

## The new gTLDs and the NetNames .Brand Service

**In late June 2011, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved the plan to introduce one of the biggest changes in Internet naming history by dramatically increasing the number of Internet domain name endings such as .com, .net and .org. These Internet domain name endings are known as generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs).**

This change is a major opportunity for companies to take ownership of a part of the Internet for the benefit of their customers, suppliers, channel networks, users and public in general and there are already a number of projects underway with groups like .paris and .eco planning to make applications.

Many companies are also considering how they will use this new and exciting possibility to enhance their marketing operations online and to protect their brands, and NetNames (in conjunction with its Group NBT plc sister brands) is currently working with organisations throughout the globe to help them (a) assess the feasibility of a personalised domain extension and (b) to make the complex application to ICANN.

If your organisation is thinking about whether or not to apply for a new gTLD, talk to NetNames. With our expertise in domain name management and through our new .Brand service, we can help you to make the correct decision about whether or not you should apply for a new gTLD.

If you then decide to proceed, NetNames can help you further by developing the necessary business plan to form the basis of the application, and support you in the launch and implementation of the gTLD (managing the registry) should your application be successful.

As NetNames and Group NBT are world leaders in corporate domain name management, we are best placed to help organisations assess whether or not they should apply for a new gTLD.

Our new gTLD programme is also run by a team of domain name industry experts and led by the current Chair of the GNSO, the international policy making body for all gTLDs. As such, they have been and continue to be instrumental in developing ICANN's new gTLD initiative.



## The new gTLDs – the facts

### What are the proposed changes?

The programme known as 'the new gTLD programme' means that Internet address names will be able to end with almost any word in any language or script, offering corporations and communities of interest around the world the opportunity to market themselves, their products and causes in new and inventive ways.

### What does this mean for the Internet?

The new gTLDs will change the way that information is found on the Internet and how companies design their Internet brand strategy and build their presence online.

It has the potential to improve customer and consumer safety by reducing the effectiveness of common Internet attacks such as phishing fraud.

It will make finding legitimate brand owners' sites more straightforward, at the same time reducing the effectiveness of counterfeit or traffic diverting websites.

It will undoubtedly change the way search engines prioritise their search rankings.

### How to apply for a new gTLD

Obtaining a new gTLD is not cheap, not quick and will involve considerable internal and external effort to create a successful new gTLD application. Applicants will have to cover the \$185,000 application fee and are required to demonstrate the financial, technical and operational commitment to manage and operate a new gTLD for up to 10 years.

Applying for a new gTLD has the potential to affect corporate, marketing, and sales strategy as well as corporate operations at a fundamental level and this has to be considered and understood by all key organisational stakeholders. Only a very few corporations will have the experience, resources and technical capabilities required to apply for and operate a new gTLD in-house. Most organisations are seeking out experts, such as NetNames, to assist them in understanding the strategic and operational implications that the new gTLD programme will bring.

### When to apply for a new gTLD

ICANN will accept applications for new gTLDs from Thursday 12 January 2012 to Thursday 12 April 2012. It is expected to take at least three to four months to gather the information required and to create a new gTLD application. Therefore organisations seriously considering applying for a new gTLD should take action now.



## The benefits of applying for and running a new gTLD

The new gTLD programme creates many benefits for companies and organisations. The benefits for brand owners are outlined below.

- The new gTLDs will give organisations more control over their corporate image on the Internet, their naming strategy, their partners, suppliers and customers
- Organisations will also be able to gain a greater level of control over their Internet presence with regards to costs, intellectual property, and technical control
- Brand owners will be able to enhance both their internal and external communications as their chosen gTLD could become the focal point of their Internet presence for internal and external uses
- Brand owners will be able to rationalise their online presence (including their portfolio of domains and trademarks) by existing online through their own gTLD domain name
- When implemented adequately, a new gTLD will also be able to generate significant direct revenues for organisations (via the registration and renewal of domain names)

Do not procrastinate... Talking about whether or not to apply for a new gTLD is a discussion that your organisation should have sooner rather than later as ICANN will accept new gTLD applications for just a short window of time from **Thursday 12 January 2012 to Thursday 12 April 2012**.

Whilst this may seem like a good few months away, it is expected to take at least three to four months to prepare the application. Therefore you need to get ready now.

If your application for a new gTLD is successful, NetNames can support you in launching the gTLD and managing the registry.



## NetNames .Brand Service

NetNames has implemented an easy to follow, six step plan for organisations thinking about applying for a new gTLD. This process, and the programme of work which accompanies it, is described below.

