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ABU DHABI – ICANN GDD: Update on ICANN Domain Name Registrant Work
Wednesday, November 1, 2017 – 14:00 to 15:00 GST
ICANN60 | Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: This is the ICANN60 ICANN GDD Update on ICANN Domain Name Registrant Work on the 1st of November, 2017, from 14:00 to 15:00, in Capital Suite 07. [AUDIO BREAK]

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Good afternoon, everyone. We will get started momentarily. For those participating online as well, thank you for joining. Today's session will give an update on some of ICANN's work on Domain Name Registrants. We are going to start with some background and an overview of the various programs and services ICANN is performing for registrants.

Then, we'll go through a couple of examples of some of the recent work we're doing, and then we will be opening it up for questions and comments and suggestions because we want to get as much feedback as we can. So, without further ado, to introduce the session, we have Trang Nguyen, Vice President of GDD Strategic Programs with us here.

TRANG NGUYEN: Thanks, Brian. And I'm sorry, we are experiencing some issues with uploading the presentation. I see it's up there now. Terrific. Thanks, Brian, and welcome everyone. Thanks for attending the session. During this session you will hear about the current work that we're doing in support of registrants, but it's important to remember that this work builds on what ICANN organization has been doing for many years, which is to assist registrants when they come to us with questions about their domain names.

So, when registrants contact us for help, we answer their questions, we direct them to where they can get resolution for their inquiries, and based on the inquiries that we receive, we also publish materials such as frequently asked questions or videos about those issues so that others with similar problems can have a resource to refer to. In fact, the work that we're going to be sharing with you today is not new work. It's sort of a next step in what we've been doing for many years.

I guess, the one thing that you could consider new is a more focused coordination of this activity under what we call Registrant Program. Under that new Registrant Program label, what we've been doing more recently is we've been looking at data, because we do have data from all of the inquiries that we receive from registrants. So, we're looking at the data to see

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what are the issues that are impacting registrants the most right now, and we work on either updating or creating new content to help educate registrants about those issues.

That's sort of the work that we'll be sharing with you today. That is our current area of focus as it relates to registrant support. We would love to hear input and suggestions from the community, not just as it relates to this work, the education piece of work, but also on what additional work should ICANN Org take on in support of registrants. So, we'd love to get feedback from you on that as well. I'll turn it over to Brian and the rest of the team to go through the presentation. Thank you.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Thank you, Trang, for that introduction. As Trang mentioned, ICANN has been of course providing services to registrants for a long time through various channels such as its Global Support Center, Compliance, PTI, and others. With us today to help get into the work of ICANN's Global Support Center in a bit more detail is Michaela Quinzy who is the Senior Director of the Global Support Center. Michaela, the floor is yours.

MICHAELA QUINZY: Thank you, Brian. Michaela Quinzy, ICANN Org. I think many of you are familiar already with the ICANN Global Support Center.

Essentially, what we do is we're staffed in the three ICANN Hub offices, Singapore, Istanbul, and Los Angeles, and we provide 5x24 hour support, largely to contracted parties but also to registrants and end users of the internet that somehow find their way to ICANN. We're providing support via phone, email and the various portals in the six UN languages. So, involved in that, we're responding to and resolving inquiries, and then following up with those inquiries with a customer satisfaction survey, and then reporting our results out in monthly metrics and KPIs.

Next slide, please. So I won't spend a lot of time on this slide. It is the history of the ICANN Global Support Center starting back in 2012 with the CSC. In June of 2015, we launched what we call now the Global Support Center, and at that time we implemented a contact center platform that allowed us to field phone calls and use routing to get inquiries to an available in any of the Hub offices. That's when we consolidated all of the inquiries that we're getting from registrants into one group.

As Trang mentioned, we've historically provided this level of support to registrants; however, they were very crafty about getting support at the time and they would find their way into the organization and get responses, but we weren't able to gain intelligence about why they were contacting us, nor could we ensure that we were responding in a uniform way. Once we

implemented the Global Support Center, we were able to do so. The information that we've gathered since June of 2015 has informed the Registrant Program.

