

NET MAN

Business Websites That Work!

“Ask NET MAN” Column
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New Mexico Internet Professionals Association Educational
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Q: It is time to renew my domain name. I have received several letters from different companies. How do I decide on who to work with on this? Does it matter?

A: Any accredited registrar can register domain names in your company or personal name. For a list of accredited registrars, see the website of The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN at www.icaan.org), and use the link in the left center of the page. There are a number of wholesale domain name registration services such as 000domains.com, itsyourdomain.com or 4domains.com in addition to the more popular and more retail type registrar services.

Like any other industry, the registrars are competing for your business, and some have resorted to less-than-ethical methods of obtaining that business. Because domain name registration information has been publicly accessible, competitors will often email or snail mail you what appear to be renewal invoices but are actually requests for you to authorize transfer of your domain registration over to that registrar – be careful to read the fine print on anything that looks like an invoice for domain registration and you’ll find that many may just be solicitations with no obligation to actually pay the dummy “invoice.”

While you may want to switch registrars for financial reasons, aggregated billing or better customer service, you are free to make that choice on your own – or even just stay with your current registrar. If you're not sure who your current registrar is, you should become familiar with a “whois” lookup. For .com, .net and .edu domains, I use <http://TheNetCave.com/whois> You could also use any other whois lookup, such as Smart Whois at <http://swhois.com/>

At the first URL, I entered (as an example) **nmipa.net**, and see near the top of the retrieved

whois information the line: **Server used for this query: [whois.networksolutions.com]**. I may also have seen a line in the retrieved information which would look like: **Registrar: NETWORK SOLUTIONS, INC.** These lines indicate the registrar with whom the domain is currently registered. In this case, you see Network Solutions, now owned by Verisign. Near the bottom of the page, you see: Record expires on 02-May-2005

As the top level (.com, .net, .org, .biz, .info, etc.) domain names get moved progressively to their own master registries, we are seeing some implementation of anonymous records in the more general whois queries. As this proliferates, you may need to take note of the sponsoring registrar code rather than a plain English name showing in the Registrar line, and then decipher that code through the top level domain’s main registry. As an example, the CORE- codes are noted at <http://corenic.org/comnetorg.htm> For .org domain names, the master registry is <http://www.pir.org> with a whois service at <http://www.pir.org/whois/>

At the PIR whois lookup URL, I entered **nmipa.org**, and see near the top of the retrieved whois information the line: **Sponsoring Registrar: NSI (R63-LROR)**. This code is linked to information on who the code represents, the registrar with whom the domain is currently registered. Clicking on the code link, we again see that the current registrar of this domain is Network Solutions. Back on the initial results page, we see: Expiration Date: 07-Jun-2004

If you want to transfer to a different registrar, that you must complete the transfer request and approval process in advance of one month before your renewal date, otherwise the registrar and registry put a “lock” on your domain and it cannot be moved to any other registrar.

Your website development company may be a registration partner with an ICANN accredited registrar, and able to handle transfers and renewals associated with your domain. They're a great resource for handling the technical aspects of moving a domain to another registrar

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