

**ICANN
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GNSO – RySG BRG Community Session – dot Brand Trends
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Cole Quinn: Good morning, welcome everybody.

Man: Thank you.

Cole Quinn: Well get started now because we've got a full agenda. I want to take a moment and welcome everyone to the BRG community session. This is an open session here at ICANN 63. And we have food and drink for you to enjoy, so please help yourself. Feel free to get up and walk around a little bit here. My name is Cole Quinn, and I'm the current president and chairman of the Brand Registry Group. I work for Microsoft. And my team manages the domain portfolio for the corporation and I also look after the eight top level domains that Microsoft owns that are branded. We have dot Azure, dot Bing, Hotmail, Microsoft Office, Windows and Skype and Xbox, right? So we got a handful of TLDs there.

And the first ICANN I attended was in Dublin in 2015 when I came into my job. And my predecessor sent me an email that was a forward to an invitation of a Brand Registry Group there down the street from the conference center. And it just said you should go to this. And I went there, and I sat there in a room full of strangers. And I realized pretty instantly, these are my people. And I had a great connection with these folks.

And the things that they were talking about, the challenges that they were sharing resonated with me as a registry operator at Microsoft trying to get things done with my TLD. And I came, excuse me, my throat does this when I speak publicly. And so I came to get to know the Brand Registry Group a little bit better. And I came to find out a few things about it that these are major corporations that were working collaboratively. These businesses were not primarily in the domain business. They found themselves in the position of being a registry operator, but they're not in the domain industry.

And so, as kind of, rookies, they're prone to be making some of the same mistakes and running over the same landmines and these companies came together to say let's do some collective learning. Let's do some sharing and let's do this right. And so they carved out a space for themselves with the specification 13. We have top level domains for which we do not sell to third parties, the second level names. And we are 40 members representing roughly 70 TLDs. About half or the members are from Europe, a third from North American and then about a fifth from Asia.

There's a couple membership categories. There's the regular members which do have their top level domains already. They've applied. They've delegated. They've launched. And there's also an associated membership status for companies that have self-attested that they are going to - they have an intention to apply for their dot brand in the next round whenever that comes.

And so we've got this mixed bunch of companies that in some senses were actually competing in the same market. We have Amazon and Microsoft, you know. And the thing that I love about the Brand Registry Group is that in this space, we're able to meet together and share best practices. We're able to advocate for brand interests and policy development at ICANN. And we really put aside some of our corporate objectives. And we come to this space in a real special way to raise the water for all the boats, to promote brand advocacy and brand interest.

And so that's just a little bit about the brand registry group. One of the things that I discovered when I started becoming more involved here is that we have the ICANN community in which to navigate. And there's a thing called the Global Domains Division, the GDD and how the registry operations and how the BRG interfaces with the GDD. And many of you probably know when that Linett Nardone, she had been the engagement manager for the GDD, the ICANN side of the house. And we developed over the last couple of years, some pretty special relationship with her. And her boss, first it was Krista. Then it was Russ.

And, you know, like everybody else, people come and go. And Linett moved on a couple months ago. So what I want to do right now is just introduce to you to Aysegul Tekce. I think I pronounced her name right. And she's our new BRG engagement manager. So welcome Aysegul.

Aysegul Tekce: Good morning, everyone. My name is Aysegul Tekce. I'm working with Registry Services and Engagement Team. I'm based in Istanbul office. So as he said half of the BRG members are based in Europe, so I am close to most of you. I'm happy to be assigned as your new engagement manager and looking forward to working with you. Thank you.

Cole Quinn: All right, short and sweet. I'm going to turn this over to Martin right now, I think. We've got some interesting things here. I think this is, kind of, the meat of the meeting where we're going to talk about some of the use cases and some of the examples that we've seen in the wild of dot brand TLDs. Martin?

Martin Sutton: Thank you, Cole. And just also wanted to advise that Aysegul will be joining us at the brands and domain event tomorrow afternoon as well which is a great opportunity for ICANN to engage with brands that are, you know, doing stuff and talking about their experiences. So we welcome you to that as well. So and if anybody else is interested in terms of brands and domains event that's occurring tomorrow, it's outside of the ICANN meetings. And you can

find more details online under the Brand Registry Group website. So please feel free to have a look and if you're interested to come along, please register.

