
ICANN81 | AGM – GNSO: RySG BRG Membership Working Session
Monday, November 11, 2024 – 16:30 to 17:30 TRT

SUE SCHULER:

Hello and welcome to the session of the Brand Registry Group, a fireside chat for future .brand applicants and current .brand registries. My name is Sue and I'm the participation manager for this session.

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CREWS GORE:

Thank you, Sue. Hi everybody, welcome to our Brand Registry Group meeting today. My name is Crews Gore and I'm President of the Brand Registry Group. Today we're going to be taking a different approach in this meeting. We wanted to really open it up for brands, organizations, and consultants that may have questions that they want to ask us but don't feel comfortable asking them in a public forum. So what we've done is we have set up a Slido which is a way to interact where you can ask questions anonymously for us and the panel to ask. We'll have a

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couple poll questions where you're able to also participate and provide your answer.

I just need to get this properly shared first and then we'll be good to go. Okay, I'll try to do it in a different way but that works. All right, so this is the Slido page. You can join by scanning that QR code or going to slido.com and putting in that number and from there we're going to have different questions that pop up. You are able to interact if you have any questions to post into that chat and as poll questions come up you'll have the opportunity to give your answer.

So from there I'm going to pass it over to Mark just to introduce himself and go down to the panelists so you can get to know one of us.

MARK WILSON:

Thanks, Crews. So my name is Mark Wilson. I'm from AXA, the insurance company. I operate the .AXA brand. I manage the global relationship with our trusted registrars and I'm also responsible for brand protection activities. I've been in AXA 26 years now but be responsible for domains for 16. Thank you.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL:

To go on, yeah, Martin Kuechenthal. I'm a co-founder and CEO of LEMARIT, a Global Domain and Registrar located in Germany, mainly European customers. And I have been working in the field of .brand TLDs since the first round. And over the years developed different strategies for our customers and also running registry backend. And I'm

here on behalf of one of our clients, .arco. And I'm on the board of directors of the Brand Registry Group.

NISHA PARKASH:

Hi, I am Nisha Parkash, head of domain management from Sky Group. I am responsible for the domain portfolio for Sky Group across all its licensees as well, so across territory. The .sky registry, DNS and PKI all under my remit. I've been at Sky 12 years, and I started my domain career within a corporate registrar, Mark Monitor, so sort of on both sides of the fence, I have some good knowledge.

COLE QUINN:

And I'm Cole Quinn. I lead the team that looks after Microsoft's corporate domain portfolio. I lead the corporate domain services group that includes DNS management, the domain portfolio itself, as well as the registry of our top eight .brand top level domains, as well as our registrar.

CREWS GORE:

All right, thank you everybody. So to start, let me see if this works. We put together a poll just based off of previous meetings today and getting the interaction from everybody to think about how many TLD applicants will there be in the next round. So as you put in your vote, we can see where everybody's at, but it's just a good icebreaker to open this up and see what everyone's thinking.

How many applicants do you think there will be in the next round? Give it another 15 seconds, but so far 10 votes and looks like between 500 and 1000. So really people think it's going to be less than last time. All right, it's pulling away. All right, then we'll go with that. Oh wait, still going. Yeah, because in the last session, I was thinking that it was going to be over 1500. And I think just, we don't know how the brands are going to react. They're keeping a lot of their cards close to their chests and don't want to say if they're going to be applying or not. Hence why we set up this environment where you're able to ask questions anonymously. But you'll see that we're looking at a little bit like half of the applicants. All right, we'll close it out here. All right, so interesting.

Everyone thinks that, or a lot of people, majority think that less than half of what we had in the last round will be applying in the next upcoming round. So keeping that in mind, we'll hold on to that later. But the first question that someone had posted was that what makes a .brand successful? Do you have targets within your brand that define success? Nisha, do you want to start out by answering that question?

NISHA PARKASH:

So there's definitely no targets. I think personally what I believe makes a .brand successful is a migration away from your .com domain. So if you can get the business to see the value in moving away from your main corporate domain and you literally put it onto a .sky, or like you've made that transition, I feel like that can define success on your registry because we know .com is king. And a lot of people don't like to move

away from .com, and we have successfully migrated from .sky.com to many .sky domains.

CREWS GORE: Anybody else have any ideas about that? Mark?

MARK WILSON: Yes, so the .axa journey was quite interesting in that there were no targets, there are no targets. Its original objective was a just-in-case application. Like many trademarks and brand holders, we're not the sole owner of the .axa exclusive trademark, and we thought it was a worthwhile investment to prepare for the future. We thought it held a lot of opportunity. Since then we've had other things that we've developed that we weren't thinking of at the time, but again they don't get measured per se.

