

I believe in being an innovator.
Walt Disney

New gTLDs are not innovation, they are a platform for innovation. New gTLDs will change, for the better, the way that people find resources on the Internet. They will provide a platform for innovation that will create benefit for individual users and especially for large brands on a scale not previously seen in the DNS.

There have now been multiple economic studies. They have been thorough and well thought out to the extent possible. The studies have examined the potential benefits and the potential costs and seem to generally support the premise that new gTLDs will provide benefits that outweigh the costs.

There are two other, more important, conclusions that we can draw from those studies however. The first is that it is impossible to study the future. New gTLDs, if allowed to flourish, will change the way that domain names are used. They will bring semantics to the right of the dot. The top level domain today has little to no meaning. When the new round proceeds we will see a marked change in the way people will use domain names. The ability to find resources of all kinds more easily on the Internet will provide a small, but clear incremental benefit to users. But that benefit will be felt trillions of times! Every time someone finds something on the Internet more easily there will be a benefit.

This is the same small, incremental, but clear benefit experienced when moving from IP addresses to domain names (something early geeks STILL say was not necessary), from convoluted long urls provided by geocities or an ISP to ones own domain name and from a hotmail email address to one more personalized. It was not that long ago that a large percentage of businesses used a hotmail email address on a business card!

Second, the biggest beneficiaries of this change will eventually be large brands who will use their own top-level domain to manage their Internet presence. When users grow to expect to find Internet resources at “.company” the need for brand protection and the opportunity for user confusion will be greatly reduced. This effect cannot be underestimated and I say this as the owner of a large Internet brand that has been, and continues to be, the victim of cybersquatting all over the Internet.

It is important to note that the recent decision on vertical integration has been instrumental in simplifying and thus hastening the ability of large brands to take advantage of the coming innovation. Single registrant-Single user domains will allow the benefits of brand protection through use of new TLDs to flourish.

While the vertical integration decision was clearly the right one (and I say this as a party who would have greatly, but inappropriately, benefited from a protectionist decision), I must note that the process of getting to a decision was messy. I encourage board and staff to provide the community, and especially the GAC, with clear, written reasons for their decision.

There has been a lot of discussion of competition for .com. What we need to think about is NOT will any single domain become a competitor for .com, but instead will a large number of domains *in aggregate* provide competition for .com. This issue cannot possibly be understood by studying the extremely limited TLD introductions of the past.

Lastly, I greatly sympathize with the challenges faced by the GAC in dealing with these changes. We are not only dealing with a large change that is difficult to predict with certainty, we are also dealing with a process change with the ART and the devolution of power from the United States to a more global national community.

After all these years and all of the studies and working groups and hard work of so many people I believe it is clear that it will be impossible to answer all the questions that governmental representatives naturally want answered with the certainty that they would like.

In addition, those with the loudest voices inside governments are of course the large, vested interests who have been opposed to change from the onset. We must all be sympathetic to the pressure this creates for GAC representatives.

I would urge GAC representatives to understand ICANN as a living process. We, the community of which you are a part, will be expected to deal with problems as they arise. When we do, we will be dealing with them in practice, not in theory. When we do, we will be doing so with the precision that hindsight provides and the one thing that is certain is that the problems we expect are unlikely to be the problems we encounter. This is a good thing and should not be feared.

I will also note that the ICANN community, including staff and board, should engage in extraordinary efforts to provide the GAC with the information they need in the form they need it. This is about relationship which is both new, a global community operating at a peer level with national governments, and old, relationships that are built on communication and trust. We will all be better for this.

It is these relationships that will allow us together to continue to manage change.

The Internet is the greatest agent for positive change that the world has ever seen. The DNS is a small but vitally important resource that sits at its heart. All of us in the ICANN community, staff, board and GAC are its stewards.

The DNS is a platform for innovation in the broader Internet. Right now, when the global economy is benefiting from the progress made in the developing world, when the mobile Internet is about to take the change we have seen and accelerate it, is when we need to allow innovation to bloom. Users all over the world will be the beneficiaries.

The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.
Walt Disney

Respectfully and hopefully submitted.

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