

THE INSIDE STORY: BUYING AND SELLING OCEAN.COM - WITH RICHARD LAU



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Episode 348

It's rumored but not confirmed that today's Sherpa sold a five letter, dictionary word domain name that has hundreds of thousands of exact match searches per month, and thousands of companies use this word in their name...but nobody's been able to confirm the sale or the price. The domain? Ocean.com. Stay tuned!

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Michael Cyger: Hey Sherpa Network! My name is Michael Cyger and I'm the publisher of domainsherpa.com, the website where you can learn how to

become a successful domain name investor or entrepreneur directly from the experts. It's rumored, but not confirmed, that today's Sherpa sold a five letter generic dictionary word for a large sum but nobody's been able to confirm it. The domain? Ocean.com. We're going to see if we can get some facts on this domain name by talking to the previous owner who happens to be the founder of NamesCon Domain Name Conference, Richard Lau. Welcome, Richard.

Richard Lau: Thank you for having me. Glad to be here, Mike.

Michael Cyger: Hey, and welcome to the Seattle area. As I mentioned just before I hit the record button, this is being billed as, like, the storm of the century. Everybody's panicked, filling up with gas, going to buy wood for the fireplaces, so I hope you're okay over in Seattle.

Richard Lau: You know what? I...I'm a hearty Canadian. I've got an all-wheel drive and no umbrella.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, it's so funny because, you know, they shut down the schools here on Bainbridge Island because of...any snow comes down, or too much water is on the streets, the buses can't actually, like, make the path through the...the old horse-drawn carriage, you know, roads that we have here, so...but luckily school is on today so I don't have my kids to contend with this morning.

Richard Lau: Yeah, I was checking the weather, you know? I'm actually heading back...driving back through the thick of the storm, so...

Michael Cyger: Oh!

Richard Lau: ...You know, everyone wish me luck.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, well maybe you stick around a little bit longer, hang out here in Seattle.

Richard Lau: Sounds good.

Michael Cyger: Alright, you know what I do here, Richard. I try to get all the inside information. I try to dig deeper than anyone else so we can learn tips, techniques, strategies, that are going to make a difference in the lives of individual investors and entrepreneurs. What the audience who's watching or listening may not realize is that you're a pretty private person, right?

Richard Lau: Yes. I do try and fly under the radar.

Michael Cyger: So today's interview might be a little difficult for both of us. You're going to stick with me though, right?

Richard Lau: I will. I will.

Michael Cyger: Alright, great. Besides founding NamesCon, many people may not know too much of your background...what kinds of domain names you personally invest in, what sales you've had in the past, how you...you used to help registrants of stolen domain names recover their names and...and much more. So hopefully on today's show we'll learn about ocean.com, a little about your background, maybe some information about NamesCon and...and hopefully a bunch of tips for domain name investors. Sounds good?

Richard Lau: Well, is it a five or six hour show?

Michael Cyger: Yes. And we need to get you out of here so you can drive back and...before the power goes out for me, so...

Richard Lau: Okay.

Michael Cyger: So thanks again, Richard.

Richard Lau: We'll keep you [inaudible].

Michael Cyger: It appears that you recently sold ocean.com to Carnival Corporation, the cruise line company, although the domain is under privacy. Let's start with that.

Richard Lau: Okay.

Michael Cyger: I believe you used to own it. Do you still own ocean.com?

Richard Lau: Okay, I...I feel like I'm under oath here because I...I do have a very strict NDA in place so I will answer questions that I can answer, but yes, I used to own it.

Michael Cyger: Awesome. Alright, well just start there. You used to own it...because I couldn't even check that because it was under privacy.

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: And so, you used to own it. Your NDA says that you cannot disclose if you currently own it?

Richard Lau: I...I'm not allowed to discuss details regarding the transaction.

Michael Cyger: Alright.

Richard Lau: So...

Michael Cyger: Let me ask you this...

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: How much did you sell it for? No, I'm just joking. I know you're not going to say anything. Alright, you didn't confirm the sale but you did tell Elliot Silver at domaininvesting.com that MarkMonitor, the brand monitoring and protection company, "is a great, very professional organization to work with."

Richard Lau: That's true.

Michael Cyger: Did MarkMonitor approach you, or were you actively marketing the domain name for sale?

Richard Lau: If...if you...if you read the quote that I gave him, I...I didn't say that in the same breath that I talked about ocean.com, but having said that, I can say that I've never approached MarkMonitor myself.

Michael Cyger: Alright.

Richard Lau: How's that?

Michael Cyger: Fair enough. Fair enough. You know, I...I'm just blowing right through these questions...

Richard Lau: Yup.

Michael Cyger: ...Because, you know, there's not much information, but I need to ask you because people want to know. So Richard, let me...let me ask you this. The word ocean...

Richard Lau: Yes.

Michael Cyger: ...Has a massive exact match search volume. I was pretty impressed yesterday. I went onto estibot.com and I looked across the exact match search volume...it said two hundred thousand searches per month. I went onto KWFinder as in keywordfinder.com and it said three hundred thousand exact match searches per month. That's massive. ZoomInfo shows me that there are thousands of companies with the...with the word ocean in their name. It's a great brand, dictionary word, only five letters, passes the radio test, I could go on and on and list a bunch of other characteristics about why that domain name is so good. Namebio.com shows that ocean.com last sold in May 2011 for a hundred thousand dollars.

Richard Lau: That's correct.

Michael Cyger: Is that your purchase?

Richard Lau: So, yes, I was...what I can talk about, and what I think is actually more helpful to the...to...to your viewers, is talking about the buy because, you know, it's...it's real estate...people talk about....you make money on the buy.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: Right. And so, when...when I bought ocean.com with a partner it was in Las Vegas in 2011 and, you know, we..we knew that when we bought it that we had made money. And we did...we just didn't know when we would realize that return. And in the five years since, you know, when my...my partner wanted to build out ocean.com...he was very...I...I have to sell him on moving on. Do you know what I mean?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And so, he had plans...he had business plans. He had that in place. It wasn't one of these, "Oh yeah, I've got plans for it." It was, "No, Richard, I've got plans for it. This is what my next project is." And so, you know, when I went to...to talk about it was on the buy. You know, I was down there, I was in Las Vegas networking.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: I wasn't there partying. It was down there to...for Domain Madness, which sounds like a domain party, but there are...there are about...I think there were about a dozen of us and Mike Fiol was putting on...Miguel or Mike Fiol was putting on an auction and I don't know if you recall. I think there might even be some video of it kicking around still...

Michael Cyger: It was before I even in the industry, Domain Madness.

Richard Lau: Okay.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Well he...he held it in the bowling alley suite at the Palms.

Michael Cyger: There's a bowling alley suite at the Palms?

