



May 15, 2015

Via Electronic Mail
comments-irtp-c-30mar15@icann.org

Re: IRTP Part C Implementation

Google Domains appreciates this opportunity to submit comments on the [proposed amendment](#) to the Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP). At a high-level, Google supports the IRTP and welcomes the opportunity to improve clarity around the transfer process as well as reduce the risk of domain name hijacking. While the proposed implementation is generally straightforward and supports the IRTP, we have identified several areas of concern, which should be addressed prior to the finalization of contract changes.

1) The current approach to “Change of Registrant Credentials” is overly narrow and does not minimize the risk of hijacking.

As proposed, the inter-registrant transfer process requires that the registrar provide both New and Prior Registrants with a “Change of Registrant Credential” in the form of a PIN or other code. Both registrants must authorize the change by providing the registrar with the credential before the change can be completed. Unfortunately, this approach has two significant, related problems.

First, the reliance on providing a code or credential limits the authorization process to using a “shared secret” between the registrar and registrant. Although shared secrets are commonly used in security protocols, there are a variety of other mechanisms to authenticate users and authorize specific actions, many of which may be both more appropriate and more secure than the use of a shared secret. For example, a registrar might seek to have a registrant authorize the transfer by use of two-factor authentication or through the use of a digital certificate. Both of these mechanisms might make it harder for a prospective hijacker to authorize the transfer than the use of a shared secret, but they seem to be disallowed by the proposed contract language.

Second, the use of a shared secret may in many cases rely on the same credentials used by a prospective domain hijacker in order to initiate the transfer in the first place. Many registrars allow the recovery of account credentials through an e-mail sent to the account holder or registrant. If a hijacker were to use this approach to gain access to a registrant’s account, sending the Change of Registrant Credential to that same e-mail address would use the very channel that the hijacker had used to gain access to the account on the registrar’s system to

confirm the change, which means that the credential has had minimal effect on preventing the hijacking.

More generally, given the slow process by which the RRA might be amended in the future¹, the contract language adopted to implement this IRTP should generally provide registrars the maximum amount of discretion on implementation in order to ensure that it is possible to react to emerging changes in security practices or the threat models presented by hijackers. In order to allow registrars this needed flexibility, we suggest the following changes to the proposed amendment:

- Remove the concept of “Change of Registrant Credential” entirely, and
- Edit II.3.2(a) to read: “To obtain the requisite confirmation, the Registrar must use a secure mechanism to confirm that each of the Prior Registrant and the New Registrant approves the change.”

2) In some situations, the expiration of the FOA may result in an ambiguous situation.

The IRTP and proposed amendment consider the Form of Authorization (FOA) to have expired after 60 days, after which the gaining registrar may no longer “proceed” with the transfer until a new FOA has been obtained by the registrant. Unfortunately, the use of the word “proceed” in this case can be ambiguous, as a transfer does not immediately complete upon the registrar’s submission of the “transfer” command to the registry. It is unclear from the proposed language what a registrar should do in the event that the FOA expires between the transmission of the “transfer” command and the completion of the transfer process.

Since the gaining registrar has no control over the process once the “transfer” command has been submitted to the registry, it is reasonable to assume that the transfer should complete once a timely-approved “transfer” command has been submitted, we therefore suggest that the new Section I.A.2.2.4 be changed to read as follows:

If the FOA expires pursuant to one of the aforementioned circumstances described in 2.2.3(a) – 2.2.3(c), prior to submitting the “transfer” request to the Registry, the Gaining Registrar must re-authorize the transfer request via a new FOA.

3) Change of Registrant due to Lifting of Privacy Service, Court Order, UDRP or other Administrative Proceedings.

Changes of Registrants may occur under circumstances in which approval from the prior registrants would not only be difficult to obtain but also inadvisable. For example, if a Change of Registrant results from a court order, UDRP result, law enforcement or other administrative

¹ It will be over three years from the initiation of the IRTP PDP to the adoption of any contract changes.

proceeding, the Prior Registrant may be unwilling to approve the transfer. These types of changes should be explicitly excluded from the definition of Change of Registrant. In addition, it is an undue burden and could further fraud and abuse to require registrars to obtain approval from the New Registrant when the Change of Registrant occurs as a result of a privacy/proxy service provider lifting the privacy service. This type of change should also be explicitly excluded from the definition of Change of Registrant.

We note that other comments suggest that the Change of Registrant procedure be applied only prior to the expiration to the domain name. On this point, we disagree. Important protections such as the Redemption Grace Period are only available to the domain's registrant, and these protections would be significantly undercut if it remains possible to alter the registrant simply because the domain name has expired.

4) Consider the case of a simultaneous change in registrant and registrar.

In some circumstances, a New Registrant may also wish to transfer the domain to a different registrar than that used by the Prior Registrant. Unfortunately, the 60-day lock imposed in the new Section II.3.3 may make this confusing and unwieldy. We understand and support the intent of this provision in making it easier to recover from domain hijacking events, but we recommend that the IRTP support a means of authorizing simultaneous change of registrant and registrar to avoid complications where all parties can agree to and authorize the combined transfer.

We believe that these proposed changes will improve the proposed implementation of IRTP Part C and encourage ICANN to adopt them prior to finalizing contractual changes.

Sincerely,



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