



# Your International Digital Strategy

## Choosing the right domain

There are two main types of domain; a country specific and a non-country specific domain. Country specific domains, for example .co.uk for the UK or a .fr for France are naturally geo targeted which means search engines assume they are more relevant for that market. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. If you are on a .co.uk domain, search engines will automatically give you more ranking authority in the UK, which is helpful if you are solely focusing on the UK market, however it may limit your visibility on international search. You may still be found but, for example, only if a user is specifically searching for you via branded terms. The main issue with country specific domains is in the management of them as you will need to purchase and maintain all the domains as well as host multiple sites which, depending on your website infrastructure, is either very easy or very hard to do.

A .com is a non geo targeted domain which means search engines give that domain equal ranking everywhere. (There are other geo location ranking signals but I'm not going to go into this into this here.) So, if you want to have a more global reach and you are on a .co.uk you can simply switch to a .com. I have seen companies do this resulting in good organic, international growth.

The question is do I go for multiple country sites with local domains or one website that targets globally?

Well it's not quite that simple either because if you are on a .com you can then have sub domains or sub directories that are then manually geotargeted for specific countries. For example, you could have a .com/FR sub directory with a French version of your site and then optimise this section of your website for the French market. This approach be very productive if executed well.

[Google's support page that outlines the pros and cons of both approaches](#) says "Geotargeting isn't an exact science." Thanks Google!

However, this is one area of SEO that does have some clear guidance. The important things to consider for international SEO are: [Hreflang tags](#), [Site Maps](#), [Geo targeting in web masterstools](#) & duplicate contents. [This](#) is the brief help offered by Bing on the subject.

Also, if you are moving from a local domain to a global domain then don't forget to to put [301 redirects \(permanent redirects\)](#) in place. If you don't do this correctly you will lose all your historical SEO value.

So, whether you chose a .com or lots of local domains it doesn't really matter as well as you execute it well. The main thing to look at is how your website platform handles domain structuring or multi-site infrastructure.

### **Charlie Ruigrok**

*Digital Trade Adviser, Department for International Trade - East Midlands*

If you have any queries relating to international trade, why not get in touch. You can email us at: [info@tradeEM.co.uk](mailto:info@tradeEM.co.uk) or call 0345 052 4001.