

Melbourne IT recovers Centrebet's domains in time for World Cup



Client: Centrebet

Key facts:

- Leader in online gaming and wagering
- Operates in 13 countries
- Offers up to 6,000 international sports and horse racing markets per week

Challenge: Recover key Greek domain names to support market development.

Solution: Engage Melbourne IT to conduct detailed investigation and launch Dispute Resolution Process.

Results: Both domains successfully recovered and immediately transferred to Centrebet's ownership in time for the World Cup.

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*Luke Brill,
Head of Marketing.*

Centrebet is one of Australia's leading sports bookmakers and was the first licensed bookmaker in the Southern Hemisphere to offer online sports betting. It has since expanded to offer online sports wagering in 13 countries around the world.

In 2009 Centrebet began operating in Greece using the domain centrebet.com. The company's preference was to also have a localized presence with centrebet.gr however this domain - as well as centerbet.gr - had previously been acquired by cybersquatters with the intent to profit from the Centrebet brand. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to recover the Greek ccTLDs, Centrebet contacted Melbourne IT for assistance. Melbourne IT specialists were able to gather the necessary background information and quickly recover the domain names for Centrebet in time for the World Cup.

Cybersquatters hold key ccTLD domains

Opportunistic cybersquatters familiar with the growing recognition of the Centrebet brand acquired centrebet.gr and centerbet.gr back in February 2009 ahead of Centrebet's market expansion in Greece. As the company increased its branding effort, it became apparent the cybersquatters were creating a source of confusion for prospective Centrebet customers in Greece and diverting potential online revenue.

"Greece is one of Centrebet's fastest growing markets and it has been a priority for us to recover the domains successfully and ensure we have full control of our online brand in Greece," said Luke Brill, Centrebet's Head of Marketing.

For online bookmakers, the risk of potential revenue loss becomes even greater during large international sporting events. In addition to the attention created by top contenders, these events are extremely important opportunities for capturing new customers. Centrebet typically sees its new customer acquisitions double in the months leading up to and during major events, making it vital that customers get to their website when searching for the brand online. With the World Cup in South Africa fast approaching, getting rightful ownership of the two .gr domain names was a top priority. That is when Centrebet turned to Melbourne IT DBS for help.

Taking the right approach to recovery

Melbourne IT DBS had been working with Centrebet for over three years providing corporate domain management services including domain registration and renewal process management and advice pertaining to their overall domain name strategy. But Centrebet had yet to use Melbourne IT's domain name recovery service.

Previously Centrebet had attempted to recover the .gr domains themselves by filing a WHOIS complaint. They had gained agreement with the Registrants who then let the domains go to another party contrary to their agreement. After consultation with their client, Melbourne IT collected the relevant background information and put together a detailed report demonstrating a bad faith registration with recommendations for Centrebet's consideration. The first step recommended was to file a dispute with the local authority. Being familiar with the local jurisdiction, Melbourne IT specialists knew this action would ensure that the domain was locked while the case was reviewed.

"When dealing with domain cybersquatters, trademark holders are generally faced with two options - either buy the domain from the cybersquatter or resolve the dispute through arbitration," said James Panton, General Manager Brand Protection Services, Melbourne IT DBS. "Where there is a trademark infringement or a bad faith registration, Melbourne IT does not recommend acquisition as a first step because of the longer term implications associated with being seen to buy back IPR leading to possible future hijacking and piracy. We would always recommend recovery in these instances."

Centrebet followed Melbourne IT's advice and filed a dispute with the authorities. Without proper understanding and expertise in demonstrating a bad faith registration it is quite difficult to have a successful DRP case. But thanks to a lot of experience in this area, Melbourne IT is frequently able to deliver successful outcomes where other attempts often fail.

The Dispute Resolution Process in Greece is managed by ELTA, the Hellenic Post Office, who processed the case in 2009/2010. Leveraging its extensive experience with such cases before resolution authorities, Melbourne IT was able to put forward Centrebet's case and was successful in recovering the domains.

"Melbourne IT's enforcement team was very thorough in their approach and advice. They handled all aspects of the dispute on our behalf and their experience in this area ensured the right result," said Luke.

Success – In time for the world cup

On successful completion of the case, Melbourne IT promptly gained control of the domains and provided access for Centrebet to begin using them on the same day. Both domains were successfully recovered and transferred to Centrebet's ownership. And the timing couldn't have been better for Centrebet's World Cup program.

"Melbourne IT's effective recovery of the domain in time for Greece's participation in the 2010 FIFA World Cup was a high priority and we are very pleased there is no longer any cause for customer confusion," concluded Luke.

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