CREWS GORE: Right. And we've seen registries have success with just two domain names in their portfolio, and they're using for security purposes, they may be using those two domains for all internal websites. And you just are not getting that vision in the public sphere, but on the back side they may be using their .brands in different ways. So I know that's a tough one, I was thinking about that before.

NISHA PARKASH: Yeah, I don't think it's about the size though either, like how many you've registered. And I think that's what makes people feel a bit

daunted about maybe having a registry. Sometimes it is literally about that one great domain that is going to be secure. We at Sky have major infrastructure sitting on the .sky registry. It's not seen in the public domain, but it's super secure, it's managing, and it's serving huge infrastructure for streaming services. So it's not really always what you see, and it's not the number either.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL:

And just one addition there. The measure to measure success within the whole industry has been so much, and there's so much about domains under management, and it's hard to change that perspective. And also when you-- I mean, we see that all the time, we have like, overall .brands, we have about 20,000-22,000 domain names registered. Is that good or bad? When you think about that, there's a cloud.microsoft domain, how much traffic is on this domain and what value this has. Yeah, it's probably has a higher value and is a bigger success than maybe 20, 30 or 50,000 TLDs in an open TLD, which you can actually not compare. But I think that to move away from the domain under management perspective is very important to define success.

CREWS GORE:

I absolutely agree. All right. So another question just came through. Is a .brand more secure? Can you cite examples where using your .brand has kept you more secure versus a .com domain?

COLE QUINN:

Cole, do you have any examples? Yeah. So there's a lot of inherent differentiators at the top level, especially for .brands where you own the entire namespace.

And so some of the examples that come to mind that we have done with all of the eight of our TLDs is the HSTS preload list, which we've submitted for all of our TLDs that would force HTTPS traffic across. So if a user accidentally types in HTTP into their browser bar and sends it across the preload list that's embedded into the browser will automatically flip it to HTTPS. So that's a higher level bar of security there.

There's also with regards to SSL cert management, one of the things that we did with .Microsoft in order to lock it down and prevent folks from requesting certificates for any random domain .Microsoft is that with our PKI team, I went in and delegated the entire namespace, the wildcard, the TLD to myself and my team so that any off plan domain that comes across requesting a certificate, I'm able to inspect it and mostly reject the request and explain to them that the .Microsoft namespace is not open for general use, that it's highly guarded and highly governed.

And so anything .Microsoft comes to me and for some additional overhead, except for cloud.microsoft, which goes to the OCDI team and that stands for One Consolidated Domain Initiative and that's the cloud.microsoft team that runs that second level domain and all of the Microsoft 365 services on it. So that's another inherent benefit to

keeping the TLD secure at the apex, which you go up a level and it makes it a much more simple and elegant solution.

CREWS GORE: Those are some great examples. Mark?

MARK WILSON: Yeah, if I understand, I think there's the element about is it more secure than other TLDs? But there's also the fact that by using the .brand, you're able to make other changes within your organization that make the organization more secure. So I think by knowing that you absolutely own every domain on that TLD, you can begin to simplify some of the other security protocols that you use. Some of the rules about network traffic, for example, those things are a lot safer and easier when you've got certain key systems running on .brands.

NISHA PARKASH: And I'll just add to Cole, only my team can register to .Sky, so you can get anybody in a business registering to a .com or a ccTLD and they can just fire it up within their organization. But from a management point of view, nobody could register a .Sky apart from me and Sean, who's sitting opposite me. So we would know what is going in the registry versus what in the business, what people are doing that we can't control. Because it happens, we're in this organization where developers will just go ahead and register their own domain name, fire it up, and we won't find out about it until six months, seven months later. But again, with your registry, you will have specific people, you

should have specific people managing that registry within the organization.

CREWS GORE: Yeah, then it goes to if you have that your TLD set up at your registrar signing an RA, that domain name, if that registrar were to get hijacked, could not be transferred out into another registrar account. So much we do fear that your major domain name is going to get hijacked and taken away. This really prohibits that transfer out. Great.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL: Can I add something?

CREWS GORE: Yeah, go for it.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL: Also, these examples we just heard are really great. And I'm super happy that we have these use cases also to use in discussions with potential applicants for a new, for .brand in the next application window. And I mean, the big difference which people have to learn is that they can make their life so much easier, especially also in the cybersecurity teams to control incoming and outgoing traffic by knowing a .brand is a friendly approach in what way ever. And when the brand name is on the left of a .com or whatever TLD, you can never be sure. You need a lot of measures to make, to understand and to check and to control this traffic coming from these domains, even

though when you have a good domain management and you always have a insecurity left about domain names used.

And we see that in the discussions that the cybersecurity approach and the security approach in general, that is the main driver. And I'm sure that will be the main driver for applications in the future because they are just reasons which cannot be denied. Just great to decipher that.

COLE QUINN:

Yeah, that's a great point. It's like another way of asking the question. It's not so much what I'm doing special to apply security measures, but what's inherent with a .brand is things like the unspoofability of a TLD compared to a second level.