So I'm not going to flash up loads of different websites and different things like that. If you're really interested about finding out who's using and how they're using it, there's plenty of information on different resources including make way dot world and the brand observatory. So this is just giving a quick, visible look at traditional measure, the second level domains and the growth that we've seen within the dot brand environment just this year.

So year to date is over 40% growth in second level domains. Now always caveat that with, you know, the fact that 14,000 domains doesn't seem an awful lot when you compare it to all of the larger generic TLDs But what you do need to remember is that for a brand environment, they created these spaces away from the generic world and the ccTLD world. They were forced to use in the past. And these domains that they now register within these locations are for a purpose. So it's not as if they're having to go and protect themselves with vast numbers of typos to prevent cybersquatting on misuse and abuse of their brand.

So they've managed to find through their dot brand a trusted and zero abuse if you like environment. So this is clean space. So as they build up gradually as we've seen over the last few years. It's steady increase. More and more are becoming active. And more and more are finding even better use cases and the value that they have had now that they're tapping into within their dot brand.

So that's a positive one to follow and track, but as I say, if you really want to drill down to individual cases, there's plenty of resources available. I'm not going to just go flying through loads of different sites.

And it, you know, what we're talking about here is not a surprise. I mean this is how they're using it is very similar to what is available already prior to dot brands coming along. So they're making use of it in areas like social media, websites and redirects, through the email now we're seeing quite a few more interested brands take on using email. But also hidden behind the scenes, there could be some internal network capabilities that they're starting to deploy and utilize through their dot brand. Perhaps that's where there might also be some additional innovation. So you're not going to always have that visible in the public domain. So it's just to outline some of those.

So if we drill down a little further on some of these to, you know, what makes it any different, I think in terms of social media we've seen that the use of a branded link rather than an obscure random string creates a lot of trust for the user. So it builds in some trust. So this is a really good way to make sure that in that social media space which is grown and grown and will continue to grow, the user's experience is improved. They get a consistent and memorable terms that they can use to direct them to further places that they may want to explore. For the brand, the marketing people, it reinforces that brand even more so in the online space.

And so with that, combination you're seeing an uptick in click through rates. So these can be between 30, 40 increase of click through rates. Now that's where we start to see some tangible evidence of these providing, you know, incremental value adds to running a dot brand on the internet.

And for, you know, the actual brand themselves, they've got, you know, greater control of this and the flexibility to put whatever domain that they want to refer to within the short link makes it much more appropriate for the user to identify with, far more intuitive as well as that trusted link. And then in terms of activating a dot brand, this is probably one of the avenues which is what we would regard as a low risk entry point. It's not disruptive towards any of your existing digital footprint across gTLDs and ccTLDs. And so it's an easier one to deploy.

So for those who have been reluctant to move forward, this may be the right avenue to explore and start. And what or has been evidenced with those that have gone through this route is it gives great visibility, not just externally but internally. It raises awareness of those around your own organization and increases their - the visibility of that increases the want to do something, to actually motivate them to do something more with the dot brand.

If anybody has got any questions as I go along, please do feel free to interject and if any of our members have got things to add, please feel free to add as we go through as well. Otherwise, you'll get bored with my voice.

So website, so what's so fascinating about websites? For a dot brand environment, what do you get? You get the ability to plant something in there that is again more intuitive as a domain name that has meaning and value to recognize where you're going to is really where you want to land. It's a faster way through for an individual user to find what they're really after. But also understand that it's a trusted space. They know and are familiar with brand. So giving those websites more ability to have a thin layer with content rather than the very heavy and layered websites that they may have created over many years on a dot com or ccTLD environment they can start to spread out more in a TLD world that they control and operate.

In terms of the marketing issue of, you know, I've got a produce launch and it's tomorrow. I need a domain name, please. Sort it out. We've all been there and it's a last minute struggle not only to register a name, but to see if it's actually available. Does it infringe on anybody else's trademarks? Is it registered in all sorts of other ccTLD and gTLD environments that you want to protect it. Well within your own space, you have the flexibility and choice to go in and find something that suits you, suits your product and can be launched very quickly.

And again this trust element rides through everywhere we go in terms of use cases. The added trust that it gives to the end user is extremely valuable.

