

## New gTLDs Communications Plan

*This paper is contingent upon board approval of the new gTLD program. No formal communications will be undertaken prior to board approval.*

### PHILOSOPHY

If approved, the launch of new generic top-level domains will fundamentally change the Internet as we know it. Such a profound change will ultimately have implications for every country and, in our highly connected world, for most people.

That demands and deserves a high-impact international communications program. Aimed far beyond ICANN's usual audiences, it will eventually target the general public as well as a series of specific audiences on the premise that a rising tide lifts all boats: broad and simple communications raise basic awareness across the board. Your mother and father and cousin may not need to know the details, but they do need to know that the Internet is changing. Businesses beyond the technical community need to know that a new platform for innovation and potential profit has been created.

This effort – properly carried through – should create *buzz*. We want people not currently engaged to start talking about it; we want to capture their imaginations. It's not just about the new business opportunities being created; it's about the businesses generated down the road by the websites these new domains will enable and the increased benefit of choice to the everyday Internet user. It's not just explaining the practicalities of how a new gTLD will work; it's making people start to think about how they could use this new tool, and being human beings, how they might benefit.

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### GOAL

The principal goal of this plan is to increase the likelihood of success for the new gTLD program and to ensure that new gTLDs are communicated as clearly and comprehensibly as possible – both the opportunities they present and the risks involved in applying for and operating one.

This will be achieved by significantly increasing global awareness of the new gTLD program. The communications program will raise awareness among interested parties and applicants worldwide on the *who, what, when, where and why* of new gTLDs.

A variety of media and marketing tools will be used with the coordinated support of the ICANN community. Our outreach will be based on ICANN's five geographic regions – Africa, Asia/Australia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean and North America. Critical program documentation will be available in the six official United Nations languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

## **KEY MESSAGES**

1. The landscape of the Internet is expanding.
  2. Most organizations with an online presence will be affected in some way; for some, this represents great opportunity.
  3. New gTLDs are a platform for innovation.
  4. They bring risks and rewards, and potential applicants should evaluate the program carefully before deciding whether to proceed.
  5. The New gTLD program was developed in a transparent, inclusive and thorough way.
  6. Strong efforts were made to address the concerns of all interested parties.
  7. Ensuring the security, stability and resiliency of the Internet is paramount. New gTLDs will not affect the stability of the Internet.
  8. Additional safeguards were put in place to enhance property, consumer and other Internet protections.
  9. Internationalized Domain Names make it possible to access the Internet in scripts other than Latin-based characters.
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## **tone AND VISION**

New gTLDs are complex, so it is important that our messages be as simple, direct and compelling as possible in order to gain interest and attention. Avoiding technical jargon is fundamental. We must be technically accurate without being overly technical. But this isn't just a technical change; it is a shift in the way the Internet will be used and we will need to be creative to generate sufficient attention.

A human and engaging tone will make new gTLDs “real” to our targeted audiences as we illustrate how the program will affect them – whether or not they plan to apply.

The tone will be slightly cutting edge to demonstrate the unique nature of the opportunity and the potential for innovation.

Recognizing our role as stewards, not advocates, we will be neutral, presenting all sides of the issue while still promoting the great work done by all who participated in crafting the program. For example, materials that explain the investment opportunity will describe both the risks and the possible rewards.

Our communications will not say, “You should invest in your own TLD.” We are stewards of an important resource that is changing, not advocates of a specific innovation that may not fit everyone. Having said that, though, we intend to adopt a “sportscaster’s approach.” We won’t tell you what team to support, but we love the sport. If approved, new gTLDs will represent a historic change in the Internet. It is appropriate to inspire and nurture natural interest in how new gTLDs will unlock creativity and innovation in the use of domain names. While we will not speak prescriptively, we will build awareness,

be proud of the ICANN community's achievements and cast them in a positive light. For that reason, our communications, while fact-based, will feel upbeat.

The physical brand – a consistent reflection of the program's identity expressed as a logo and memorable slogan – is a key part of making the tone and vision come alive.

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## **THEME**

The overarching theme will be Internet expansion, under the premise that the landscape of the Internet is expanding. New gTLDs are opening up the domain name space and expanding the horizon of the Internet, increasing the potential for innovation. And IDNs are expanding the domain name space by allowing users to access the Internet entirely in their local language characters, making the Internet ever more globally inclusive.