Next slide, please. So, this slide is just a bit of history about the volume of contacts that we're receiving from registrants over the time. So you'll see that in June of 2015 and the six months preceding that, the number was significantly lower than the following months. That's largely because we launched the program in the middle of that period and so the logging was minimal and we ramped up over time. You'll see the trend is somewhat upward over the past years. The chart is reporting in six month increments.

We'll see some variability in the volumes that we've received in different months. Some of it is based on, as I said, awareness. Then there's some seasonality around holidays, so months with holidays, and then activities going on in the domain name space also impact the volume. So, we saw some incremental spikes throughout the time; for example, we had a spike in inquiries regarding privacy proxy in the second half of 2015. Then, recently, we don't understand exactly what the driver is, but we saw a spike in reports of fraud and content related inquiries in January of 2017.

I also have a little chart there that shown the breakdown of where the inquiries are coming in, so basically, 60% of the inquiries are coming in to the LA office and the remaining 40% are divided up between Singapore supporting APAC and Istanbul supporting EMEA.

So I'll talk a little bit about some observations and the drivers for contacts. I don't think there are any surprises here, but I'll go through the information anyway. So, over 80% of our total volume is from domain name registrants and it's regarding their domains. Some people have asked me how they find their way to us, and we find that they've either been referred by their registrar or reseller in some instances, particularly when it's WHOIS related. Some of the information in the WHOIS notices mentions ICANN and our contact information, so that results in them contacting us. Some are finding us via internet search, and of course, using the information on icann.org on our Contact Us pages.

Generally, when we are fielding these inquiries, we're able to have a conversation with the registrant, educate and inform them, and then close out the inquiry. Generally, those answers fall into helping them identify their registrar, providing an explanation about how the process that they're inquiring about goes, helping them navigate information that already exists on

icann.org. We spend a lot of time, surprisingly, not so surprisingly, explaining who we are and what our role is, and also helping them know when or how to file a compliance complaint.

Recently, we've seen increases in volume around fraud and content abuse and phishing, as I mentioned earlier, renewals and transfer issues, and rights protection and ownership abuse. Those specific categories have trended month over month since we began tracking. We've seen decreases in volume around new gTLD inquiries and also domain management inquiries.

Also, about 90% of our inquiries are people who find their way to ICANN one time, so it's one instance in time; we answer their questions, close out the case, and we never hear for them again. The other 11% are folks who will contact us repeatedly, and generally, those are folks who are contacting us about fraud and abuse.

I mentioned that we issue a survey upon close of cases. The survey is eight questions, a five point scale ranging from completely not satisfied to extremely satisfied, and we seem to be trending lately at about a 3.8 on a scale of 5 on the overall satisfaction rating question. The other questions are about responsiveness, knowledge of the agent. Those questions tend to trend a lot further, but the overall sat number is lower, largely

because we don't ultimately resolve the case. The other downside there is that we don't have data on the ultimate resolution of their cases as well.

So, again, I kind of skipped over it, but I also show the top drivers. I don't think there are any surprises here. The vast majority are from registrants around their domain issues, transfers, renewals, they can't log in, they don't know who their registrar is, they don't know how to get resolution on their issues. We use a knowledge base to capture how to respond to those different inquiries and we attach those knowledge articles to cases before we close them, and that information helps us understand why and to what degree folks are contacting us, and it also gives us some insight into how useful our information is that we're providing.

Next slide, please. Do you have a question?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: That's interesting data. Do you have any insight as to how many registrants would contact ICANN first before they go anywhere else, before they even contact their registrar?

MICHAELA QUINZY: I don't have real solid information. We do find that a number of registrants don't know who their registrar is or what a registrar is, so there are quite a significant number that we are the first contact for. I don't have a way to track actual numbers, but I would bet that it's more than half.