So internally, what does it mean as well? Well you can manage a risk far better if you're in control of a lot more of the end-to-end from the root of the internet to the end user. So in terms of websites, you can, you know, take advantage on the fact that everything is served up in a secure environment on (DNSEC) and really just be able to apply other layers of security and authentication that suits the user. And I'll talk a little bit later.

And in terms of compliance I've referred to here, an illustration of this is where, you know, in the past it's very difficult even in an organization which may have good central controls to manage all of the real estate around the internet. Now with hosting things within our dot brand environment, you've got far greater capabilities of monitoring and using tools to monitor these effectively for any internal policy requirements as well as external regulatory requirements. And can quickly adapt and change things as needed.

In other advantages perhaps where you, as an automotive industry are engaged with authorized dealers and as licensees, [inaudible] licenses you could create websites for those dealerships and control the content style and again any of the compliance requirements that could be deployed across that. And we've seen examples of that already deployed in some of the European automotive dot brands.

Redirects, so often these are considered to be, sort of, what's the purpose of just setting up a dot brand then just putting loads of redirects on there? Well there is a good advantage. And I mentioned earlier that over time and years, real - digital real estate may have got very deep and confusing for users to drive down and find what they're actually looking for. So DVAG is an example of where they've used the redirect links via their dot brand to create intuitive domain names that consumers can then be directed to the specific content which may hidden deep within websites. And again, this is more

memorable from a user experience point of view. It has the advantage of being extra simple for navigation for users.

And perhaps it also provides a lot more information. As a registry operator you can tap into a lot more information than you were able to and or a second level domain to see how those habits move forward and change. And that may help you actually develop a way to integrate or migrate elements of your existing digital landscape into your dot brand but in an effective manner, because it's not typically a straight transition from one to the other. This is new space that most people will tend to try and find creative ways and better ways of deploying their digital footprint within their dot brand. Again with the redirects, similar to the social media, this is the low risk entry point.

Now we are starting to see more cases of email being deployed on dot brand. This is probably a more challenging step for many or a nervous step for many to start to work towards. But it has been done by some already and has been working for some time, for instance with (dot Weir). Dot Cannon recently announced that they were going to transition all of their email through to dot at mail dot Cannon and publicly made a statement as to why they were doing it. And to make sure that it was going to, you know, increase trust with the users, the recipients which is their suppliers as well as customers to support their business.

And with that perhaps there is always a concern regarding how does this new email get accepted in various email clients? And there's been a lot of work done in the years with the universal acceptance working group, steering group, sorry, to make this much more viable and less of a concern. So it is great to see this advancement with some to use their email and I'm aware that there are others actually working on progressing this further with their dot brands.

So again, the more use cases that start to materialize, the more significant it is for the end user to see this. They adopt it very easily within the dot brand

environment again for the trust element and it's good progress. It's all very quiet around here. Thank you.

Man: (Unintelligible). I have a question then. It seems like this kind of announcement is useful, but what would be even better would be to get some white papers from companies that have gone through this process to talk about what was the process that they went through. What were the thing they had to think about? What were the challenges they faced to help other companies understand how to go through? Is the BRG doing anything to encourage or to sponsor those kind of white papers?

Martin Sutton: Good point. Not to date, I mean there has been other examples and papers produced via I think New Staff has done a lot of work in this area and illustrated how they've achieved it, some of the barriers to being with that they had to overcome. So, you know, these are not without challenges. Everything that we've talked about today is not an easy transition for a brand to do. So they have to think things through. What obstacles might be in the way? Is there any technical issues as well that need to be considered? So yes, these are huge steps for them to take. And there is stuff out there but I - good point in terms of creating more information.

Cole Quinn: So, this is Cole. And one of the things that I do is also chair a committee on the BRG called the Registry Operations and Best Practices Committee and we have a roadmap. And we have deliverables that we've set out to produce for BRG members in the community members in the community. And it does address things like this, all right. So we do aim to have white papers for a lot of the different aspects of standing up and maintaining and launching and getting the most value out of your asset. It just is that we have a finite set of resources and this is one of the things that hasn't come to the top of the priority list yet. But please do keep your eye out for it and I will send you a personal email when it's ready to publish, all right? Thanks.