Richard Lau: There is a...there is. And there is a basketball one but the bowling alley is the most fun, and he held the auction there. And I found out about ocean.com being in the auction the night before. I think it was about one o'clock in the morning in the back of a limousine and we were waiting for other people to come into...to...to this, you know, we were sharing the...sharing the ride so to speak, and so I was talking with Mike about what names are going to be in there, blah, blah, blah, and "Ocean.com." And so, you know, my...then, you know, the...the person that was sitting beside me was like, "I want to buy that." And we both said it at the same time and so then we worked out a deal. Well, you know, "Rather than competing against each other why don't we go in together" and...and so it was very fortuitous for both of us in terms of, you know, if we weren't...if I wasn't there, you know, striking up the conversation and...and guiding it to...to the names, you know, would I have bought it on impulse at the...at the auction or, you know, would I have bought it if I wasn't down in Las Vegas and we were really just watching the auction online? And same for the...my partner that, you know, would he have said, "Hey, you know, I want to be in"? If he had been out having a smoke...and this is why, kids, you shouldn't smoke...if he was outside having a smoke, and it was just myself, I...I probably would have been able to buy it just on my own...having said that, it's been really good having a partner going through...through the years of...of owning it. We...we've been approached many times. We've turned down many, many offers. And so, it's been good having a partner as a sounding board where you're...you are on the same page, you know, fifty-fifty.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So, you know, what can I say is, on the buy, you know, there's the networking side, then you have, you...you...you've done the research, you've looked at the name, but when I was sitting there and he mentioned it, you know, amongst many other names, right? He's just rattling them off. You just know, you know?

Michael Cyger: How do you know?

Richard Lau: You just...oh my goodness.

Michael Cyger: What is it about ocean...because you didn't have your computer in front of you, you didn't know the search volume, you didn't know how many companies were using it, how many trademarks existed, you know?

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: What made you feel...what...what in your gut made you feel like, "That's the one"?

Richard Lau: Well, you know, you talk about...people talk about ten thousand hours, right? If you spend ten thousand hours playing the piano, you're going to be really good.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: If you spend ten thousand hours going over lists, you're just going to know, right? This is not...

Michael Cyger: So you...so you're saying that you've spent ten thousand hour...Malcolm Gladwell's reference to how long it takes to master a topic...you've spent ten thousand hours going over names, looking at good

names, bad names, and being able to, on a gut instinct, determine what has value and what doesn't?

Richard Lau: So I wouldn't say ten thousand hours just on the lists.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But ten thousand hours being a domain investor, definitely.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Definitely and, you know, Malcolm Gladwell, I'm glad you remembered his name because I...I...you know, his other book Blink...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Is an amazing, you know, fast read, but it's...it's...it's the same thing. You walk into an art gallery...well if I walked into an art gallery would I know if...if one's real or not, but if you're...if you're a ten thousand hour art historian or art student and you walk in and you look at a painting, you'll be like, "There's something wrong with that."

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And you won't necessarily be able to put your finger on it right away. Or you'll walk in and you'll see a budding artist and you'll be like, "Oh my God," you know, "What is that? I...I need that." And you...you see the price and it's a thousand dollars and you're like, "I'll...I'll pay it. I'll pay two thousand."

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: You'll...you just know instinctively after you've put in that ten thousand hours. So, you know, people, I think some people look at domaining and domain investing and they think, "Oh, this is easy," you know?

"I'll just register five, six names, maybe a few dozen and then the money will start rolling in." It's not a get rich quick scheme. You need to put in the hours and then you'll know what is...what is a good value or what is not a good value.

Michael Cyger: How do you put in...hey, Richard, how do you put in the hours without wasting your money?

Richard Lau: Wow. No, you have to be able to waste some money.

Michael Cyger: Uh huh.

Richard Lau: You do. But, there...there are a couple of different ways. You know, your course, you know...my son is sixteen, my oldest son is sixteen, and I had him go through the DNAcademy course and it was really eye-opening for him and for me to be able to have a formalized method of transferring knowledge, and so that we could talk about it. The other thing that is a lot of fun and, you know, isn't the, you know, the twenty, or thirty, or forty hour time commitment is...is this little app that's on NameBio, you know, the Domain Name Game, and it's...it's hilarious because, even as a seasoned veteran, I'm at, you know, fifty percent, maybe less. I feel like a baseball player, you know? Where they're like, "Oh, you got one hit out of eight. You're pretty good."

Michael Cyger: I know, and I told...I told Michael Sumner, the creator of that, it's killing me because, like, I'll say a domain name is ten thousand dollars and it sold for nine thousand, nine hundred, and I'm, like, "Oh, it's just under." And I get it wrong.

Richard Lau: Oh, but the worst is when you...you guess, you know, a thousand and it sold for a hundred and fifty six...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Thousand, and you're like, "What am I missing? What don't I...what...you know, why do I not have that inherent...bingo, right? And, you know, then...the...there are tools out there that can help you narrow down the value, you know? Like you said, you look up the search volume, you look up the keywords, you look up, you know, how many companies are using that...are...how many companies are using that in that vertical, you know? So for...for ocean.com, when I was sitting in that limo...to me it was, like, that sounds like a VC or a shipping company.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Now if you go to ocean.com you can actually see who's using it now, and that's not who I thought would be the end user. But, you know, to me ocean was just such a great brand that I also bought ocean.net. And so if you go to ocean.net, that's the brand that I built my company on because I'm like, "You know, the .com, that's too valuable to use just for my email."

Michael Cyger: Okay, I'm going to come back and ask you about ocean.net because I want to learn more about that, but let me come back to this hundred thousand dollars. And also I should say I did not ask you that lead-in question on how to short-circuit the process of learning to get a plug for DNAcademy although I appreciate it.

Richard Lau: No.

Michael Cyger: I just wanted to see if there was anything else or if you just agreed that, like, yeah, some people just need to waste some money in order to be able to ingrain what was done wrong. And, you know, my intention in DNAcademy is to try and get people not to waste money, not to spend thousands of dollars learning the process. If I can shorten, you know, losing thousands of dollars to losing hundreds of dollars...

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: ...And try and practice, and get people to go slower before they go all in. Like, I'm all for that, so I appreciate you saying that, like, sometimes you just need to lose money in order to learn what's good and what's not good, but a hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money, especially back in 2011, or maybe it wasn't. Do you think the domain name prices were higher back in 2011 than today, Richard?

Richard Lau: No, I think that when I look back to 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, all the way to 2012, to me that was a dip. And when I look at my sales that I was involved in, that's when I'm like, "Oh, I regret selling that name. I regret selling that name. I regret selling name." So, there's very few names that I sold in that four year period that I'm happy I sold at that time.

Michael Cyger: Huh.

