

Bringing Your Team Together Online

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Technology has really come to a point of convenience, such that if you are not using it properly in your business, then you are seriously shortchanging yourself. Internet domains are cheap and ubiquitous. If you don't have one yet, you should stop right now and ask yourself why. If you have one, and your email address still ends in "@yahoo.com" or "@hotmail.com" you really need to rethink things. Imagine using your domain to solidify and bring your team together under a single banner.

If you don't have a domain name for your team yet, then this article is going to be perfect for you, and will hopefully inspire you to take action to unify your team right away.

If you already have a domain, perhaps you will get a few ideas from this article on how to maximize the use of it for your business.

REGISTERING YOUR DOMAIN

Domains are basically "leased" for a period of time, typically in 1-year increments, but you can pre-pay for as many years as you like to ensure that you don't forget to renew it. Most registrars give you plenty of reminders as you approach your renewal time.

GoDaddy (www.GoDaddy.com) has a fairly friendly interface for registering your domain and changing any of the settings for hosting it (which you will need to do later on in this article). Since they are a major domain registrar, getting step by step instructions on how to change DNS settings, etc., is easy to do no matter where you host it. Their domain prices are generally on the low side, and will run you about \$9 a year, which should fit any budget.

When you choose a name, pick something easy to remember, and easy to type.

You are better off registering a “.com” domain because people generally assume a domain name ends in “.com” but there are many to choose from. NET, ORG, BIZ, INFO, NAME to name just a few.

You can search GoDaddy for different domain names until you find one you like that is available. Remember, if you find a domain that has the .com taken already, and you register the .net version, that some of your would-be visitors will forget that it's a .net and end up typing yourdomain.com and end up at a different website. The best strategy is to buy the .com, .net, and maybe even the .us and .info versions of your chosen domain name. That way you will capture all the traffic you meant to even if they accidentally use the wrong ending.

SPECIAL NOTE: If you haven't registered your domain yet, and you are doing so mostly to set things up as I am teaching you in this article, then I recommend that you just register your domain through Google's new registration services. They will add privacy features to your registration as well, so that you will get less spam. They only charge \$10.00 a year, and the domain will be mostly pre-configured to use with Google Apps! That's a great deal!

HOSTING WITH GOOGLE

After claiming your name on the Internet, it's time to host it.

Hosting just means designating a computer that will be the “home” to your website, email, etc.

There are many companies that offer a huge variety of hosting packages, but Google has a free service that you can use to host your domain, handle all your email, personal and group calendars, shared files, and more. Configuring your hosting and your domain to work together is not terribly difficult, but it is probably the most complicated part of this process.

Google provides thorough instructions for doing it your self. You will need to set up a Google Account first. Once that is done, you can get to the instructions that show you how to set up your new domain and link it to your Google Account. Here's where you set up your Google Account and your new domain:

<http://www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/admins/editions.html>

Sign up for the free Standard Edition to get started.

EMAIL

Google's Gmail will handle all your email and you will be able to set up a virtually limitless number of mailboxes. All of them are free, and will be a part of your domain. Decide now if you want to let people pick their own user names (which will be their email address), or if you just want to set them all up with a standard naming convention. I recommend that you choose a standard to use so everyone's email will be similar.

Here are some common account naming standards:

Full.Name@	First+LastInit@	FirstInit+Last@
Jim.Dickinson@domain.com	JimD@domain.com	JDickinson@domain.com
Peter.Parker@domain.com	PeterP@domain.com	PParker@domain.com
Tom.Jones@domain.com	TomJ@domain.com	TJones@domain.com

If you have a large team, or expect to offer accounts for lots of people, full names will often be better because you can't have duplicate names. TomJ might be found more than once in your group, because you might have a Tom Jenkins and Tom Jones. You might have more than one PParker, because you might have Paula Parker as well as Peter. Full names are often the best, because even if you happen to have two Tom Jones, one could use Thomas.Jones, while the other uses Tom.Jones.