I was in a conversation yesterday with the global-- well, it was Tony and Ben and we were just talking about the global block plus and they had picked up a domain. And I looked at it and it looked like microsoft.com, but it was instead of an M, it was an RN. And with from my vision, it looked like microsoft.com and it was just picked up like that. That's just one example of the thousands of ways that you could spoof a second level domain. So anything under a top level .brand is just unspoofable. So you know that you've got a higher level of security and trust and consumer promise that's available out there because you're not going to have a .RN in microsoft, right? Not with the way things are going here. So I just wanted to say that.

CREWS GORE:

All right. So next question posted was, have you encountered universal acceptance issues with .brand domains and how did you overcome them? So I know from Fox, we use .fox nameservers, so dns.fox is the naming convention we use for our nameservers. And our corporate registrar understands when we use those the .fox domain extension.

But when we go out and acquire a domain name or purchase a different registrar, there have been other registrars out there where, okay, we've acquired the domain name and the business is ready to use it now. So like, all right, get it set up on our Fox DNS. And I'll go ahead and try to update the nameservers to ns1.dns.fox and it'll come back with either an error or it will just automatically put a .com at the end. Network solutions, I don't know why you do that, but those are just some of the UA issues that I found.

Luckily, we do have a lot of contacts within the ICANN community and so we're able to reach out to those registrars and ask them to make those updates. But I know the BRG in the past has sent a letter to ICANN regarding WhatsApp and the universal acceptance of not accepting every TLD in it when you're writing in the chat and recognizing it as an actual domain name or domain name extension. It's recognizing some but not others. And the question is why is it doing that? So, I have from Fox have encountered some UA issues. I don't know if anybody else in the panel has.

NISHA PARKASH:

Yeah, probably only like just email, right? Getting blocked, things like that, but nothing major.

COLE QUINN:

I've run into form validation issues where you enter in an email address or a URL and whatever the gear was on their business rules engine would kick it back and say that it wasn't a valid domain name or email name. And I don't find that .brands were particularly egregious. It was just the new gTLD program in general. And the second part of the questionnaire, how do I overcome them?

At the time, I shared an office with Mark Spence Eric who was on the UAWG. And so I would spin my chair around, and I'd say I need you to look at this. And then he would take a note and be like thanks a lot and then go to the Don and say we got some work to do and get in touch with the folks that were hosting the web app or the site or anything.

So, yes, I did run into some UA issues, sometimes it was .brand but not exclusively, and just going through the process of reporting it but I haven't seen any, any issues recently, like in the last two or three years I could say.

MARK WILSON:

Yeah, I'd agree. I'd agree with both those in the very early days there were a lot of email issues fundamentally setting up email domains was a problem. And I would also say there was a lot of misinformation around that topic and about the scale of the problem. It was even then a fairly small volumes that we were seeing rejections from certain platforms. For the last five or six years, no problem at all. Apart from, like Cole said, there are the old third party websites and forums that still

seem to maintain an old list of validation saying, enter your company email. The don't recognize some .brands, but very few of those would come across now.

COLE QUINN:

I'll add this, you know my memories being jogged here. I will add also that one of the ways that we overcame some of these issues was making use of the public suffix lists and so we made entries for all of our TLDs on the PSL. And that was something that was foreign to me, but Jeff and Frakes is a good friend of mine and he was the keeper of the PSL at the time. So he showed me how to do that and how to make an entry and do a pull request and do it the right way and so that is something that all the main browsers tap into to validate whether an extension is valid or not as well, so that was helpful.

CREWS GORE:

Great. All right, next up we have what have you learned from the past 10 years of using your .brand that you wish you would have known going into the last application round? Martin, you have something?

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL:

I will make a quick answer. It would have been good to know that it would take 10 or 12 years before the next possibility to apply would come. And I think the whole process after the application and also the application phase itself was filled with uncertainty and when a corporate doesn't like one thing then it's uncertainty in processes. And the changes and processes after the application, I think of reveal date

and this, what was it called, the digital archery and all these kind of things and until the first domain was delegated that was for us insights of the ICANN community attending the meetings, talk to ICANN staff and so on.

It's understandable but for corporate it's very hard to understand that, how that is even possible. And actually one problem which occurred is that the responsible people over time, they just changed. They got new roles and the people who started applying were not there when the TLD was finally delegated.

So we had that and then you need to start educate the people inside the corporation to do something and there are for sure a lot of other things but this uncertainty, not to know what happens and that took so long time. I think that is one of the reasons why a couple of TLDs never really became successful because the internal sponsors were just gone.

NISHA PARKASH:

Yeah, I would say, knowing the size of your registry that you want to have basically-- so I wasn't part of the application process when Sky was being applied for, but I joined Sky at the time of delegation, and we had a really small registry. We had like 50 names that we were able to register, but because we didn't have a strategy, we just didn't really think. We thought 50 would be enough. And it took about four years to get the first domain into the registry.

