

How Do We Raise Global Awareness of New gTLDs?

CADNA appreciates the opportunity to offer its comments and perspective on ICANN's proposed plan to raise global awareness of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs). While CADNA still believes that ICANN may have been premature in its approval of the new gTLD program, it does support ICANN's efforts to raise awareness as long as this absolutely does not become a promotion of the new gTLD program itself. Brand and trademark owners should not feel pressured to apply for a new gTLD; it is important that ICANN's new gTLD communications plan remain as neutral and educational as possible, to ensure that companies are able to make informed decisions about whether to apply.

In the Philosophy section of the plan, ICANN uses some language that has given CADNA cause for concern. The section talks about creating buzz about new gTLDs and making sure that companies know about the new business opportunities being created, when there is no proof yet to back up this claim. It is the first page of the plan, and it is already beginning to feel like a sales pitch. In the Key Messages section as well, ICANN mentions that there will be risks and rewards, but then goes on to state that new gTLDs will not affect the stability of the Internet, which is misleading because it is a fact that has yet to be proven.

While it is true that new gTLDs are going to open up the domain name space, and while CADNA understands that ICANN wants to cast them in a positive light, it is important to also emphasize that applying for a new gTLD may not be for everyone. It is an expensive, time-intensive process, and will often require employing third parties with additional expertise. The costs don't end with the application, there are annual fees to consider, as well as the responsibility of managing the new TLD. ICANN can make its messaging upbeat, but it should not downplay the costs or accountability.

Lastly, there is the question of budget. Some of the latest rumors put the budget for this communications plan at \$750,000, which seems alarmingly low for a strategy seeking to raise global awareness of new gTLDs. CADNA believes that ICANN should release more information on both what the final budget will be and how it plans to employ it. It would also be beneficial for the parties commenting during this period, who are clearly interested in contributing their perspective as to how ICANN should go about raising global awareness of new gTLDs, and might be able to offer better advice as to how to proceed with this plan.