Richard Lau: That I think that if I had held onto them, you know...we...we came out with the new gTLDs and .coms took a hit, and now that we're, you know, eighteen two...eighteen months, two years in, the value of premium and super premium, ultra premium .coms has gone way up and, you know? So it's...it's...it's been an interesting journey and in terms of making mistakes and wasting money, you know...how much money did I waste when weed.com sold at auction for, you know, I...I can't remember the price, I think it was a hundred and ten thousand, you know, after...after commissions I got less than a hundred thousand for weed.com, which if you look into, you know, if you Google it I believe it sold for 2.9 million. So, I'm not...you know, when I say...when I admit that, you know...you know, it's...we...we all make mistakes and at the end of the day, as long as your successes outweigh your failures and you've taken some money off the table, that...that's how you ultimately measure it...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...In terms of financial success. Obviously there's a lot of other...life balance and...and family, and, you know, but...

Michael Cyger: Yeah, but on the business side, right. So...

Richard Lau: Yeah, there's...there's a lot of mistakes.

Michael Cyger: A hundred thousand dollars...is that a typical purchase. You know, I know you went in with a partner...you said equal partner, so I'm assuming fifty thousand, fifty thousand for the two of you. Is that a typical type of purchase for you...buying a single word domain name in the...in the five to six figure range?

Richard Lau: It's...I...I don't do them every day. You know, I would probably...I do, you know, single digit buys of that nature in a year but, yes, that's what I'm interested in is being able to buy a single word .com for, you know, for five or six figures.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Typically five figures because once you're into the six figures it's hard to find an end user who realizes the value.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: You know, you can bring a horse to water but you can't make them drink. I...I was having a discussion with a sea level...a sea level, you know, person at a financial institution. They were undergoing a name change. And, you know, when...when I look at it I'm like, "Well, you know, I don't want to embarrass them on camera, but X.Y. Financial"...and so they went with xyfinancial.com. But xy.com was available for purchase. It was an existing business that, you know, it was a single owner operator...you know, they'd been in business forever. There was no trademark, no confusion...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...No bad faith whatsoever. So, you know, you need to go to that company and say, "Hey, I need you to painfully separate, do a name change,

or move over to a new gTLD or add, you know, [inaudible] thing but we'll make it worth your while." And so, for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars they could have had, you know...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Xy.com. Not...not the two digit...

Michael Cyger: Right, right, right.

Richard Lau: ...But two word .com.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, you're right.

Richard Lau: And so it was a lot of money for a two word .com, but if you look at the math as a financial institution who's spending three, four, five million dollars a year on marketing, it's a no-brainer to me, but they said no, and so instead someone has to type in financial after their two words and I...I...I just feel like I failed in not being able to communicate why they really needed to...to do that.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And I was not involved in terms of making money. I was just trying to give advice to a friend and I feel like I failed, so...but yeah, I mean, the...the value is there in...in the single words and it's, for sometimes, it's just a matter of waiting years until the...the right end user, you know, comes along and there is a champion within that end user company who realizes that, "Yes, we need to write a check, and we're going to be the best case use for that name."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And so, you know, there...there are other domains and I've bought many other domains with partners...hockey.com is one,

sslcertificates.com is another, domainname.com is another, resume.com, and in many cases we've decided to build them out and in other cases, you know, face.com, I'm just sitting on it and I'm...I've got an idea for it but hopefully someone else comes along and...and convinces me not to...to put the...the investment and build the team. It's a lot of work.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, you can only really have one or two projects at a time and so right now my baby is...is NamesCon and then the side project beside that is resume.com.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. Alright, I'm going to ask you about those but I want to ask you more questions about partners because I think a lot of people in the industry don't look at partnerships as an opportunity. Maybe they don't know people that they trust well enough, you know, for a lot of reasons. I recently bought a domain name with a partner and I think it's...it's a great way to go because you are able to bounce ideas off of the other, you know? You're in it together. You're not making all the decisions, worried about making a rash decision. You mentioned that you bought hockey.com, sslcertificates.com, domainname.com, resume.com with partners. Is that correct?

Richard Lau: Yes, that's correct.

Michael Cyger: So...so you're not the only one buying the domain name. You're not the only one building them out if they are being built out.

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: How many of...how many of your domains would you say you've done partnerships with in the past?

Richard Lau: I would say it's less than a dozen.

Michael Cyger: Okay, but...

Richard Lau: It is...

Michael Cyger: ...In that order of magnitude, somewhere around ten...

Richard Lau: Yes.

Michael Cyger: ...Order of magnitude. And so, besides splitting the cost of it, besides, you know...you know, in the development...I'm not talking about development yet...besides splitting the cost of it and being able to...to talk about it with a colleague, the potential sales, fielding the inquiries that are coming in, what other benefits are there to buying with a partner?

Richard Lau: So, buying with a partner is a tricky business because you have to be able to trust your partner absolutely. And it's also good to talk about the exit with your partner before you complete the, you know, initial purchase. To give you an example, the very first domain partnership I did was with a person I didn't know, you know, other than...we'd never met, we still have never met. It was back in...gosh, I think it was 2002. And it was a two letter domain, xr.com.

Michael Cyger: Wow.

Richard Lau: ...And it was up for auction. We...we purchased it together and the...there was a shotgun clause that either one of us could buy the other out at the full purchase price, you know, so...

Michael Cyger: Oh, wow.

Richard Lau: ...I think we...I think we paid...gosh, I'd have to go back and...and double check, but let's say it was twenty thousand dollars for the domain, so we each kicked in ten so then if I wanted to buy him out he would pay me twenty, and if I wanted to buy him out I would pay him twenty.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And we owned it for several years and then finally I exercised and bought him out, you know? So he was happy.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Those were early days.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, that's a great return on investment.

Richard Lau: Yeah, it was still early days. Two letter .coms now, you know...gosh I think the XR would probably be worth closer to high six figures...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...If not a seven figure name.

Michael Cyger: Definitely.

Richard Lau: And we sold it for...for...for lower six figure name...value, you know? That's...that's again, one of the names in that dip that I think, gosh, I think maybe we should have held onto that but who knew?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, when...when...when weed.com sold, it sold to a room full of domain investors that could have put up their paddle...

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: ...And bought weed.com off...off the auction for, you know, just barely six figures. So it's not...I'm not the only one that was at that time saying, "Oh, gosh, where's the value at"?

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: So, but in terms of partners, you know, the...the big thing besides, you know, obviously the...the financial risk is a huge portion, right? Hockey.com was...I couldn't have done it without partners. And so, but, you know, that is a big portion. But the...beyond that is bringing in partners that have a different network than you do. So, as an example, on hockey.com, the two partners that...that are in there with me, they have completely different, you know, social and business networks than I do and so in terms of talking with...with people and letting people know about hockey.com and the, you know, potential partnerships in terms of a...a joint buildout, it just triples the...the effective reach that you have.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And so, that's...that's a very highly important aspect of partnering that...that can't go under...underscored. But if you have a partner that is in the exact same business and social realm then it's really financial and trust and sounding board...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...And not feeling like you're alone.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: You have these self-doubts of, "Am I doing the right thing? Did we do the right thing buying it"? And it's better to have a partner in it, you know?