And then when the business started to see that there was this TLD, it became a bit of an accessory. And, I mean, I had graduates that were

like calling me up saying, I told another grad that I could get a .sky, do you think you could give me a .sky domain. And it became this thing where like everybody was trying to get hold of, a .sky domain. And I was like, I've got, I've got a 50 domain registry I can't just hand them out like cookies. So I had to say no to the grads that were-- and then they got really disheartened, like they were just young guys in tech wanting a .sky domain for their next site. And I was like, you can't have one because I just don't have a big enough registry to give you a domain name.

So I would say, knowing how big the registry-- how do you anticipate the registry to look and how many names do you want? Do you want to constantly be registering domains? Do you want to register and delete? Because, of course, if you register and delete, you're creating space every time you delete a domain. So that's fine. A 50 domain registry is fine. If you're going to constantly be deleting, you're never going to reach 50.

But if you are, like Sky have a lot of graduates, I mean, we have an academy, we have a lot of young people coming in, them getting a .sky domain is a big deal. And you want to make sure they're getting the domains they want. So just, you need a bigger registry basically. And now we do, we have a thousand, we can register up to a thousand right now.

CREWS GORE: Yeah. And those numbers are based off of what you have signed up with at your registry service provider. So when you're saying 50 domain registry.

NISHA PARKASH: Yeah, because it's your backend provider, right? So where with Nominet, you would negotiate with Nominet your size, the size of your registry. And it's not to say that you can't go over 50. 50 is not the limit. What it is, is that then you're-- well, I'm sure we're going to get into this later regarding budgets, but you pay for your 50 domain registry, but you can still register, but you're just going to start paying per domain name that you register past that 50. And you don't really want to do that really. So you should just anticipate what you think you should have.

And I just, I would just say, honestly, think about the next 10 years and just go as big as you can. You know, you never know what you want to do with it until you start using it.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL: I actually find this concept very interesting to decide. And I never heard of that before today, actually, when we talked about it, that you need to decide. I think that was extremely hard to do that at the time of the first application round. And I can just recommend, it's a contractual thing to find a contract or to find a registry, which is not binding you to any numbers and that it's favorable also like price wise. That you don't have the big jump. And I saw that in contracts also in the first round that

you have like very low number. And then when you have one more, then it's just extremely expensive suddenly. And of course this really messes up your budget. So I think it's very important for .brand to have a contract and to have a backend, which is easy to go with purely contract wise on the number of domain names, because you really cannot know how much your domain names you really will register in the future.

KAREN DAY:

Yeah. Karen?

KAREN DAY:

Hi, I'm Karen Day for the record with .sas. I just want to say from my experience, we too started out with the bare minimum in 2013, 15 back when I was a young person. But what I have seen is that the backend business model has changed and evolved. And I've actually had my backend come to me to want to redo the business model that's in our contract. And I anticipate with the advent of the RSP pre-approved process, we're going to see when it comes out. And when they go public with what their business models is, I'm expecting it to be completely different than what I've even got now. I think we're going to continue to see that landscape evolve.

So don't feel like my advice would be-- yeah, think as big and as proactive in the future as you can. But if you can't, don't let that be a barrier. If somebody in your business is telling you, okay, we can do this, but I'm scared and I'm nervous and I've actually seen this in play, I

only want to sign a contract for five that's cool. Things change all the time. Contracts are negotiable.

NISHA PARKASH:

Yeah. And I just want to add to that question. Sorry, because it's not just about the numbers. You know, a company like Sky is a media company. We collaborate with a lot of third parties. We're running competitions, we're running game experiences. You need to know that you're going into this, not actually trying to put another company's trademark into your registry without approval. So say you're a business that works a lot with third parties. You wouldn't be able to just say, okay, say me and Cole work together. I couldn't just register Microsoft.Sky. I would have to seek permissions.

And the other thing is, is knowing that sometimes generic words also require some sort of approval potentially. So I'm talking about whether I wanted to register Portugal.Sky, I might have to speak to the Portuguese government to get that approved. So there's things like that, that you need to be aware of. So depending, you can go, okay, yeah, I'm going to have this registry and I own it, but actually there are still restrictions and you need to be aware of that.

COLE QUINN:

I think that example of countries in your second level, if I recall correctly, several years back, there was a confusability avoid on clause that you could not use certain two character second level names. So for instance us.microsoft. There are some ccTLDs that would allow it and some that

wouldn't. And so one of the things that you would need to do is check in in advance before you start registering problematic two character second level domains, even within your .brand.