Man: Yes, you mentioned the notion of not only of these sites growing but getting people internally excited so that they - there's more interest. And that's for the client's that we do that for. That seems to be the biggest thing is getting buy in from their own company. And I think I remember (Tony) talking about email specifically. That really, kind of, made people internally understand what the dot brand was. It's like oh, the email is now the dot brand. So that's a useful thing about email even though it's a complicates setup.

Martin Sutton: So as far as reinventing the wheel, FTLD, some of the work I've done with them, we've actually migrated 300 banks already that have dropped their comment and moved to bank. And email is actually one of the most trickiest parts of that migration. And if you go to the FTLD website, you'll actually see case studies. There's about 30 of them where we actually detail with the bank what they did and some of them specifically addressed the email issues. And again, email is incredibly tricky because of the universal acceptance. So you have to run parallel mail servers for, you know, obviously existing business cards and emails and then when in fact you run into a UA issue. So email is probably one of the most complex aspects of a migration over to a new TLD extension. And again you can talk to (Craig). He has a lot of those resources to help spin up and not necessarily reinvent the wheel.

((Crosstalk))

Mike Palage: I just want to say thanks. These are great points of conversation and comment and I would invite that to continue to anyone in the room. For the folks that are online it's hard to tell who's speaking, so if you could introduce yourself before you make a comment, that would be great thanks.

Martin Sutton: That was Mike Palage. So thanks, Mike. So I think if I just move onto this one as well. Areas like (demark) within our registry, so using some of the secure protocols such as (demark), it may be possible to use these in a different way to deploy them more easily across a whole registry rather than individually domain name by domain name. So all of these things start to

become more visible as use case materials, as people go through these experiences and certainly I've got connection with (Craig) following ICANN 63 to talk about the (demark) aspects going forward and how that may be useful for deployment in a dot brand environment as well.

So in terms of the sort of internal network and innovations area, I mean this is a great way that, you know, for technical standards especially can be deployed within the registry itself rather than individual domain names. So there may be some - a lot of streamlining that could be an advantage to dot brand going forward. And we're only beginning to start to unearth some of these.

HSTS, the HTTP strict transport security has been flagged over the last number of months as a real opportunity for a registry to be able to ensure that all the traffic that goes to an through - from the dot brand is under the HTTPS. So, you know, there's still things to think through as a deployment requirement and how that may impact in the future for a registry such as a dot brand, but many are already exploring that to implement as a value add to their top level domain.

And we shouldn't forget, you know, this is really about making sure that there's extended control right from the room of the internet to the end user. So as a dot brand, you have a greater opportunity to control all of the supply chain within that environment. Yes, you may have to outsource for certain aspects, but those are more on a one-to-one contractual basis.

I mentioned earlier as well, in terms of innovation, things are already sparking off within lots of organizations. We can't talk about them in the open space, but certainly within the brand registry group. Plus we don't expect people to describe anything that is going to have competitive issues. There is certainly the network capability of being able to discuss with your peers one-to-ones some of the interesting stuff that's going on. And certainly tomorrow and the brands and domains event, it give us a chance, an opportunity to explore a

little bit further in terms of the experience, the individual experiences of dot brands.

So let me just - we're doing okay for time and then we'll just open up for any questions, but just to think about what's next. You know, we're seeing a tremendous awareness certainly internally as brands start to activate and, you know, whether that's just starting through with the social media and some redirects through starting to move into creating new websites and services within their dot brand environment and then towards email. That is really generating more and more interest. In fact, what used to be a matter of having to go out and tell people and see and explore how to use it, some of these people are now enjoying the different aspect of having a queue at the door and having to reject some of the ideas at this space so they can actually control what is effectively a new and organized space and maintain that for the future.

In terms of user adoption, within a dot brand, we find there's no issues as long as you're, you know, good at the communication part, users are quick to adapt and adopt usage of a dot brand. And in the pipeline, we've got brands that want to apply for their own trusted space for the future. Those that perhaps didn't apply in the first round but were holding back to see if all of the rough edges could be smoothed out for the application process but had only anticipated a one or two year gap are probably a bit disappointed with the lack of progress in that particular area.

But in the meantime as again more use cases emerge, there will be new comings to that queue. And they're looking forward to the next round of new gTLDs opening up as soon as possible. So the BRG is actively engaged and a lot of members directly themselves within the subsequent procedures, policy development work. And we hope to see, you know, strong progress on this so that the new rounds can be opened up as soon as possible.