Michael Cyger: Definitely. So you held ocean.com for, you know, it's 2016...you bought it in 2011...about...about five years...did you go into that, or do you go into other acquisitions like hockey.com or resume.com knowing that you're going to hold a domain name for...indefinitely, five years, ten

years, you know, as...as the partners need funds you discuss being able to liquidate it...how do you discuss the timeline for holding a domain name?

Richard Lau: Right, so, it's funny because right from the very beginning my partner in...in ocean.com was saying, "I'm going to build this out. It's going to be a billion dollar company." And I was, like, "Well, I don't know, you know, I think we'll find an end user that is bigger than...than both of us and...and who will want it." So, you know, it...we...we discussed it but it wasn't set in stone, right? It wasn't like xr.com which was set in stone.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But...and that's because I know and trust him and...and we can...I...I knew that we would be able to work it out even though it wasn't an easy...easy thing to convince him. You know, having said that, you know, it's...it's not...it's not cut and dry. With hockey.com, you know we want...we...we've gone through various discussions of building it out. We've had various different meetings with very large companies about building it out. But I liken it very much to car dealerships and McDonalds, you know? When you look at the...the companies, you're like, "Oh, they're in the business of selling cars." They're not really in the business of selling cars, at least not in...in Vancouver. They're in the business of holding real estate. The selling cars allows them to cover the carrying cost of sitting on three or four acres on a main thoroughfare in a major city. And then you see these car dealers and they are actually land developers, and, you know, they build high-rises in the...the...the car dealership is now in a fancy showroom either at the base or across the street but, you know, if you...if you sit down and have coffee with these guys, which I have done, they're like, "Yeah, you know, we're...I've been in the car business for...or my family's been in the car business for twenty, thirty, forty years, but really we're sitting on land." And same thing with McDonalds, you know, if you look at the amount of real estate that they hold. So how that comes back to domain names is when I look at these domains I'm looking at something that I'd be happy to sit on and pass down to my kids. So in most cases when you're looking at the...the single word generic .com's, these are family heirlooms that I'm happy to...to

sit on and, you know...can I imagine my son, you know, developing out vancouver.net? Yeah, I can. Can I imagine my other son developing out face.com? Absolutely. So do I need to sell these? Absolutely not. You know, it...would it be...you know, so I have...you...you generate other business that allows you to carry the cost and finance the purchase of these gems, and then the gems don't need to have a business sitting on them, you know, for twenty years.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And...and that's...that's what I'm willing to wait, you know? When I bought freemusic.com...wow, I...I can't remember when it was, but say...I think it was the early 2000s...I bought it because I'm, like, "Music will be free," you know? It might not be in my generation but the...the...I, you know...the...the days of the...of the rock and roll band going on tour, selling, you know, multi-platinum record albums and having, you know, ticket revenue, those are gone. It's...it's live performance, you know, smaller venues, and the music, in terms of it being online, I think will be free.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So, you know, the \$1.29 that you pay to Apple to, you know...for how much goes to the artist...very, very little.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Because they need to make the money on the concerts, so we're getting there. But I do believe that your music subscription will just be tied in with either your ISP or your phone, but the...the...they'll...they'll attach some value to it saying, "Oh, it's got a twenty dollar a month value." But you're not really paying for it.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: You're just getting music for free.

Michael Cyger: Exactly. So let me...so I understand your analogy about domain names premium, you know, ultra premium, however you...you want to refer to it, names like ocean.com having such a value that you don't mind passing it down to your kids. It's like, you know, people that bought land in New York that then pass it down to their kids and it's...it always has value whether there's a business on it or not. Maybe the business goes out of, you know, business at some point, but the thing is that if you own resume.com, and you build a business on it, end users who may want to buy it are less likely to approach you because they'll look at it and say, "Oh, there's already an operating business. It looks like they're successful," whereas with land, if there's a car dealership on it, they're more than happy to walk into that car dealership, say, "Who's the owner? And I'd like to buy this," because they know they'll just move to a different location, or they'll give them a lease back for a number of years, or something like that. How do you...how do you balance the fact that once you build on a domain name, it potentially receives less inquiries going forward?

Richard Lau: It...it...it absolutely does. I mean, when you take your piece of land and you decide to build on it, you are removing it from the market...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Or you're putting it into a different market. So resume.com is a...is a prime example, you know, vis-à-vis hockey.com. So resume.com is a profitable business, but it's a seven year overnight success, right? It's been seven years of hard work.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But we've got an office in Vancouver. We've got a team. It's a separate incorporated company. It [inaudible] live, I'd almost say bricks and mortar business, you know? People wake up in the morning, they put their clothes on, they get in their cars, and they drive to Resume.com Services, Inc.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know? And yes, it's going to...it changes so, you know, people who would...who might be, like, "Oh, yeah, I'll just buy that name," they can't.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: Because it has, you know, eight staff. It has 1.8 million resumes on it that are hand built that by individual users. There's a live, living and breathing entity, which is a corporation, right? Behind this domain name.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So, yeah, it's a big decision, and you're investing beyond the domain. You're investing your time, and there's nothing more precious in this life than your time.

Michael Cyger: Sure.

Richard Lau: And so...

Michael Cyger: When you actually build revenue and when you build net income then there are other businesses that are going to buy it potentially at a higher multiple than you'd likely receive it if it were just a domain name, so that's not lost on me and the audience, but the point I wanted to make is that you lose the opportunity to sell it as just a domain name when you build on it unless you shut down the business. You know, if it's not successful at some point and you shut it down and then, you know, you just offer it as a domain name again.

Richard Lau: Right, and...and we've seen that happen. I mean, that was what I was suggesting to the bank, you know, I think that that's what...I believe that's what booking.com did when they bought Villa...villas.com. And you know, that...they...those were example of...of real live businesses...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Behind the domain name and, yeah, you just buy it and then you shut it down.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: I mean, face.com was leased out to an Israeli company and they were bought by Facebook, and Facebook didn't take the name.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know? They...they...they...it was an acqui-hire.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: They were really just after the assets of the personnel and the...the idea.

Michael Cyger: The facial recognition software...

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: ...If I remember correctly. Yeah, there was...somebody wrote an article about that.

Richard Lau: I'm glad they didn't buy it.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Because, to me, you know, face.com is worth more than they were willing to pay.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And so, it's...it's...they're not the best case use for it then.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. So...so am I to understand based on your comments that when you buy domain names like ocean.com or face.com, you're holding them indefinitely? You're going to hold them and pass them down to...to your sons or future generations until the right highest and best use case comes along and makes you an offer that you want to accept?

Richard Lau: Yeah, I mean, I...I always...I believe I always leave money on the table, right? I'm...I'm not going to hold out until the absolute highest...

Michael Cyger: Gotcha.