And to your example of putting another trademark in your domain. I had an embarrassing situation when I, one of the things that I was doing as an experiment with .Microsoft and the other TLDs, I wanted to see what the world, what the internet was typing in. Because I was curious to know what expectation was out there about what domains people thought that Microsoft should have.

So I got an NXD report back from my registry service provider, it was Verisign at the time, and they would give me monthly reports for all my TLDs under their management. And I would see what domain names were out there and how many hits we're getting. And so I thought it would be interesting to just register those and then set up redirects and redirect everything to Microsoft.com and just see if it moves the SEO needle at all. And it was kind of a lame experiment, but then I took it a step further and tried to do some automation there.

So I would get an input of the report and then generate some automation to register the domain and hook into the registrar's API and voila, I would just auto register these domains. Until I got a call from Google saying, "Why did you just register gmail.hotmail?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. That was an experiment gone wrong." And he said, "You will take care of that, right?" I said, "Yes, Andy." So I turned that off, the experiment was over, and it was good lessons learned. And that's one for Deloitte and the Trademark Clearinghouse.

NISHA PARKASH:

Yeah, I was just about to say that. If you're working with a front end registrar, they should be making you aware of this anyway. We had an instance a couple of months ago where we were putting in generic words to .sky, it got pulled up on the TMCH, and then I had to make a decision whether I wanted that in the registry or not. And it was just easier to not have it in the registry, despite it being a generic word. But to the business, I'm trying to explain to them, well, if somebody had sky in their domain name, we would challenge it. So it's just the same thing.

A lot of the time, your stakeholders don't think that. I mean, coming from a generic place, we're a generic brand, believe it or not, people forget we're a generic brand, and actually challenge me when I stop a generic word going into the registry. And I'm like, "You do realize we are Sky." And then they're like, "Oh, yeah." Now I think about it, it makes sense. So I was like, we would challenge sky. But the point of this is, is that your front end registrar should be advising you. And that's why it's important that you work with the right registrars.

MARK WILSON:

If I can just add on that one about the going back to what I've learned is something initially just reminded me of talking about front end registrars. I'd say one of my biggest learnings was recognizing the difference. It may sound obvious, but you are contracting directly with ICANN. You have lots of legal agreements that you have to follow and you have to monitor and you've got to make sure you're meeting those requirements.

And I'll be honest, I think we underestimated just how much of that there was and how involved it could be. I think there's a lot more help now. I think even things like the new applicant guidebook, when it comes out, it's going to make people a lot more aware of those things. But you are still operating at a more senior level with ICANN than if you are just working through a third party registrar.

CREWS GORE:

All right, great. All right, now that we're a little bit halfway through, I want to put up the next poll that we've put together is, have you thought about applying in the next round?

So I'll give everybody a little bit of time to provide their answers. Because this is always interesting. It can be generic. It could be for a .brand, but just getting an understanding here, how many of us are actually thinking about applying? So that's good. Overwhelmingly, we're all thinking about applying in the next round. And it goes into the next question that I had pulled up here is, after 10 years of operating your .brand, what suggestions do you have for ICANN to improve policies for .brands?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

[inaudible 00:36:26].

CREWS GORE:

Correct.

NISHA PARKASH: Policy, not policy related, but I will just say terms and conditions. Payments, I mean, if anyone's come across this. Organizations like myself, I mean, Crews, Cole we've got a payment system. And supposedly ICANN doesn't like to sign these T's and C's. So please change that.

CREWS GORE: Maybe we can take this question about what things brands may be looking for from ICANN or the ICANN community when the next round, for the next upcoming round.

I was thinking about time predictability. Do we actually think that April 2026 is when the application is going to open up? Or is there this fear that it's going to keep getting pushed back, pushed back, pushed back to the point where brands are having to start budgeting a year in advance to make sure they have the budget and strategy ready to go for that application window, which is only really going to be four months from December to April. You're going to get the applicant guidebook. You're going to get the registry service provider approved list and the RAA to really review all of these things in four months, which in corporate can be really quick. And then be ready to go to apply in April. Is there anything else that-- no, should we go to the next question?

COLE QUINN: Well, I'll just say just to not leave that one hanging. When I was on the board of directors and chairing the Brand Registry Group, I sent a letter to ICANN asking them to consider having a carve out for .brand so that

we could fast track and just delegate some .brand TLDs in advance of having everything ready for the next round. Citing the no to low risk factor and the business use cases that were at the ready and the low contention factor, and it was rejected. So that was a suggestion that we had a few years ago. And so now we're just patiently waiting in the line, along with everyone else. Jeff, I saw you came up.

JEFF NEUMAN:

Yeah. Thanks, Jeff Neuman. I'm not, I used to be a member of the Brand Registry Group, but now I'm on my own. So one of the things I was going to say is it's kind of a unique situation this time around. This is going to the question of whether I think it'll start in April 2025. Last time around, we had very strong opposition from a lot of groups to even starting the round and that in and of itself caused a lot of the delays. We're fortunate enough at this point, and I'll knock on this wood that there's no one really opposing it going forward, which means that if it's delayed, it's because of ICANN itself, not because of the pressure it's getting from others.