The specific theme, aimed initially at marketing-minded potential applicants (whether they represent businesses, governments, communities, etc.), is that new gTLDs are a platform for innovation; any new pioneering idea could be the next big one – the next Facebook or YouTube. This theme will be expressed as:

- *What will be the next big .thing? You name it!*
  - *New gTLDs - Empowering innovation.*
  - *What follows your dot? Define yourself!*
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## **AUDIENCES**

Initial communications will target the business community, potential applicants and the tech community. This initial audience ranges across the five regions, includes developing countries and will be communicated to with a minimum of the six UN languages. Though end-users are not the primary target of this first phase of communication, they will still start to see that change is coming to the Internet. Later phases will expand the audience to include consumers and end-users as a more primary target. This is because new domains must first be available before end-users can reap the benefits. It is the entities that apply for and implement new gTLDs that will pass on the benefits to the end-user.

Interested parties are defined broadly as governments, large corporations, communities and other organizations. Specifically we will target corporate marketers, advertising agencies, investors, local municipalities, non-profits, religious groups, trade associations, rights holders, trademark attorneys - essentially anyone who should know about the program, how it could affect them, and how new gTLDs will ultimately change the landscape of the Internet. Some will be interested as investors; some to preserve important cultural touchstones; some as defenders of their rights and intellectual property.

Applicants are defined as entities that already plan to apply for a new gTLD.

The tech community, for this purpose, includes registries/registrars, software and web application developers, and manufacturers of routing hardware who need to ensure proper technical preparedness so consumers will be able to reach sites with the new gTLDs.

Materials will be tailored to the interests of each of these groups; specific tools for specific concerns among specific audiences. Critical elements of the program, such as the objection process and new rights protection mechanisms, will be communicated so that those most likely to be affected are informed about these opportunities and informed about procedures for participating in them. Example: a podcast that demonstrates trademark protections would be aimed at trademark attorneys; a podcast on branding would target marketing professionals.

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## Core components, phase one

The New gTLDs Communications Plan has four distinct phases.

**Phase 1: Pre launch**, defined as the four-month campaign period leading up to the official launch of the program signaled by the opening of the application period.

**Phase 2: Launch**, defined as the 60-day period when applications will be accepted.

**Phase 3: Post launch**, defined as the time period once the application period closes until the next round opens.

### Phase 4: TLDs go live/in the root

The plan focuses on **four key communications areas** over the board-mandated communications period:

1. Coordinated campaign incorporating TV, radio, print and online **advertising** elements, customized by region.
  - Initial advertising targets: international business TV, newspapers and websites, Google ads. Develop an energetic, bright, attention-getting teaser campaign – both in video and print form - that piques interest and directs people to the new gTLD website: *What will be the next big .thing? You name it!*. This will create expectations that something big is coming.
2. Top-tier international **press** coverage.
  - Ensure widespread/global press coverage about the program – interviews with strategic outlets and article placement, aimed initially at global and regional TV channels and major business newspapers.
3. Five major **regional launches**/road shows.
  - Regional launch events will be held in each ICANN region. Three countries will be visited per region, with major speeches, press conferences and outreach events held in each.

4. Social and other **online media**.
    - Develop a solid online presence where any of the targeted audiences can get detailed, clear information, supplemented with social media based notifications. Generate social media traffic through an active Facebook page and Twitter feed; engage bloggers. Engaging, friendly podcasts and video blogs, tightly edited for a busy audience, will be used on the website and in social media. These will provide interested parties more information on specific aspects of the program – its business potential, an overview of the application process, the objection process, risks and how to apply.
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## Materials

1. Website
  2. Continually updated FAQs
  3. Factsheets
  4. Glossary of new gTLD and IDN terms
  5. New gTLD timeline
  6. Countdown clock
  7. Educational videos
  8. Video blogs
  9. RFP for advertising agencies
  10. Advertising materials
  11. Social media – Facebook page, Twitter feed, blog
  12. Presentations
    - a. New gTLD basics
    - b. How to apply - overview of the application process
    - c. Business opportunity
  13. Speeches
  14. Proactive story pitches to news organizations.
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## TIMING

Preparation for the launch is underway; the four-month pre-launch plan will be implemented following board approval of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

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## EVALUATION METRICS

1. Website statistics

2. Countries reached in the regional launches
3. Attendees at outreach events
4. Feedback surveys
5. Applications received
6. Social media monitoring
7. Interviews conducted
8. Media clips
9. Post-launch studies.