Richard Lau: ...Best case, but if it's a good enough case...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Then...then yes, I'll...I'll move on. I'll, you know, there....there's many examples where, you know, you...you're out for...at a conference and you're talking about recent sales, whether it's yours or...or...or someone else's...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...And you're like, "Oh, they undersold. They could have gotten more." Yeah, but there's also value in keeping...keeping the...the...the cash flowing.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And keep...you know, you don't want cobwebs to gather on your domain names either.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So there are names that I...you know, there's a small stable of names that I'm, like, "These are...these are my family heirlooms. They're just kind of like a watch collection or, you know, you're building up your...your...your land.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And then there's others that you're like, "I have no sentimental attachment whatsoever. If someone's going to give me an offer on this domain that makes more money, you know, gives...gives me a return, I'll sell it."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, I'll give you an example, gr.com, I bought, you know, for six figures and sold it to...and I made, gosh, I think it was three percent...

Michael Cyger: Huh.

Richard Lau: ...On the flip. It's hardly worth my time.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, over what period of...well, hardly worth your time if it's, like, ten years...

Richard Lau: No, no, it was...

Michael Cyger: ...But if it was like ten days.

Richard Lau: No, it was probably...I think it was, like, two years.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. Yeah.

Richard Lau: But, you know, I was like, you know, "I...I can take that money," because there's a lot of money tied up.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And so I take that money and then buy, you know, ten smaller names...

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: ...And hopefully make a...a better flip, you know?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Jp.net, I saw on a newsletter, I think it was, you know, twenty thousand, twenty five thousand...bought it, sold it fairly, fairly quickly for thirty five.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Right? And so, that's a fifty percent return, right? Some people look at it and say, "No, you should have just sat on that and sold it for a hundred and fifty, you know, five years from now."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Maybe, but I've got others that I'm doing that on.

Michael Cyger: Right. Exactly.

Richard Lau: And I'm happy to do that. So, you know, I...I encourage people, don't put all of your domains into the same bucket. Have a bucket that's for your kids. Have a bucket that's for ROI, and have a bucket that is, you know, generating revenue from parking.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. Let me ask you...you own ocean.net. You've said that. I've seen you send emails to me in the past. Did you buy ocean.net before or after ocean.com?

Richard Lau: I bought it at the same...it was immediately after.

Michael Cyger: Okay.

Richard Lau: I believe...

Michael Cyger: You bought it from an end user?

Richard Lau: I bought it through a broker but I believe it was the same owner...

Michael Cyger: Oh.

Richard Lau: ...That had both the com and the net.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But the net didn't go through the auction, but I bought it immediately after and my...you know, I rebranded. I renamed the company. So I changed the...the...the name of the company from a...from a brandable...you know, it was a six letter brandable .com...to something that, you know, wouldn't have to worry about the radio test, right? If you say, "Yeah, I'm from Ocean Networks," that...that's pretty hard to misspell that.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Whereas the brandable...people were mispronouncing it. I mean, you know, my Canadian company is, as an example, Coreva, you know, people are...people look at it and they're like, "CO-REEV-AH"? Like, what is that? How do I say this?

Michael Cyger: Yeah, CAH, CO...

Richard Lau: And what does it mean?

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: So ocean...

Michael Cyger: And so, was there...I'm sorry, Richard, I'm going to move this along because...

Richard Lau: Sure.

Michael Cyger: ...I did spend so much time because I did find the ocean.com and the characteristics so interesting and buying in partnerships which we didn't even discuss before we got on the show. But was there interest from the company that purchased ocean.com to buy the .net as well as a defensive registration?

Richard Lau: I can't talk about that, but I still...I still own and use ocean.net and it would be very painful for me to move away from it...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Because even if they were interested in it, you know, if you...if you go through the logistics of moving off something that is a contact point for not, you know...not dozens but thousands of people and accounts...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...And so, if two years from now I happen to lose an opportunity or control of a domain name account, or...

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: ...Something, well it...it dwarfs...it dwarfs the... the, you know, the value.

Michael Cyger: The value that you might get for the domain name.

Richard Lau: The market value of, yeah...

Michael Cyger: So, Ocean Networks is the name of your company. You run off of ocean.net. You've got the understanding that Networks stands for .net. That it...

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: ...It supports itself, but inevitably I'm sure somebody will send an email to your name at ocean.com.

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: Do you worry about that as a domain name investor, as somebody who counsels other people not to buy new, you know...to...to...to understand that human nature is to type a .com, at least for now...does that worry you as operating the ocean.net?

Richard Lau: You know, it's a...it's a small concern, but most people realize that my main domain name is actually, or my main contact is richard@lau.com, and most people also realize that if I don't reply within forty eight hours, you know, there's...there's an issue, and so contact me through, you know, Skype, LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, the...I think the only thing I'm not currently on, which probably will change soon, is WeChat. So, you know, I...I have not...I've not had anyone contact me saying, "Hey, I tried your .com but I didn't get, I"...so that hasn't been an issue.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But if I was promoting ocean.net as a website then yes, I would be...I would be concerned that...about the bleed over to the .com.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Absolutely.

Michael Cyger: How many domain names do you own in your investment portfolio today?

Richard Lau: Gosh, I don't know. It's that many.

Michael Cyger: Is it bigger than a bread basket? Do you own more than a hundred?

Richard Lau: Yes, absolutely. It's...it's...

Michael Cyger: You own more than a thousand?

Richard Lau: ...It's definitely in the thousands.

Michael Cyger: Less than ten thousand?

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: Okay.

Richard Lau: Less than ten thousand, more than a thousand. I'll say that.

Michael Cyger: And how does it shake out by TLD? Mostly .com's, few .net's, bunch of new gTLDs...how does it shake out?

Richard Lau: Yeah, you know, I would say mostly .com's. There are some...you know, I'm from Canada...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...So there are some .ca's in there. There are more .net's than you would think because, you know, .net's...you're able to get a one word .net and the value and the power behind the new gTLDs...and I have some new gTLDs as well...but the power behind the new gTLDs and the alternate g's, right? The .net, .biz, .info, .org...they are amazing platforms for an MVP, like, a minimum viable product.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: So, as a startup...you know, someone very recently contacted me and...and just, you know, exchanged emails and he was...he was saying, you know...he was upset that someone had registered a .net version of his .com and they were, you know, launching a business. And he was, like, you know, "Why wouldn't they just come and buy the .com from me"? And I'm, like, "You know," and he was asking me, "Do you get upset when people do this"? I was, like, "Absolutely not. I want them to be successful because then they'll have money in their jeans to be able to buy the .com. So let them take that five or ten thousand dollars, plough it into a minimum viable product...they'll put their...their...their sweat equity into it and then, you know, in a year, if it's viable they'll either get friends and family together or they'll get a VC and they'll be able to come and say, 'Okay, you know what, now I can pay ten or twenty thousand dollars for the .com.'" And absolutely, it's...and...and...and plus, you know, inevitably you're going to get some bleed as well.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So you...you get an increase in...in the traffic to the .com, especially if they're using, you know, a .co, you know, or, you know, even a .io. I was at a...I was at a board...board advisory...I'm on the...kind of the

extended advisory committee for DomainTools and they were talking about this website that was showdan.io and I'm in the room, we've just talked about it, I open my laptop and I type in showdan.com. Like, I have no excuse.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Right?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: It's not...it's...it...you know, so, it...it happens and...yeah, so...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...To me there's a great opportunity both for the domain name investor and for the startup community and entrepreneurs to have all of these new gTLDs available because now you can go out, you can build...