So the, my answer is, I think it can happen in October 2025. I think we're all going to need to do some work to make sure it happens, but the work that we need to do is just to finish those last implementation details, as opposed to fighting against those that don't want to see the round happen. Which I think is a better position than we were in between 2008 and 2012.

One of the things that I've been trying to make clear in the implementation team is that they keep adding new processes to

happen between, not when you first apply, but after the application is submitted. They've now added a whole bunch of things. So do I think they can open the window in April 2025? Yeah. Do I think they're going to get anywhere through the application review process and evaluation within a year or even two? I don't know. And that's as big of a problem. Or you can ask, is it more of a problem to start later and have a shorter time to evaluate or start earlier and have this really long evaluation process before it can be used? I think both of those are big problems.

ICANN understand the problem of starting too late. They don't understand the problem, which, Martin, I think you absolutely made this point that in the last round, by the time that the brands got their TLDs, they had changed over different chief marketing officers, sometimes twice, two or three times. Or whoever their executive sponsor was has changed.

So I think that I would like the BRG's help in making sure we get the lifecycle of the evaluation process as soon as possible. Because if we all start talking to brands or your own brands, and you tell them, well, yeah, it's going to open April 2025, but we think it's going to take two and a half, three years to evaluate, it's dead in the water.

So I think right now, we've done everything we can to make sure it starts April 2025. I think you guys are all needed to help us ensure that we can then have a smooth process so we can get TLDs up as soon as possible so that the brands and the sponsors within the brands can actually want to apply.

CREWS GORE: Yeah, and so evaluation would be then between the application and then delegation.

JEFF NEUMAN: Application to delegation. Right now, it's with all these new things that they've put in there, including a choice of an alternate string and different decisions about when objections can start or which objections have to go first before other types of objections. It's crazy, and a bunch of us have been asking ICANN to give us the application lifecycle, like a diagram or something, so we can all understand what ICANN's thinking is from the day it gets the application to the day the TLD is delegated.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL: Do you mean 2025 or 2026?

JEFF NEUMAN: Sorry, 2026. Sorry. You're right. My misstatement. Wishful thinking. No, 2026. But you might not see a TLD that gets applied for in 2026. You might not see it delegated. Right now, honestly, I think 2028, 2029 at the earliest, like the first one, if the processes are.

CREWS GORE: Yeah, what did it look like last time in 2012?

JEFF NEUMAN: So last time, the primary reason it was three years were two. Number one was the whole changing of the contracts for everyone. But number two was how long it took to negotiate a specific brand amendment.

KAREN DAY: I meant, well, the spec 13 amendment came in. Yes, after the application, but--

JEFF NEUMAN: No, it wasn't finalized. The application was submitted in by--

KAREN DAY: April 2012, right?

JEFF NEUMAN: Right. Or I think it was moved, right?

KAREN DAY: It was April. Believe me.

JEFF NEUMAN: It's supposed to be April, but it got moved because of the security breach. But yes, by the time the brand amendment was in place, it wasn't until 2015 that the brands were signing their 1st amendments. So, brands weren't even putting in to be delegated until after that amendment was finalized and able to be signed. This time around.

We're not going to have that. So, if you discount that-- For the gTLDs that were done first, they were up in the root within about a year and that was because body came in and changed all the contracts. If that hadn't happened, I think the first ones could have been delegated probably within 9 months. Yeah, what the brands had the last time was, it was affected by external conditions that, again, it still took 3 years, but that was that part's been solved.

CREWS GORE:

I'm going to go to the next question. What is the most significant advantage of using .brand domains instead of the legacy gTLDs in service for customer security? Any other points?

Let me touch on this a little bit, but if you want to answer this before we get to the next one

NISHA PARKASH:

I mean, the obvious one for a business in Europe was GDPR. So, ultimately you can't really look up the ownership and authentication of a domain name as easily now because they're redacted information. Once people start to understand that a business like Sky owns .sky, literally the .sky part within the URL tells the customer it's Sky. Because it's only us that can register that.

So, that's really been helpful for us in Europe. I think I mentioned it earlier, being able to fire up a domain name, delete it. You can bespoke a website to a customer for a short period of time, .com, minimum one year, and you can't get rid of it.

The other thing is, if you register, I have found in terms of managing a domain portfolio of over 10,000 names for Sky. If I register a string to .com for a temporary campaign, and I then delete that domain because I don't want to pay for that renewal cost, I find domain squatters will start registering every single string to everything I haven't registered. And we're talking doing a short-term campaign for six weeks. I register a .com and all of a sudden that exact string has now fired up in 10 ccTLDs. You protect yourself a little bit by using your .sky registry, because I feel like you're less of a threat then. I think we've become less of a threat.

