

An email exchange on the Post Expiry Domain email functionality issue:

Q: Of the 120 million active domain names, approximately about 60,000 domain names expire everyday, of which a sizable number expire without the Registrant's intent to lose the names.

In any post-expiry situation as in <http://domainnamewire.com/2010/05/13/texas-governor-rick-perry-domain-name-expires/> the domain registrant, apart from suffering from a change in his name server records to a dysfunctional/ppc name server such as NSI.PENDINGRENEWALDELETION.COM, loses the email functionality, in most cases, immediately after expiry. The registrant may renew the domain during the grace period or later but until the time of renewal the email functionality is usually lost. This is very harsh on the Registrants whose domain names expired unintentionally.

As a technical solution, as a member of the working group on post expiry domain name recovery, I proposed to explore the possibility of a webmail service provider such as Google modifying a product such as <http://www.google.com/apps/intl/en/business/gmail.html> This google application is now a premium service billed at \$50 per user, but used to be a free service during its introductory period.

Is there a technical and commercial possibility that a corporation such as Google could technically modify an application such as its business email to allow Registrars to deflect email traffic meant for an expired domain to Google's business email servers, assuming that the Registrant has given Gmail his prior consent to redirect the email traffic and store messages in gmail's servers until the domain name is renewed? This may have to be designed as a free service for a period of a maximum of 180 days during which the Registrant may renew the domain name and re-transfer email traffic to his domain's email server or may choose to continue with 'gmail for business' by converting this to a business account.

There are various possible models such as offering all domain registrants a redundant email server option which is functional for, say, 180 days after a domain expires or a model by which the Registrant opts to go to gmail for business right from day 1 of his domain registration.

The question to Google at this stage is on the technical feasibility of such a service. If it is technically feasible, I will report to the working group that email redirection or a system of redundant email servers is technically feasible. At that point of time, the working group may ask Google and similar corporations about possible commercial interest in offering such a non-profit service with a choice for users to opt in for premium services.

Response from Olivier Crepin LeBlond : Technically it's feasible. Commercially it's probably impossible to evaluate - because you cannot treat a domain name serving 10 email addresses, on par with one serving 5000 email addresses.

Q: I understand. But such a complication could make this commercially MORE attractive for a company such as Google or Microsoft to offer a product to bridge the domain name expiry time period. (Small domain registrants with less than ten email addresses would require this service to be free for a start while those with more than 10 email addresses can be assumed to be businesses or organizations with a varying ability to contract for such a service for a fee at the outset)

A company such a Google could consider this as a proposition from ICANN to offer 180 million (growing to be a billion) domain owners on a golden platter.

Response from Olivier Crepin LeBlond : **This is like insurance: the cost of the service will need to be evaluated against the likelihood that domain name renewal is late. If the back-up service by, say, Google, cost so much, perhaps would it be better to pay someone specifically to renew domain names. In the current times, I don't see this happening.**

Another solution would be to suspend Web, whilst still routing domain for email.

Method:

- copy MX records for domain example.com
- modify example.com nameservers to ns.icanncontrollednameserver.org
- carry entry for original MX records for domain example.com in the ns.icanncontrollednameserver.org

Others might tell you that as long as the domain name can be quickly restored post expiry if the domain owner wishes to renew, the cutting off of Web as well as Email usually gets the domain owner to take action when every other attempt at contacting them has failed previously.

Comments: I do not agree that cutting off of Web as well as Email is necessary to WAKE UP the domain registrant.

But the solution copying Mx records to an icann owned or icann-assigned server would solve the problem of email functionality for domain registrants until renewal / restoration.

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