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: ...A product. And once you've built up a real business that's doing six, seven figures a...a year in revenue, then go buy the .com.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. Richard, do you...a lot of investors say that .net's are undervalued, especially with the new gTLDs coming out. You mentioned that you have a good number of .net's, single word .net's, maybe acronym .net's. Do you receive a decent number of inquiries on those?

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Michael Cyger: You mentioned that you have a good number of .net's, single word .net's, maybe acronym .net's. Do you receive a decent number of inquiries on those?

Richard Lau: You know, I...I receive less than I would imagine, but yes, I do think they are undervalued. I do think they are...

Michael Cyger: Do you think that those are good opportunities for investors to look at?

Richard Lau: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, you know, I've seen some .net's even in the auction...in the...the newsletters. I subscribe to, you know, you talk about how...how do newbies not waste money, you know, obviously beyond taking a...a formal course, is, you know, getting on the forums...NamePros is a fantastic one, you know, going through Flippa, talking with the...the...the people that are buying and selling on there, and then, you know, the...the...the...there's so much to...to learn, and...and, you know, and what I've found in the domain investor community is that people are just so open to...to sharing.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So, yeah, I mean, there's just a...

Michael Cyger: Yeah, I want to ask you more about sharing but one more topic...I can't find any domain names that...of yours...that are not under privacy. Even your lau.com which you mentioned, your email address...the email address is listed right on the website but if you go look at Whois, under privacy. One of the tactics that sales people always recommend is to be accessible. However people want to search and find you. If they want to go to Whois and contact you through that email address, whatever. Why do you put up all your domains under privacy?

Richard Lau: Yeah, it's...that's a mixed bag and it's...it's...it's...there's no right solution. There's...to me, there's no one hundred percent right solution, and so like you say, I like to...I like to stay fairly private, you know? The...the people that are watching this video are not my extended friends and family.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: So if you go and Google and...and, you know, I...I'm trying to walk a balance between being absolutely open and having some...some privacy.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And so, also, you know, it...it...I...I do feel that enough people...if you're interested in the name, you'll go to the website, you'll make the inquiry. And generally the inquiries are...are...are shifting...they're...they're coming in through the web-based inquiry platforms, versus the ones that are coming in through email are very often automated and...and spam.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And so, you know, when...when someone approaches you and it's coming in through email, or if you're approaching someone and...and you're pitching them through email, you know, gosh, you've got a...a...a five percent chance that the...the person, even if they're reading it, is going to get back to you, but if you email them, and you send them a message on

LinkedIn, there's...there's...there's definitely value in paying that monthly membership with LinkedIn. You know, you message them on email, and you message them on LinkedIn, and they see there's one or two degrees of connection, or there...there's zero but you're a real person, there's a much more likelihood of getting...of getting contact. And, you know, there was that Bob Mountain interview I was listening to and he was saying that they'll...they'll have the phone number on the landing page because if you...if they can talk with the...the...the prospective purchaser, the close rate is, like, three hundred times higher than if it's just coming in through email.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And that's true. So, to me, email is less important and that's why the...the Whois privacy...being under privacy is less valuable today...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Than it was ten years ago.

Michael Cyger: Right. Yeah.

Richard Lau: But having...having now...having said that, having a, you know, whether it's a domain agents or Afternic or Domain Name Sales, you know, link on your landing page is much, much more important now than it was ten years ago.

Michael Cyger: Yeah. Great point. And the Bob Mountain interview I think you're referring to was the one that just took place last week over at domainnamewire.com, the podcast with Andrew Allemann...great...great tips on there. Make sure you're getting your domain names onto Afternic with a buy it now price so you can get into the registry stream and take advantage of people's buy it now, you know, the...the...the impulse buys. Let me ask you, Richard...some domain investors refuse to sign non-disclosure agreements, or NDAs. Rick Schwartz is one that, like, says, "I will never sell a domain name that requires me to sign an NDA," you know? Because it limits

the data, it limits the liquidity potentially in the market. What's your opinion and why?

Richard Lau: Gosh, so I have two opinions on NDAs. One is if you...if you're approaching me and you've got a business idea and you're, like, "Hey Richard, I've got this idea. I'd like to...to go over it with you. You may be able to invest or maybe you can give me some feedback. I just need you to sign an NDA." The conversation is over.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Ideas are a dime a dozen. It's all about implementation and if you need to...me to sign an NDA to share the idea, it just spells failure. And so, that's...that's just something that I've adopted. It's not something that I've come up with, and so I've adopted that. And so then, on NDA on sales, you know, if you sell a name through Sedo and you want...you want an NDA, you want the...the price not to be disclosed and used by their marketing they're like, "Okay, well that's going to cost you an extra," you know, I think it's, "two and a half percent."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: It's kind of like, you know, you pull out your Visa and the corner store guy says, "Hey, hey, wait a second, I'm going to charge you three, you know, three dollars to, you know, to...to use that."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So, you know, I...I understand why the platforms want the ability to...to be able to disclose the...the sales and...and sales prices, and I also understand why some purchasers want that privacy. So, I'm flexible on...in terms of NDA, on a sale, I mean, you know, if it's important to the buyer, well they've got reasons for it, and so I'm not going to just stand on my principle and say, "I don't sign NDAs; therefore, I'm not going to accept your money." So, but, you know, so...

Michael Cyger: Because at the end of the day it's a business transaction, and you're trying to do business.

Richard Lau: Exactly. Exactly. And, you know, if you look at guys that have portfolios like Rick...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Or Mike Berkens, you know, and they've got a different strategy...their strategy is to sell very few and...but sell them at a high price point.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: And so, GoDaddy came into Mike Berkens and said, "Well, let's work out a deal," and GoDaddy has applied a completely different strategy to...to the same portfolio, and so, who's right? Is Mike Berkens right in...in selling fewer names but at a much, much higher per name average? Or is GoDaddy right in selling, you know, three or four percent of the inventory every single year at a much lower average? So...

Michael Cyger: They're both right.

Richard Lau: They're both right. Well, you know, I mean, GoDaddy wrote a large check...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...So maybe GoDaddy's right.

Michael Cyger: Exactly.

Richard Lau: And...and GoDaddy likes to...to...to display all of the sales data.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, and...and, but I...I don't know if...if...if you went to GoDaddy and insisted on a non-disclosure...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...They might just say yes, right? So...