JIM PRENDERGAST: Thanks, Jim Prendergast. Just before we leave this slide; when you say new gTLD inquiries, is that people looking to apply for a new gTLD? What does that actually mean?

MICHAELA QUINZY: Generally, yes. They either want a new gTLD or they want to register a domain under a new gTLD.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Okay. Thank you, Michaela. Any more questions for Michaela? We can come back at the end of the session as well if there's anything specific for her about the Global Support.

So, in addition to working with the GSC, in terms of building our educational content, we also work closely with our contractual compliance colleagues to better understand issues that registrants may be facing. Here at this slide, you can see that in working with them, we look at complaint volume and type, and

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discuss in further detail what they see as particular pain points for registrants recognizing, of course, that not all complaints come from registrants to compliance.

More specifically, the top five registrant related complaint types that compliance has identified for us are around transfers, domain renewal, domain deletion, the Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy, or the UDRP, and issues related to WHOIS and accuracy. So, there's really some great data there, and we would like to point you to icann.org to learn more. Compliance has a lot of great data up there and reports on their contacts and their tickets that they're receiving, so please go to icann.org to the Compliance section for more information on that.

So, next in our presentation, we're going to focus on some specific examples of the types of educational materials that we've been developing more recently and that we're going to continue to develop moving forward for registrants. So actually, in the past few months, we've focused on two policies, the WDRP or the WHOIS Data Reminder Policy and the Transfer Policy.

Around those two topics, in regards to the WDRP, it's important for registrants to keep their contact information up to date for a number of reasons because they're going to receive notifications from their registrars about important things they need to do in

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regards to managing their domain name. And in terms of the transfer policy, it's somewhat complex, and it's been updated in 2016, so we wanted to provide some more easy to understand information about transfers.

The types of educational materials that we have been developing are written for registrants, so they're trying to make sometimes complex policies and procedures a bit easier to understand. So we've been introducing new webpages and content on icann.org, updating content that was previously there, and sometimes creating new content and pages. We have begun a regular blog series and are also producing complementary educational materials written for registrants, specifically, we have a series that we've started called "Do you have a domain name? Here's what you need to know."

So, we're trying to put there short, concise, but comprehensive information for registrants, which we also translate to try and reach as many people as we can. And we update FAQs. We're going to create infographics and other things that we think are going to be useful for registrants moving forward as it pertains to ICANN's policies and the way they need to manage their domain names.

Another initiative we've undertaken is developing tool kits for registrars; the concept here is to take the content we're

developing for registrants on icann.org and packaging it in such a way that we can give it to registrars for them to use for their customers in whatever way they want, whether that's for their customer service teams, for FAQs, for regular website content. We have discussed with some registrars this concept and we hope to hear and get feedback about how we can make this as useful as possible for registrants, for the customers of these registrars.

Just a couple of quick examples. You can find all this content at icann.org/registrants. We try and compile everything there. We have the most recent blogs that we're publishing, other articles or information being published on icann.org from other parts of the organization as well that might be useful for registrants, and have categorized in a menu different aspects of domain name management, registrant rights and responsibilities, information about the domain name industry for registrants there, so we certainly invite everybody to disseminate this information out to registrant communities and individuals, and whoever else you think might find this type of information useful.

Again, these toolkits. The objective of the toolkits will be to help registrars in their interactions with their customers by providing them with relevant content written specifically for registrants. The content will be about ICANN policies and other topics

relevant to registrants. We hope the registrars can use the material as website content, online resources, customer service Q&A, FAQs and however else they might find it useful.

A quick example of what we think a toolkit around the WDRP might look like is here on the slide and it's language that talks about what ICANN is and ICANN's role. Again, this is written for registrants who often times might know nothing about ICANN, about the policy, in particular, what registrants should know about the policy. There are a few things that they should really take away and keep at the front of their mind as a domain name manager.