NOTE: It's OK to have "periods" separating the names, and sometimes it's clearer to use one, but you don't have to. You could just as easily have JimDickinson as well as Jim.Dickinson. That is a personal preference. I think it's just as easy to say my email address is "Jim-dot-Dickinson-at-domain-dot-com" as it is to say my email address is "JimDickinson-at-domain-dot-com". Sometimes you might even feel compelled to have to say "JimDickinson-all-one-word-at-domain-dot-com". So sometimes already having "dot" between names is just easier for people to understand.

In your email administration, you can create special email lists of your users as well, using what are called "aliases".

An Alias is basically an email address that doesn't have its own email box like all your users do. It is an email address that simply forwards email to one or more users that do have mailboxes.

When you set up an Alias, you pick what users you want to receive emails that are sent to that address, and update that list as necessary.

For examples, you might want have a list set up for the leaders on your team called something like leaders@domain.com. When you set it up, you list all the leaders accounts you want to get email at that address, and when you send an email to that address it automatically forwards to each of those leader's email accounts. This is a fantastic way to economize your emails. You could do the same for everyone that's going

to convention with you, or even make aliases by the state or city they are in. Then you can email everyone that belongs to that group with just a single address.

As the owner of the domain, you are the administrator, too. But you can also give others administrator permission to help you with managing your domain and domain users. If you have a lot of people in your group that you want to have email addresses at your domain, then you just might need a little help with it. Choose someone you trust because they will have the power to delete accounts, too.

CALENDARS

Google provides a calendar application with their free account as well. You can even set up “shared” calendars that all your users can see as well. This is a great way to keep track of and announce travel dates, meetings, conference calls, etc. Google Calendars allow you to have more than 1 calendar (and they will layer on top of each other so you can see appointments on all the calendars at the same time) so you can have a calendar for personal or family things that no one else but you can see, but you can also have other calendars for your business, church, community, etc. Users can share calendars with each other as well, so you could have a calendar called “travel” and share it with everyone so they can see where you will be and when for meetings you will be doing.

You can have a calendar just for leaders, or if you really have a lot of meetings in a lot of places, you can have calendars by state or city. Use your imagination! When you start using calendars to share with people, you will really start enjoying the benefits!

START PAGE

Google even offers a place where you can set as your home page in your browser. On this page, you can display your emails, news, announcements, shared documents, and lots of other widgets. Your users can customize that page to their heart’s content, too, but it will be a great tool to help them keep in touch with the “group” because it will always be right there for them to see when they get online.

DOCUMENT SHARING

Wouldn’t it be great to have a central place to keep files for everyone in your group? The latest PowerPoint. Handouts and brochures that can be

downloaded and emailed or printed. Testimonials. Forms and other tools people can use in their business.

Google Docs lets you upload, or even create on the fly, files to share with everyone. It's a great feature that gives you a great way to manage "official" material you want to use in your group.

CHAT

Google Talk is also integrated and runs as a full-featured chat client you can install on your computer. This will allow your team to communicate in real time and even by voice if they have a headset for their computer. No need to call and pay international rates. Simply be online at the same time and use Google Talk to talk just like a phone! I have had many voice conversations with people in Australia and New Zealand over Google Talk. It works great!

IN CONCLUSION

With your own Domain and all the free tools that come as part of Google Apps, you have some very powerful tools for your business and your team. And you just can't beat the price!

If the task of setting them up seems daunting though, don't fret. It is well worth paying someone else to set it up for you so that you can enjoy the benefits right away. Companies like mine help people do this all the time, and the rates are typically quite low.

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when you use them, can bring a
team together online no matter
where in the world they are.***



Jim Dickinson is the Co-founder of i-SupportDesk.com, an experienced inter-Network Marketer, Author, trainer, and entrepreneur. Jim has over a decade of IT experience and has honed his talents to create a New Breed of IT professional. His motto is 'We can fix it fast, for less - TODAY!' Jim is married to his high school sweetheart and Dad to 10. He loves the ocean and mountains and loves the freedom that network marketing can provide in todays troubled times. His love for the industry, technology, and people have created a unique ability in Jim to work as a Geek, but speak to the laymen. He has a new column online called 'Ask A Computer Expert' that has been met with lots of excitement. When it comes to customer service, professional training, and product creation, Jim shines!