Michael Cyger: Yeah, they might. Richard, let me ask you...investors will have an opportunity to buy you a drink at NamesCon in Las Vegas from January 22nd to 25th, 2017, maybe get some information from you, who knows? Besides potentially getting the inside track on ocean.com, what can investors expect if they attend NamesCon in January 2017?

Richard Lau: So, I mean, I'm...I'm very honored and...and fortunate that NamesCon has blown up from just being this event that we could hang on a water night charity fundraiser for water school on, to being the industry conference, and, you know, to be quite frank, it's outgrown me. I cannot deliver everything that the sponsors need to be able to...and attendees need to be able to get from...from, you know, just being driven by myself. So, I partnered with the...WorldHostingDays. They've come in, they've purchased the conference. I'm still working on it day and night but NamesCon is...will have fourteen hundred, fifteen hundred people in...

Michael Cyger: Wow.

Richard Lau: ...January. I don't think there's ever been a domain name conference with that many people and it cuts right across...it's not just a domainer show, you know? A domainer show is three hundred people...

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: ...Four hundred people. This is IP lawyers, brand managers, VCs, finance, all of the services companies, you know, the parking, the...the website builders. We've got Weebly there, we've got Squarespace, WP Engine, WordPress, you know? And then we've got all of the registrars, all of the

registries, you know? If you're not there it's...you're...you're, you know, it's disconcerting to your customers that attend...that okay, "Why...why is that company not here"? So, you know, we...we've increased the number of exhibitors for the...for the booth spaces. We're almost sold out, you know? It's...it's blowing up beyond my, you know, wildest imagination.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And so we've got three tracks of...of...of content. We've got networking every single night. So Sunday night...the...the conference starts on Sunday at 11 a.m. That's January 22nd, 2017, Tropicana in Las Vegas. And it starts at 11 a.m. on Sunday. Sunday is a lot of meet the experts sessions so it's really, really good for people who are new to the industry because you're in a small room environment, you can ask one on one questions, you know? You can shake hands with people like yourself who, you know, it's...it's such an amazing industry that the...the accessibility of experts and CEOs is...is, to me, unparalleled.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And, you know, we're not charging extra, you know? I go to some conferences and they're like, "Oh, if you need to get into that room..."

Michael Cyger: Yeah, the VIP...

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: ...Room is an extra few hundred dollars for that one hour session, right.

Richard Lau: So we...we followed a different formula and instead of...instead of charging extra for VIP access, or for, you want to access this track, we cut all of the food. So, yeah, there's no big shrimps.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And you have to be a big boy and you have to go to...to the Starbucks or to the steak restaurant or dine-in restaurant. You know, you can feed yourself or, like me, you just skip lunch and you just network.

Michael Cyger: More coffee for you...

Richard Lau: You know, you can eat and sleep when you get on the plane.

Michael Cyger: You know, we discussed NamesCon on a recent DomainSherpa Review and two of the three Sherpas were going. I'm going to be doing the DomainSherpa Review live there with Drew Rosener, Shane Cultra, Frank Schilling. I've told people that they will have an opportunity to chat with the Sherpas live after the session. They all stick around there, you can ask them questions, you can take selfies, but I'm sure people are wondering how accessible the people are at the event, you know? It...it...and I think it's changed greatly since when I entered the industry in...in late 2011, 2012 to today. What do you tell people when they ask, "Can I really go up and chat with so and so, or this person"?

Richard Lau: Absolutely, I mean, the...you know, the Frank Schillings of the world are harder to access but, you know, these...he'll be presenting. You'll be able to, you know, do the Q&A and afterwards all the speakers come up and, you know, they...they're accessible. Just come up at the end of the stage...end of the session. You know, we've got fifteen minutes between the end of the session and the start of the next. That's a great question, answer period.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know, one of...one of the things that I've really noticed at NamesCon is the lack of business cards. So differentiate yourself. Go to MOO, moo.com, M.O.O.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And get, you know, [inaudible] and...and have it available [inaudible]. Just a quick tip: have it be matte and have it be white. You know, with [inaudible], so that, you know, someone...someone can write a quick note down on the business card. But we also will have QR scanning for...for exhibitors and sponsors to be able to do...to...lead tracking, but in terms of attendee to attendee or if you're wanting to...to reach out to...to speakers and industry leaders, just, you know, come with card in hand. And, what's amazing about this industry, to me, is that...that people are so friendly, they are so accessible, you know? I get emails from people that I've never met and they just ask questions and...and, you know, I may not reply right away.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: But I try and reply to everybody.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Because I had a hand up, you know? People helped me into this industry and I think a lot of us feel that...the same way, and so when others are asking us for help we also give advice, you know? We're not going to hand-hold you but we will say, "Hey, go here, try this, you know, here's some advice."

Michael Cyger: Who helped you, Richard? Who helped you into the industry?

Richard Lau: Steven Sachs. Steven Sachs, Kevin Sinclair, and Rick Schwartz.

Michael Cyger: Huh.

Richard Lau: So if Rick Schwartz did not have his flat message board...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...I wouldn't be here today.

Michael Cyger: Interesting.

Richard Lau: So it's a huge shout-out to Rick, but yeah. Steven Sachs...I was going through a hard time, you know, that's another forty five minute show...but I was having a hard time and needed a transition from running a registrar to...to...like, "Oh, what do these domain investors do with these domains"?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And Steve actually led me to the water and...and showed me the tools and then I...I jumped in with both feet.

Michael Cyger: Wow. You know, I do want to support your recommendation for moo.com, M.O.O. .com. I do buy my business cards there. They're beautiful. I did make the mistake on one of my businesses, my Bainbridge Island Magazine, of printing the glossy. And just yesterday, I...I grabbed a domain name that expired for a local bakery and I went over there, and I'm, like, at the end of the auction and I want to make sure domains go to the rightful owner so I'm at the shop and I'm bidding for them on the domain name so I can buy it and...and then transfer it to them. And they're trying to make some notes on my business card about advertising in our magazine and it would...she's, like, writing over and over again because it wouldn't right on the glossy.

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: So get the matte. It's the...

Richard Lau: Right.

Michael Cyger: ...The right way to go. For someone that's been in the industry a while, Richard, maybe half a year, maybe a couple of years, but they don't know anyone. What tips do you have if they decide to come to NamesCon?

What can they do to meet people, make friendships, create a network, build that network so maybe they go in with somebody else, you know, on a domain...high value domain name that they want to hold for a long time? What tips do you have?

