites:

- <https://histoirebnpparibas> is an information center on the history of the bank;
- <https://ourcommunity.bnpparibas> is the collaborative platform for services between group employees.

CASE STUDY

THE .SNCF, CENTRAL TO THE OVERHAUL OF SNCF'S DIGITAL OFFER



The French national railway board (SNCF) launched its new reservation and services portal in December 2017: www.voyages-sncf.com which became www.oui.sncf.

With a new brand TLD, new services etc., the group has invested in a global overhaul of its digital offering. The choice of the Oui brand ("Yes" in French) was adopted for its possible association with .sncf. Without a custom extension, the group could not have chosen or communicate with this short and easily remembered brand name. In addition, the SNCF now offers a WIFI service on board its trains. This service is accessible from the URL www.wifi.sncf, thus guaranteeing users that they are using a dedicated, trustworthy service.

04

ENHANCED SECURITY FOR YOUR USERS



Phishing, parking, damage to brand image, sale of counterfeit products ... there are many types of willful damage and they are becoming increasingly professional.

Not are major groups immune to cybersquatting⁽¹⁾ or typosquatting⁽²⁾. By having your .brand TLD and officially communicating with it, your customers and prospects will identify and trust your digital namespace.

- (1) Cybersquatting is a practice which consists in registering a domain name corresponding to a trademark, with the intention of reselling it to the rightful owner, altering its visibility or taking advantage of its reputation.
- (2) Typosquatting is a technique which consists in buying domain names that are graphically or phonetically close to a popular website or a well-known brand, so that the user who makes an unintentional spelling or typing error is directed to the site held by the hacker.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU LAUNCH

APPLICANTS ELIGIBLE FOR A .BRAND TLD

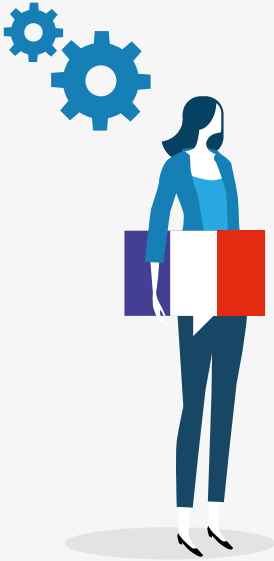
Any company possessing one or more brands may apply to have one or more .brand TLDs corresponding to their portfolio. ICANN requires applicants to provide proof of their rights to the brand(s) in question. In addition, ICANN favors applications from candidates that can demonstrate the solidity and the sustainability of their activity.



WHAT BECOMING THE REGISTRY OF A .BRAND TLD INVOLVES

From the moment the company has its own extension, it becomes its manager, known as a registry. This status gives you new responsibilities to set up within your organization:

- Choosing a registry operator that provides the technical management of the infrastructure of your extension;
- Backing up your data with an operator known as an "ICANN accredited Escrow company";
- Setting the rules for using your extension.



The technical management of an extension is a specific business line that **requires a strong infrastructure** to ensure a secure and uninterrupted service. Relying on a **trusted registry operator** makes your application more **trustworthy and guarantees compliance** with the day-to-day service levels required by ICANN.

We advise you to choose a **reputable technical operator in accordance with your data protection and hosting policy**. The latter can also take care of the qualitative monitoring of the uses of your domain names, which is requested by ICANN.

Afnic has the benefit **unique expertise in France** in managing registries. As the manager of the .fr TLD for more than 20 years and as the technical manager of 21 other extensions, Afnic has its own ISO 27001-certified DNS services infrastructure.

Afnic also guarantees **the service is 100% managed and hosted in France**, complying with ICANN rules and European legislation in terms of personal data protection (GDPR).

THE COSTS

Charges required by ICANN

In 2012, they were:

- \$185,000 to manage the application;
- \$25,000 a year in management fees.

The costs for setting up the project in your company.

These vary depending on your project, the number of stakeholders involved and the partners chosen to support you.



THE KEY STEPS IN THE PROJECT



The steps we describe are those of the previous call for applications in 2012.

They should remain similar in the next ICANN round and benefit from some simplifications based on lessons learnt by the community.

Step 1

DRAFTING THE APPLICATION FILE

This is a key step in the process since you must fill in an Applicant Guidebook that you submit to ICANN. You describe in detail your project and the associated business model, and answer some fifty administrative, financial and technical questions.



Applicant Guidebook made available by ICANN during the 2012 call for applications: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb>

Step 2

APPROVING YOUR APPLICATION

The study of the application file takes place in two steps.

- The first step involves submitting your application to the Internet community. In concrete terms, this means that your application will be made public and subject to comments. The goal is to make sure your application is not prejudicial to any rights-holders.
- In the second step, ICANN studies your file in order to approve it. This phase, similar to an audit, consists in answering a certain number of complementary questions.