So in this case, the WDRP, this is an annual reminder to keep WHOIS data up to date that every registrant should receive. It may sound elementary but just making sure your information is up to date ensures that you will receive this notification from your registrar and that you will follow up on it. Some registrants, unless they're an insider or an experienced domain name manager and registrant, they often times don't know these things. Again, a toolkit would also include resources that we've developed, that ICANN has already publicly available and then the registrars can use this content as they see fit.

In summary, it's a bit of a cyclical way we work in terms of registrants. We have Global Support and our Compliance team

and others that receive contacts directly from registrants with inquiries and questions and complaints; we in turn, are beginning to use this data, this information internally and creating educational materials based on what we find to be the biggest issues for registrants and this material is written to better inform registrants of their rights and obligations and how to manage their domain names. In turn, then, we hope to work with our contracted parties to adopt content into toolkits that they can use to serve their customers, their registrants.

How can you help? Please, we want everyone to provide input and feedback on what you are seeing as the biggest issues for registrants. There's millions and millions of registrants, different types of registrants, registering domain names from different types of registrars around the world, and we want to be as helpful to registrants as possible navigating this complex domain name system. We will also ask you for your help in disseminating the content that is available on icann.org in whatever way you can through your communities, constituencies etc.

So, unless Trang and Michaela have anything to follow up on, we can open the floor for comments and questions. Also, anybody participating online as well, if you can send questions through the chat.

Thank you, Alex.

ALEX: Alex [inaudible]. Thanks, Brian, for this information. I think it's great what you guys start doing and bringing the idea that we as a community should serve and help registrants a bit better to the discussion. I think even though everyone thinks we would be working in the best benefit of the registrant, I think it's a thought that has gotten lost over the last couple of years, and I'm saying that from the experience of someone who had to implement a couple of policies that were coming down on registrars over the last couple of years.

The last one I had to do was the IRTPC where we introduced the change of registrant procedure, and I understand what you're doing right now with those educational materials is basically picking up the mess that others have created, and trying to make sense and explain that to registrants.

When we talk about what you could do more than that, I think that's a great start, but I would recommend that you move up along the line of where this mess is being created, and I think what's really missing in the community overall, but also within ICANN, is someone who is looking at policies in implementation phases, or even when it's contemplated from a registrant

perspective and trying to understand if we do this what does that mean? How does that change the experience of a registrant owning a domain name?

I would honestly say that ICANN needs a user experience expert and that could be a role you guys could fill, someone who is actually looking at policy and understanding how that is detrimental to the actual registrant's experience, because a lot of the things that we have introduced in isolation, registrant verification with the WHOIS Accuracy program or IRTPC and the transfer policy between registrars; looked at that in isolation, it may all still make sense to some extent, but if you bring it together and just include all these processes, the experience of owning a domain name has become worse and worse and is almost impossible to understand, and you get those 20,000 registrant interactions in your call center that's just because of that.

So going up that chain and trying to give input early on so that policies that are coming out of a PDP and are now getting implemented, get implemented in a way that's actually conceivable and implementable and does not screw up the entire experience. I think that's something where you could help and have some impact in your further work and how you develop your role within ICANN.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Yeah, Jim.

JIM PRENDERGAST: Hi, Jim Prendergast. Just to pick up on what you were saying, maybe even something like a registrant impact assessment for any policy that's going to be implemented so that as you say, you get a view on what it looks like from the user end. I like to try to explain things in terms of how well my parents experience this, and if you look at it through that lens, you may think about policy as slightly different. No knock against my parents, in case they're listening.

TRANG NGUYEN: Thanks, Alex and Jim, for that feedback. And yeah, I think there's a few things that we can potentially do there. I like the recommendations about the impact assessment and also involvement earlier in the policy implementation process in terms of looking at the implementation through the lens of the registrants.