Richard Lau: So, my...my recommendation...I mean, I was actually quite introverted when I...when I...when I was younger, and, you know, I didn't pick up the phone, and when I saw Kevin Ham's name coming up in Whois, even though he was literally two miles from where I was...and I just think back to, if I had picked up phone, called Kevin back in 1996, how different would my life be? So, you know, having said that, there were no conferences back then.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So now there are conferences...there...you...you can go to an ICANN...if you can get to the ICANN, because they're usually in far-flung places...but if they're in... if they're in LA or somewhere close by to you, go to an ICANN. It costs you nothing, they feed you, and there's...there's a lot of networking.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: NamesCon obviously is very low-priced. We've got a discount code to...to bring it down even further and, you know, what I would recommend is go to the sessions, you know? Rest up before you get there, go to the sessions, and at every single session talk to the person on your right and talk to the person on your left, and then make sure you go to every single evening event because that's when people loosen up, they relax a little bit...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...You get people who haven't even gone to any of the sessions...they've been...they've been in meetings all day and then they're coming out in the evening, and so you meet some big movers and shakers in

the evenings, and that's when you can get advice. And don't come with necessarily a list in hand, you know? Have a list of...of your top...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Three or four domains in your head but don't come with a list in hand. People will feel like they're being pressured...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...That you're there just to sell. It's a relationship first, right? So go there, break bread with someone, have a drink with them, you know...cranberry and soda is my drink of choice...and...and just, you know, get to know someone...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...So that after, you know, next week or next month on the forum you can say, "Hey, met you at the NamesCon" or "Met you at...at ICANN." And, you know, just, it...it goes so much further than a cold call email. So if someone's emailing and saying, "Hey, I've got this name for sale. What do you think" versus, "Hey Mike, remember we chatted, we went out, you know, had a coffee at the Starbucks at NamesCon," you know, or "I saw your session. I asked you a question after. I gave you my card. I'm just following up with the email. I sent you a LinkedIn connection request. I have a question."

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Right?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Completely different, where you're...you're a thousand times more likely to...to give a heartfelt response to someone that you've met,

shaken hands with, and really that's what...what NamesCon is all about. The content we deliver is fantastic. It's top drawer. The speakers are unbelievable, you know? We don't pay for any speakers. They're...they, you know, other...other, you know, I can say DomainFest since we...we own that brand...but, you know, there are no Kim Kardashians coming to NamesCon. I...we refuse to do that, but the...the...the keynote speakers that we have are industry titans and, you know, they represent massive companies that you can come up to, shake hands, you know, Matt Mullenweg...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...Frank Schilling, you know? It's...it's unbelievable to have that access. You're not on a VIP list. Everyone's a VIP.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: You know? And so, I...I've designed NamesCon the way I want to be treated at a conference, you know? I've been to sixty different conferences. I put my...my blood, sweat, and tears...right down to the name tags, right? No one's spent more time on...on name tag...conference...conference name tag design than...than me, and you'll see another article this year coming out on...on the name tags. So there's a huge attention to detail and it's, to me, it's really about the networking.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, I agree. And your recommendation to sit next to somebody new during other events, introduce yourself...I remember years ago...I think it was DomainFest, we went to the Magic Castle, I was sitting in a show, I sat right next to this guy, looked like a nice guy, introduced myself, he introduced himself as Luke Webster...is the guy...before...he has come on DomainSherpa Show a couple of times...before he bought straightrazor.com from Frank Schilling, before he started the Shave Network, before he was into all the grooming...The Grooming Network now, and I had a chance to meet him before he owned all those domains and we've had a great business relationship sharing ideas. He's bought publishing companies. I've, you know, been able to...to glean some great information from him over the years,

so...and it all started because I sat down next to him and introduced myself, so...

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: ...I...I definitely recommend that. Hey Richard, I heard also...you mentioned the event is at the Tropicana. I always recommend people stay at the hotel so you don't have to spend so much time walking between the different hotels. You lose that networking time. I also heard that the...the stairway from the Trop to the MGM is going to be closed. Is that going to be true?

Richard Lau: That's what I've heard, that the...the, you know, you've got the escalator that goes up in Las Vegas. You...they don't really allow you to go across at street level.

Michael Cyger: Right.

Richard Lau: You have to go up and over, and so the...they're replacing and...and reworking that...that ramp, you know, the overpass.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: That's the word I'm looking for. And so, I've...my understanding is that's it's going to be closed.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: So if you want to go from...to the MGM, my understanding is you need to go from Tropicana to Excalibur to New York New York to MGM.

Michael Cyger: That's going to be like sixty minutes later, right?

Richard Lau: Yeah, you might want to take an Uber. So, I mean, MGM is a beautiful hotel...

Michael Cyger: It is.

Richard Lau: ...But, you know, the...the staying in the Tropicana, you know, I stay in the Tropicana. You...you...you gain so much more because, not only is the hotel, you know, where the conference is, but the hotel is...is fifteen hundred rooms, which in...in Vegas is very small.

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: And so with, you know, with fourteen, fifteen hundred attendees in...in fifteen hundred rooms, even if, say, only half of the attendees stay at the hotel, well, fifty percent of the hotel, well, thirty to fifty percent of the hotel will be NamesCon attendees, so...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Everywhere you go is a networking opportunity.

Michael Cyger: And it's awesome.

Richard Lau: Yeah.

Michael Cyger: You go down to the bar which is right by the casino. Everybody is there from NamesCon. You go to the Craps table and look for me and Shane. Everybody there is from NamesCon, like, so it's just...it's phenomenal. Yeah.

Richard Lau: Right. So, I mean, even if you go out go for a smoke, you go to the Starbucks, you go, you know, in the elevator, right?

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: Chances are fifty percent that person is going to be from NamesCon and [inaudible] but even if they're not you can just say, you know,

"Did you see the Uniregistry, you know, elevator sim, what do you think" you know? It's...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: There's...there's so many opportunities to network at the conference hotel, you know? It...it just adds to...to the whole...to the whole experience.

Michael Cyger: Yeah, definitely. Alright, if you have any questions please post them in the comments below this video on DomainSherpa and I'll ask Richard to come back and answer as many as he can. If you received benefit from today's show, learned something new, challenged your thinking around domain names you purchase, who you purchase them with, why you're buying them by yourself, you know, please take a moment to thank today's Sherpa. I'm going to be the first to say thanks to Richard...Richard Lau, individual investor and founder of NamesCon Domain Name Conference taking place this January in Las Vegas. Thanks for coming on the DomainSherpa Show, sharing your secrets for successful domain name investing, and thanks for being a DomainSherpa for others.

Richard Lau: Hey Mike, thank you. I wanted to just offer to your...your viewers that...

Michael Cyger: Yeah.

Richard Lau: ...That we'll do a two hundred dollar discount. All they'll need to do is use the Sherpa as the...as the discount code when they're checking out.

Michael Cyger: Awesome, very gracious of you.

Richard Lau: Gives them two hundred dollars off.

Michael Cyger: So, use the coupon code Sherpa when checking out for two hundred dollars off.

Richard Lau: Exactly.

Michael Cyger: Awesome. Alright, thanks Richard. Safe travels home.

Richard Lau: Thank you for having me.

Michael Cyger: Thank you all for watching. We'll see you next time.

Richard Lau: Bye.