At the end of this step, you sign a contract called a registry agreement with ICANN.



HOW AFNIC CAN HELP

From drafting your application file to signing the contract with ICANN, we support you throughout the application process. Our technical skills, our knowledge of the regulatory framework and our expertise in .brand TLDs ensures your application is solid and backed by on a quality project. ICANN approved 100% of the 17 clients we supported in 2012.

Step 3

THE TECHNICAL DEPLOYMENT OF YOUR EXTENSION



You are invited to take a number of technical tests to make sure your infrastructure is suitable.

Following these tests, your extension is created and integrated by (IANA) ⁽¹⁾ into the Internet root. Your .brand TLD is then present on the global servers making your future web services accessible.



HOW AFNIC CAN HELP

As a registry operator, we take care of the issues involved in the technical deployment of our customers .brand TLDs and enjoy a 100% success rate.

(1) IANA (the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) is an international agency reporting to ICANN whose primary purpose is to manage the technical and structural issues that are essential for the proper functioning of the Internet.

Step 4

LAUNCHING YOUR .BRAND TLD



Your extension is now active and you can use it according to your project and in accordance with the rules set by ICANN.



HOW AFNIC CAN HELP

Our solid knowledge of the market and our experience provide our clients with tailor-made support to ensure their project a success:

- *Based on a feasibility study, together we define a suitable project for your company and your ambitions and prepare every issue involved in its deployment (technical, marketing and commercial, communication, legal, etc.);*
- *We advise you on the organization of the project and help you set up an effective management system;*
- *We coordinate the launch with the various stakeholders;*
- *We provide institutional and regulatory intelligence to ensure the compliance of your project.*

BEST PRACTICES

TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT SUCCEED



Define a project to use your extension from the start

Your .brand TLD must become an asset of your business strategy. Identify upstream how it can contribute in the medium and long term to the strategic objectives of your organization, taking into account several parameters: your business model, your level of digital maturity, your objectives in terms of growth, your resources, etc. This will facilitate the drafting of your file and make it more relevant.

Set up a suitable project team

Deciding to adopt a custom extension is a strategic, cross-business project. Coordinating the project means the various departments in your company must be involved from the start. The teams in the legal, administrative, marketing, communication, IS and IT departments will need to discuss the project together.

Prepare a launch step-by-step

While a long-term vision is essential to your project, prepare your launch in stages, focusing on agile management. Feel free to test your new extension on projects of moderate scale at first.

Choose the right partners

Well-chosen partners will contribute to the success of your project at different stages in the process. You save precious time and avoid pitfalls in the application process. You also start on the right foot to make your launch successful and gain the support of your employees

In order not to miss the next call for applications planned by ICANN for 2021, we encourage you to start thinking now about how a custom extension can add value to your organization and sustainably reinforce your online strategy.

3 QUESTIONS TO...



Caroline POLLET

Editorial Manager, sncf.com, SNCF
Communication and Image Division



Why did you register your extension?

In 2012, the SNCF wanted to position itself on the .brand extension, seeing it as a formidable communication lever. We had been streamlining our portfolio of brands since 2011. The .sncf brand TLD was a good way of boosting ownership of the communication around the SNCF brand. It was also an opportunity for our image and value: SNCF is an innovation brand, and we did not want to miss the opportunity of being a pioneer in the field.

What are the results so far?

The extension has allowed us to create simple URLs, that are easily remembered, for services in line with the company's new promises. The deployment began in December 2017 with the redesign of voyages-sncf.com as OUI.sncf. Since then, we have registered other URLs under the .brand TLD for services eagerly awaited by our customers such as Wi-Fi on board our trains (wifi.sncf and wifiter.sncf).

We are currently considering several uses:

- *The creation of campaigns or pages aimed at particular target publics, such as journalistes.sncf, etudiants.sncf, jeunes.sncf, and so on.*
- *The promotion of essential services such as railway stations: stations.sncf*
- *Communication around internal processes such as that for railway athletes: athletes.sncf*

- *Communication on important cultural programs or events, such as our partnerships around crime novels in France: polar.sncf*

What are your tips for a brand that wants to register its .brand TLD?

First of all, a coherent branding system should be defined: the .brand TLD must serve the overall strategy of the brand and the company.

Then you have to find the right moment, the right opportunity to get started. For example, you can use the redesign of your digital environment to communicate about your new digital identity.

Finally, governance is also crucial for the project: convincing and bringing on-board Excom sponsors to ensure easy deployment; exchanging and co-steering with all the units in your group; and anticipating the financial and legal issues with the departments concerned.



IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE...

Please contact Cédric Michel-Flandin,
Afnic .brand TLD expert and
Key Account Manager.

Email :

cedric.michel-flandin@afnic.fr

Telephone :

+33 (0)1 39 30 83 15

+33 (0)6 43 43 22 63

afnic