With that, I think we can open up to any Q&A and we've got about 10 minutes. Anne?

Anne Aikman-Scalese: Anne Aikman-Scalese with (Louis, Roker, (unintelligible), Kristy). We found that - it's a Southwestern regional firm. We do represent a number of brands none of whom applied for a dot brand TLD in the first round. And, you know, for those who are seeking more information, we get, kind of, mixed feedback and the send us things like well, you know, McDonald's dropped their - I mean so the question that we need to answer is those who applied and then dropped, you know, why did they do so? Why did they elect not to further invest? And then secondly we need more information on in particular the security aspects and why they're, you know, seemingly far superior at the brand, dot brand TLD level? Those are a couple of the questions that we face when looking at the next round. And last question was I heard a couple people go to the mic and say we're in favor of a priority round for dot brand and I think geo or something like that. And in sub-pro, I work on sub-pro and I have to say that this idea hasn't gotten a lot of currency within the working group itself. I don't know. We haven't, you know, reviewed the public comments yet, but hopefully I'll see a ton of public comments related to dot brand.

Martin Sutton: So I'll take those in reverse if I may. So to the last point, Anne, it's, kind of, interesting. I mean even within the Brand Registry Group, it is a group that is mainly those that have already got a dot brand. Similarly in the industry with GOs, there's a GO TLD group. They are dot brand, GO TLD operators already. So they've got theirs.

What is a difficult issue is trying to get those that do want to apply in the future to come to the table and voice that. We don't see that in the ICANN community. It's very difficult for particularly brands and companies to come forward and announce that they would like to - or even give the indication that they are wanting to apply in the future, because that may show their cards.

And that could put them up into some kind of contention set. Because it flags awareness to others that they are intended to do an application in the future.

So I think we've got this issue within the community itself that there isn't a lot of different voices coming forward to promote these ideas. I have seen through some of the comments so far in the public comments for the initial report. And there is some references to moving ahead, the BRG is interested in exploring those further. And we have pushed letters to the board earlier this year in May just saying it is - you need to be doing something proactive to get the dates on the table and get this timeline sorted out so that, you know, despite - there's a lot of work that's been done. We've got a lot of years between the last round and we haven't got sight yet of the next round coming forward despite the commitment that would be done with in one or two years of the last application period.

So we've tried to voice it for some of our members that are intending to apply in the future. But it's hard to get other brands to the ICANN table. It's probably with GOs as well to announce their demand essentially. In terms of the information that you reference to, those that canceled their delegation, again we don't have the detailed reasons for some of these. But I mean there could be very varied and valuable reasons for them to do so. Change of branding, change of people within the organization that championed it to start with are no longer there after many years toward delegation.

So without the internal drive and just looking at it as a budget item, that, you know, in this day in age is quite easily a target of - if we're not doing anything with it, then get rid of it. That could be one of the reasons why. But certainly within the BRG, we haven't got access to the definitive reasons for their deletion of their delegation of backing out. (Unintelligible).

Anne Aikman-Scales: Just a quick follow up, if we want to show to clients who are potential advocates for dot brands, here's the north start if you will. You know, here's an example of what you can do with your TLD. I don't know maybe I should to

tomorrow's conference to find out. But are there just stellar examples of, you know, the dot brand TLD that we want to point to make recommendations to our clients?

Martin Sutton: So there are some great ones to look at that have really gone, you know, full steam ahead. They don't necessarily come to ICANN. They don't need to. They're not selling anything. They're not selling domains and need all of these avenues to and relationships to manage. They have got a secure and trusted space. They're just intent on making sure that they use that effectively and they've deployed it.

So it is very difficult to get some of those people around the table and certainly to ICANN. Because they don't need this space. It's not their day job it's part of one element, a tiny element of their business that helps them achieve what they want to achieve and it's part of their strategy going forward. But certainly tomorrow's event will have some experiences to talk about. Love the idea in terms of trying to frame the advantages, so I think that's a good takeaway and we certainly look at doing that. But we're not in - the BRG itself is not in the play for selling the idea, what we do is promote the best value that we derive from these things, share best practices. But we're not in it to sell and, you know, it's up to every individual organization really to assess the value that it could derive from applying and running its own TLD. (Jim)?