### Step 1

#### Kick-off meeting

During a one-day meeting, hosted by industry recognised domain name experts, NetNames will discuss the following elements with selected stakeholders from your organisation:

- Overview of the ICANN process
- The benefits and downsides of applying for and managing a new gTLD
- The benefits and downsides of a defensive approach towards the new gTLD programme
- Discussing your usage strategies for a new gTLD
- Strategy conclusions

#### Deliverables

NetNames will deliver its initial recommendation on the direction that your organisation should take with respect to ICANN's new gTLD programme.

### Step 2

#### Scoping study

After step 1, NetNames will work with your organisation to address the feasibility of applying for and running a new gTLD. The feasibility study will include the following elements:

- Identify and prepare a specific action plan should your organisation decide to apply for one or more of the new gTLDs
- Identify the effort and mix of skills required to undertake a successful application
- Identify components of the project to be outsourced and the approximate cost thereof

#### Deliverables

The results of the feasibility study will be submitted to your organisation and will include the following:

- An overview of your organisation's plans with regards to the new gTLDs
- A list of action points when applying for one or more new gTLDs
- A SWOT analysis of your organisation's ability to manage one or more new gTLDs
- An analysis of all expected costs and investments in order to implement such plans
- Recommendations regarding the new gTLDs under review

### Step 3

#### Define operational aspects

Owning a gTLD is not like owning a normal domain. If you are successful in your application, your organisation will be expected to act as the registrar for the TLD. As the operation of a registry is not part of your normal core activity it would be difficult for you to assess what operations are involved in running a registry. NetNames and its partners will fully define these operational aspects for you by advising you about the following:

- The appropriate gTLD type for your organisation
- Responsibilities for delivering all operational aspects of the gTLD(s) including roles and responsibilities, ensuring compliance with ICANN regulations and knowledge transfer
- Development of a new gTLD implementation plan
- Development of contracts, policies and procedures

#### Deliverables

- Registry-registrar agreements with registry/registrar provider(s) (where needed)
- Service level agreements with registry/registrar(s)
- Development of contracts and policies
- Dispute resolution agreements
- Validation requirements and processes
- Implementation plan and testing
- Definition of accounting and administrative functions
- Customer support plans
- Marketing plans and campaign recommendations

## Step 4

### Define technical aspects

As well as looking at the operational aspects of running a gTLD, your organisation also needs to understand the technical aspects of becoming a registry.

NetNames and its partners will not only define the technical aspects for your organisation, but we can also define the sub-contracted elements, as well as the interaction between systems and all parties, including:

- Shared registration systems
- Whois database
- DNS management
- Billing
- Reporting
- Data backup and escrow systems
- 24/7 network operation
- Systems operations
- Network monitoring system
- DNSSEC (if applicable)

### Deliverables

- Process documentation to define the technical conditions
- Documentation to define all third party operational requirements
- Selection criteria and method of operators (RFP or other selection methods)
- Definition of the role of the registrar
- Finalised Letter of Intent, Memorandum of Understanding and contracts
- Incorporation of the operator's technical solution within the applicant's existing systems
- Verification of existing internal systems which can be used in the new gTLD operation
- DNS stability analysis
- Gap analysis to identify the need for additional technical or systems software
- Review of front-end domain name registration system
- Definition of API requirements for registrars

## Step 5

### Define financial aspects

As ICANN will only grant a new gTLD to organisations that are financially stable, NetNames will help your organisation to define the funds that need to be set aside to not only apply for a new gTLD, but also to run the new gTLD for a period of 10 years.

### Deliverables

- Definition and presentation of the financial aspects of the application including the business and operating plan for the new gTLD
- Definition of registry operating costs
- Identification of internal and external costs

## Step 6

### Business plan and ICANN application

Every new gTLD project needs to be defined in an internal business plan. The business plan then needs to be outlined to ICANN in the gTLD application.

Some of the topics that need to be covered in the business plan (and in the application) include the following:

- How your organisation plans to use the suffix if successful in applying for a new gTLD
  - What names will become reserved names?
  - What names will never be issued?
- How your organisation will operate the registry
- How will a registrar become accredited to the new gTLD under your organisation's management?

During this final stage, NetNames can help with both the business plan and the application.

### Deliverables

- Business plan
- Detailed implementation plan
- Operational plan

## The new gTLDs and the NetNames .Brand Service

NetNames and Group NBT are already talking to more than 100 companies, from SME's to large corporates about potential new gTLD projects. We would be happy to talk to you too. Please get in touch.

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