I've managed over 10 years to let 7,000 domain names lapse within my normal domain portfolio. And I think having the .sky registry has really helped on managing domain infringements really, because we're less of a threat now. We don't care as much about having the .com. We've been in instances where we've fired up a product. Sky being a generic word, and generally our second word within a domain string is also generic. So we're talking sports, movies, cinema, glass, these are all generic words. Domains in that space have long gone. People have been registering these in 1998. So we're firing up a product and I'm now having to pay £250,000 for a domain name because we want an exact match to the .com. We don't do it anymore. We don't need to do it anymore. We can potentially just go to .sky now.

I'll give you an example. We did fire up a product. The person basically put £250,000 on the value of that name thinking this product and they're going to want this .com. I then said-- I basically said 24 hours except £150,000. He did not back down and he was adamant that he

wanted us to pay £250,000. I gave him 24 hours. He basically said no, so we fired up to a completely different domain. Then he came back to me and said, I could have it for £100,000. I was like, “Well, I don't want it anymore.” I said, “I'll have it if it's £50,000.” and we never bought the name. So I went back down, I dropped it again to £50,000. We'd fired up and we'd launched the product and it was his loss. He could have taken £150,000 and then he ended up coming back and saying, “Hey, I have £100,000.”

So basically, what I'm saying is you have a lot of freedom with a registry.

CREWS GORE:

Thanks Nisha. Kroopa, you wanted to?

KROOPA SHAH:

Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Crews. So I am not a brand owner. So I'm speaking as a services provider here, but we get asked that question a lot. Why should we apply for a .brand? Brands come to us as well. I think there's three benefits or advantages of using the .brand. One of them is security, but then you have branding. So your brand is already trusted. So leverage that trust and you're leveraging that trust online by using your own brand TLD. That's one.

The second point I think is what Nisha outlined very well, the examples that you provided. So I think that's fine. The second main point is brand protection. So specifically, again, you cannot control the usage of your brand in hundreds of TLDs. But when you have a .brand, you can control the usage of domains within your own .brand TLD. And again,

examples that you highlighted. And then of course, third one is security. So I think there's three main points here on why you should apply for a .brand, branding, brand protection, and security. Thanks.

CREWS GORE:

Perfect. All right. I'm going to jump to the next question, which I think this came in after, Cole, that you were talking. Do .brands have to adhere to a UDRP? Could a third party file UDRP against a . brand domain name?

COLE QUINN:

Yes.

CREWS GORE:

Has there been an instance of that? Almost.

COLE QUINN:

Yeah. So if I was not available and Andy Abrams did not know who the domain contact was and if he was new in his job and if it was vended out to a supplier that had no clue and they just were like ceasing and desisting as a bodily function, then they could have filed a UDRP against me if it came to that.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

Well, I think it's just a little bit of food for thought because the definition of a .brand is that it's limited to the registrants, right? The registrant is

limited to the brand. It's limited to the licensees of the trademark and affiliates, right? If a third party files a UDRP, how do they fall within those guidelines? That's a question I don't think we've ever approached. I thought about it 12, 13 years ago. I even asked the question and people kind of laughed at me. But it's possible, very possible, especially when we go into the second round and we have a lot more. Okay. How does UDRP now fit into the whole .brand equation?

CREWS GORE:

Brian, did you want to? Okay. Brian and then we'll--

BRIAN BECKHAM:

Sorry. I was Brian Beckham from WIPO. We created the UDRP and we run the UDRP. I was going to say something very similar to Michael. Even if that were to occur, I mean, obviously there's, I think a lot of people in the community. The dot brand spec 13 would not allow that to be in the case of Google to be transferred over to Google. Otherwise you would be in violation of your agreement with ICANN [inaudible 00:52:15] in reality.

CREWS GORE:

All right. Susan Payne raised her hand. Susan.

SUSAN PAYNE:

Yeah. Although Brian's pretty much covered it. I was going to say when there's a normal UDRP, the usual remedy, assuming one wins is

transfer. But there is also a remedy for the domain name to be canceled. And that would be the appropriate remedy for a .brand if this situation ever arose. I think if such a situation arose and the kind of example Cole gave is a perfect one, it's far more likely that at some point you probably would have that kind of conversation and negotiation and remove the domain if it was an appropriate one to remove rather than actually fighting a UDRP, but you never know.

JEFF NEUMAN:

Yeah. I mean, the simple answer to that question is yes. And what you should be advising brands is just don't be stupid. Don't put competitors' names in your registry. What Cole did was an accident, right? Even if there was a UDRP, it'd be a lack of bad faith. But don't intentionally go, I'm going to try to get traffic and I'm going to put all my competitors in there. But the technical answer is yes, the UDRP does apply and they have to abide by it. And yes, the cancellation would be the remedy.