(Jim): Yes, Anne. Just wanted to follow up with Anne. Anne, turn to your right, over here. Peter LaMantia who's right across the way has got a pretty good website that's got a lot of good case studies on what brands are doing. So maybe you two can connect afterwards.

Man: Yes, makeway.world is one that Neustar and we've got a little simple microsite called brand.tld.news and it's just to do exactly. Just show a few examples of what come people have done. That would be a good starting for you, I think.

(Jim): And then the other experience that I've seen on why they're some of the brands are stepping away is what I call the free puppy syndrome. Where the legal department went into it in a defensive posture. Once they secured it, they didn't want it in their budget and they kick it over to marketing. And marketing is like what's this? Oh, it's a free puppy. We know how expensive those can be. And marketing says I didn't plan for this. This wasn't in our roadmap. You know what? We're out. So I've seen that on more than one occasion.

Martin Kuechenthal: Good morning Martin Kuechenthal. We're taking care for a couple of existing dot brands, and we've - this is like one thing to show them the example which we see in the wide right now. But I would ask the colleagues in the room who are taking care of future rent applicants. How do you keep track? Because we experience that these people who two, three years ago were big fans of an application for a new dot brand in the next round, they left the building. They are somewhere else. So we start that from scratch. We find the new engagement. We try to find the new engagement in the companies. And I think it's the hardest part right now for those - for the future applicants is to keep them a lot, to keep them alive and even though if they don't leave the company, the interest is just going down other projects. And I think that is right now the hardest part. I would be very interested how the - how you deal with it.

Martin Sutton: What, try to keep them alive? Good luck.

Man: I'll comment on that. (Unintelligible), Martin. We've got, you know, we've got in Canada, we've got a number of big banks and a bunch of them suggest we want to do this, but these people have left. They've moved on. So now you start again. So you don't. There's no way to really drive it without applications now, because there's no real date. And I see that as the big issue in this entire community. It needs to get solved somehow. You know, those have their dot brand, they kind of look at it and go yes, okay, there's stuff we can do. If there was competitive prices that other companies were going to be applying, they'd move. It's a challenge. It's a big challenge.

Martin Sutton: So with that again, what I mentioned earlier is you're not going to get brands coming to the table to show you everything and reveal their cards as to any innovation that might be going on internally or in the pipeline before it's actually launched. So this is still, you know, their interest is not to go and sell it to an, sort of, sell it to others to go and do. It's about this community just saying look. This is available. People are using it. These are some of the benefits. And I think to Anne's point, is to have perhaps some easy referencing as to the key positives and value adds that this drives.

It was typically in everybody's business case when they started out for applying in the last round. I doubt very much has changed apart from the fact that they've witnesses use cases starting to materialize. But it's just a steady progress. You know, it's not going to rock the world at this stage. But those that do find value in it, we're having some really positive message coming through. And it helps marketing, so you know, they're getting more click throughs. They're getting more trusted engagement with their clients.

So all of these things will start to gradually become an incremental factor that's positive to use it, but they're not going to go out there and sell it and suggest others do the same. All right so every individual organization looking at its merits to do so. And we're going to wrap up in a minute, so any more questions? Otherwise we'll close it there and I'll hand over to Cole.

Cole Quinn: Yes, you know, all good things must come to an end and I want to thank ICANN org and registry stakeholder group for giving us an hour to meet with you folks. And thank you for taking a slice of your schedule to devote to the conversation around the dot brand TLDs. And I would invite each of you, any of you, if you have any questions or concerns or ideas about things that we could be working on at the Brand Registry Group. Or ways that we could be working on our things different or more effectively. You know, reach out to me, to Marin, anyone of us in the brand registry group. You could hit us up

personally or you could engage us through brand registry group dot org. And I just thank you for your time. And we'll just close it up, Martin.

Martin Sutton: Just finally, BRG members or those that represent BRG members, could you now move to the back of the room here, because (Sue) is going to subject us to camera flashes. So if you could all come back to the back here. So BLG members, those that represent BRG members whilst we're here in one room before you escape. And then we could have some conversations in the corridor afterwards for anybody that is interested. Thank you (Sue). We can close the recording now, please.