

PRO ACTION ITEM OF THE MONTH

GOT AN IDEA FOR A SHOW? HERE'S THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD DO.

BUY THE DOMAIN NAME

That's right . . . I don't care whether it's a new play you've written or an old play that you want to revive. Before you breathe a word of it to anybody, go to a site like www.GoDaddy.com and snatch up the domain for less than the cost of an extra value meal . . . and sit on it.

Maybe the show won't happen, or maybe it'll take five years, but I guarantee you the cost of the domain today will be less than the cost of the domain tomorrow.

Because if you don't grab it, someone else will.

There's a bunch of very savvy businessmen and women out there who have made a bunch o' bucks buying and trading domains like they were derivatives, and benefiting Broadway from producers who fail to buy up their rightful domains before their new musical or new play leaks to the press. I'm sure these 'cybersquatters' read Playbill.com more religiously than I do, just waiting for the announcement of a new reading or the rights of a project being sold.



The truth of the matter is . . . it may be illegal for these cybersquatters to sit on something that is rightfully yours. The infamous "Simpson Movie Suit" between Fox and a squatter who bought TheSimpsonsMovie.com set a precedent that individuals having no legitimate business interest in the domain name could not keep it from those that did.

The problem with the law? It moves very slowly.

HERE'S WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS:

- Producer decides too late that they want a domain.
- Producer finds it's already gone.
- Producer contacts squatter to try and obtain it.
- Squatter wants cash.
- Producer's show opens in a few months and has no time (or money) for a lawyer to take the case to the World Intellectual Property Organization.

THE PRODUCER DOES ONE OF TWO THINGS:

- Producer pays (anywhere from \$100–\$1,000 and some tickets)
- Producer chooses inferior domain and the “right” domain stays in possession of someone else. And that squatter is not happy. And they decided to, oh, I don't know, point the site to the negative *NY Times* review of the show.

Either way you pay . . . in cash or by the loss in marketing value from not having the prime domain. Web addresses are exactly like street addresses. And different streets have different values. Your show is like your home. I don't care how beautiful it is . . . you also want it on the right street in the right neighborhood, don't you? That means it needs the right domain.

So go get your domain. Frankly, I'll even let you stop reading right now to go buy it. Go. I'll be here when you get back.

If you don't, and you simply must, must, must, have that domain like it's a new kidney and you don't have any time, then try to cut a deal. The good news is that most of the guys I know who deal in these domains are pretty reasonable (I can say that because, unfortunately the web design and marketing arm of Davenport Theatrical has had to acquire a few premium domains over the years from shows so big you wouldn't believe). The Squatters know that legally they may not have ground, so they'll cut a decent deal making things easier for everyone.

But remember, every time you settle, you actually encourage the squatter to repeat the process since it was a successful venture for him/her.



And remember, they're dealing in perishable inventory. Once a show starts marketing an alternative domain like *Guys and Dolls* did, the other names lose value. Sure, the squatter on the *G&D* domain mentioned before may feel good about sending traffic to the *Times* review, but that's not making him any money. In fact, he's losing.

The simpler answer is to snatch up your name faster than you can say w-w-w... Cuz if you don't, you'll be, well, to bastardize a Loesser lyric: “under the thumb of some little . . . squatter.”

In fact, one of my peers out there didn't grab the domain for the show that he's planning on bringing to Broadway in the next 2 years.

Don't worry, Mr(s). X. I bought it for you.

And no, no, before anyone gets any ideas . . . don't worry. I have no desire to sell it for a profit. That's not what I'm about. I'll be happy to hand it over.

I just didn't want it sitting on someone else's servers where they could ransom it for cash.

Because God knows, Broadway shows don't need yet another unnecessary expense line on their budgets.

Check out www.theproducersperspective.com for more Action Items like this!