There are certain TLDs that UDRPs or forums, certain providers where you have to not only-- you could probably have a policy which says that the only way a transfer could occur is if they also meet the requirements. So it's kind of like a restricted TLD in that way. So if you could file like a .bank, you can file a UDRP against the .bank, but you can't get the name transferred to you unless you meet all of the requirements of a .bank.

CREWS GORE: Okay, great. All right. Next question. What do you think about cost effectiveness through the last 10 years of operation for your .brand?

NISHA PARKASH: It's quite a strange question. I mean, it's like, how can you measure it really? But ultimately it's things I've touched on before. I feel like it gives us a protection against every other ccTLD and TLD. And I think you can't beat that type of cost effectiveness because like I said, I didn't go out and buy a £250,000 domain name.

And then the other thing is, how big is the infrastructure? So you're looking at like your limiting risk. I mean, we've all been in a situation, I definitely have at Sky in the 12 years I've been there, where I get a call at three in the morning and some server has stopped talking to the domain name and the entire service is cut out. I feel like there is that level of, you've got a lack of risk in your registry. So again, how can you measure it? Like I said, we've put massive infrastructure in the dot Sky registry and it's been the most secure place for the last over a decade.

MARK WILSON: If I can just add to that cost effectiveness, I'd say ROI. I mean, return on investment. Absolutely. IT generally has some very large, scary numbers in large organizations. Using a .brand to simplify some of those networks, remove some of those risks, very quickly add up to give you the value and the return for the application fee and the operating costs.

CREWS GORE: All right. So next question came in. It isn't easy to persuade to apply for a .brand in the next round to executives. Do you have any advice? You guys have any advice?

NISHA PARKASH: The only thing I'll say here is it's really tough if your brand isn't a generic dictionary word, because if you are an actual trademark, like Microsoft, for example, just say you hadn't applied for it. It's really unlikely that anyone else is going to be able to get that. So it's really hard to persuade exec where the word isn't generic. And that's what I think. I think if you are a generic brand and you're a generic word, you need to put it out there that anybody could go out and read and acquire this.

A good example is the Amazon. And I talked about it earlier with you guys like .now launched and we have now TV and .now launched Amazon own it. It's an open TLD. If we owned it as a brand, it would be a different story of course, because it'd be a spec 13 clothes and we would use it for now TV for more than likely Amazon got it over us. And then I had to sit there and think, I really want stream and streaming .now, because that's what we do in our TV. And we don't have a trademark for stream and streaming .now. So if you are a generic brand, that's the angle. If you're not, it's a little bit harder, I think.

CREWS GORE: Martin?

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL: I think one of the most important steps is to find an executive sponsor for the brand application. I mean, it maybe comes from the business, from the teams somewhere, but the it's a significant investment. And nobody really understands that in the organization.

So my experience from the first round is as high on the hierarchy, it's decided and sponsored by the easier it's also to get the budget for this investment. And it's also very hard when you when you're somewhere in the organization and say, yeah, that's 500,000 plus whatever, yeah, this cost me, I don't have the budget, I don't even ask for it. I think the most important step is to advocate for the application to get people to the table, and to find somebody with a decision power and the budget to support that. And I think that's a key. Otherwise, I think it's very hard to get through. And that's what I would recommend.

COLE QUINN: Yeah, I was just looking at the way that was phrased persuading executives, it's like selling something to somebody. And I was just talking to somebody today about how nobody really wants to be sold anything, but they love to buy things. And so if you would approach this, not as, hey, I have this idea for a tool that I want to use, I want you to buy it. But if you would look at it more in terms of being more in tune with the problems and challenges of the business, that this could be a solution for. And then you're speaking the language of the executives, because you're in the problem solving business, instead of a tool salesman business.

And so if you adapt that kind of mindset, and then you would build the relationships with some of your champions and stakeholders and advocates and executives at different levels of the organization, then you have the depth and the breadth, and then you've got a good team of people that are getting it, that would make your job easier.

And then the other piece of advice is just be mindful of your timing. And we've talked about that a bit. Because you can be hyping up the executive, but it's not time to bite yet, not time to pull the trigger. Or you could be hyping up the executive that's on their way out. And so you get the go signal, but then there's nowhere to go for longer than you anticipated.

CREWS GORE:

All right. And then quickly, just the last thing, all these details seem really overwhelming. Can I contact the BRG for more information?

Absolutely. The BRG is here for current .brand owners or future .brand applicants. So you can always feel free to reach out to us and join the BRG to learn more and keep up with the process of ICANN in the next round.

From that, I think we're out of time, but thank you all for coming and attending today, and hope you have a great rest of the week.

SUE SCHULER:

Thank you. We can end the recording. For those that are BRG members, we're going to take a quick photo.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]