I think with regards to the existing policies, there's also an opportunity for us to take a look at them and potentially consider how to evolve those policies to serve as intended

purposes through the reviews of those policies. I think a lot of those, like the WHOIS accuracy specification in the registrar accreditation agreement has a review coming up. There are others, the transfer policy, I think, also has a review coming up, so I think we have an opportunity to take a look at those policies and how, since they have been implemented, have impacted registrants and have they served their intended purpose through that review process.

I think those reviews are scheduled to be kicked off sometime next year, probably after GDPR, so we hope you continue to stay involved and provide input and feedback through that process. Thanks for the input.

One other thing that I wanted to add is, we had a conversation with the Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group yesterday and learned a little bit about what they do for registrants as well. I think the primary customers that they serve are the non-commercial registrants, so we are committed to working with them as well in their work to, advocate is not the right word, but to advance the interests of registrants through ICANN policy development processes and things like that, because to your point, that's where the most impact can be made, that's how we make the changes and ICANN organization has a very limited role during the policy development process but what we can do

is provide support to the parts of the community like the NCSG in their work. Thanks.

BRIAN BUTTERMAN: Thanks, Trang. Another round. Anybody, questions? Behind us here. No, okay. Alex has some follow up. Thanks.

ALEX: I don't want to monopolize the entire discussion. Just one more thought that's less related to your actual work and it's some feedback that I wanted to give in terms of trying to help the customer which is kind of what you're doing through your work in the Global Support Center.

Sometimes it is really difficult to do that when policy places us in a situation where it's kind of in a dead end and it's really hard to understand the registrant has good intentions. They don't want to harm anyone, but we can't really help them by unsuspending their name or whatever because the concept of helping a registrant in good faith is something that does not really exist, and having a conversation with the current Compliance team at ICANN about that is very difficult and doesn't lead anywhere.

In doubt, the registrant is on the hook for being in compliance with the policy to the letter, and if it's not done by the latter, we

are at risk to be in breach and we can't afford that. So, often enough we end up in a situation where we exactly understand what the situation is, we understand there is not bad intentions from anyone, and we still can't help the customer.

I think that is a problem that exists that we as a community should tackle and maybe there is something that you can help work internally within the ICANN organization to facilitate that understanding that not everything is policy enforcement. There is a component of helping our customers, our registrants as well.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Yes, go ahead.

SUSAN PAYNE: Hi. It's Susan Payne here. I've been participating in the OPM working group and one of the topics that's come up during our conversations in that group is about what information is available for the non-expert on the OPMs and how they operate -- rights protections, sorry. So, I wondered to what extent you have these kind of simple registrant focused materials explaining the rights protection mechanisms that exist and how they work or to what extent you might think about having those if you don't have them already?

TRANG NGUYEN: Hi, Susan. So, we prepared some of those materials as I recalled sort of fact sheet types of materials around the rights protections mechanisms when we launched the 2012 round of new gTLDs. It may need to be looked at and perhaps updated, but that's certainly something that we had planned on doing.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Yeah, just to pick up on what Trang said, icann.org there is a lot of content there relevant for registrants. Some of the work we've been doings is going through it and looking at some things that might need to be updated or written in a way that is a bit easier to understand, so that's part of our process in identifying issues that are sticky or complex that can be maybe flushed out and written in a new way for registrants. That's part of our ongoing work, so suggestions on topics and things like that is something that we're always going to be looking for.

Anybody else? We'd love to hear from you, if not right now, then going forward. In particular, I'm going to be at the GDD booth tomorrow from 12:00 to 13:00, would welcome anybody to come sit down and chat about this work with me there, and we'd also welcome if anybody has data on registrants, we have great data from our internal sources from global support and compliance

and other faces, but we'd love data on registrants. What are their biggest issues? We can get a pretty good sense from what we're hearing at ICANN, but other information that will be useful for us would be certainly welcome.

Alright. Thank you very much. Thanks to those participating online, and you can find the slides on the ICANN schedule. Thank you for coming.

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