

**2023 usTLD Stakeholder Council  
Annual Report**



*Prepared:  
December 2023*

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## Q1-2023 Stakeholder Meeting

February 23, 2023

### I. Welcome

#### **Attendees:**

Registry Services, LLC: CPeterson, KJohnson, FEspana, JBegg, MCohen

Stakeholder Council: Ray King, Alex Deacon, Dustin Loup, Tom Barrett, Jared Hosid, Kenneth Merrill, Michele Neylon, Sam Sokol, Stacy Cheney, Becky Burr, Bryan Britt, Gabriel Andrews (unannounced)

### II. Roll call and approval of December 2022 minutes

Dustin moves to approve. Motion seconded. Minutes approved.

### III. Q1 Marketing Update

#### *Creative Refresh*

By regularly updating creative elements such as visuals and graphics we inject new life into .US campaigns, ensuring continued relevance and resonance with the target market.

Added new creative into rotation for 2023 leveraging learnings from 2022 performance.

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, where attention spans are short and competition is high, regularly refreshing creative content is crucial to stay top-of-mind and maintain engagement.

- Keeps brand message and visuals relevant and engaging to the target audience.
- Avoids stagnation and keeps the audience interested in the brand.
- Allows for experimentation and testing, which leads to improved performance and increased ROI.
- Demonstrates a brand's adaptability and willingness to evolve, which can enhance its credibility and reputation in the marketplace.

#### *Brand Ambassadors*

Brand ambassadors play a pivotal role in bolstering brand credibility and raising awareness. Their association with .US serves as a powerful validation, enhancing the brand's reputation and brand recognition.

- Brunch.us
- Parksproject.us

- Wagamama.us

### Content

Maintaining a blog and regularly posting new content to a website holds immense importance, offering a multitude of benefits for SEO, community engagement, and social activation.

- Three new articles posted in Q1:
  - 5 Marketing Resolutions to Make in 2023
  - How to Start Selling Online
  - LightenUpYourLife.us
- Highlights:
  - Organic traffic shows an almost 50% increase in average time on site and double the average page views when compared to the same time period last year. (:37s on site with 4 views per session)
  - Conversion rates for blog traffic are double sitewide average.

### Paid Advertising

Paid media drives awareness building and brand recall for the .US domain. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

- Channels:
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - YouTube
  - Paid Search
- Highlights:
  - Seeing good traction from remarketing campaigns on social media, bringing viewers back to the website to convert.
  - Facebook is attributed with driving the highest website conversion rates YTD. A change from paid search which typically outperforms other channels.

### Partnerships

**Overview:** Ongoing activations with key strategic partners supports brand equity for the .US TLD with entrepreneurial, tech and STEM audiences.

- **Startup Weekend**
  - 7 Events in January
- **Major League Hacking**
  - 4 Events in January:
    - **HackNITR** - Climb aboard the spaceship for a never-ending technological adventure full of hack challenges.
    - **HackFit 2** - focus on health and wellness. Whether it's building something for your fitness regime or your mental well-being, this is the hackathon for you to bring your creative ideas to life.

- **Hack-Commerce** – Shopping and commerce themed challenges
- **Global Hack Week** – All are welcome to attend and participate in Global Hack Week no matter experience level and student status. Hundreds of hackers who have never coded before attend GHW. This event is geared for folks learning to code as well as experts!
  - Notable domain registrations: rocketbunny.us, necessarily.us, usedto.us, inevitably.us, nationally.us, notepal.us, techamong.us
- **Lean Gap and Conrad Challenges** (US Students)
  - Ongoing
  - Conrad (Finalist round, the Innovation Summit, April 12-15)
    - Conrad Challenge to become a brand of Space Center Houston’s educational programs by the 2024-2025 season.

#### IV. Administrator, Policy & Security Updates

##### *POLICY & SECURITY UPDATES*

##### *ICANN – 11-16 March 2023, Cancun, Mexico*

Registry Services will be attending the upcoming ICANNs. Fernando Espana will be there for ccNSO representatives.

##### *Accountable Access to usTLD Registration Data:*

- Accountable WHOIS in the usTLD Namespace – in the works, public comments are being assessed for provision of a RFC (Request for Comment) from NTIA.
- Background:
  - A secure WHOIS gateway system.
  - Not a privacy or proxy service.
  - Fully compliant with our usTLD WHOIS contract.
  - Return results in real time except for “other” cases.
  - It uses an authenticated RDAP model for law enforcement and other legitimate parties

**RKing:** Said there were many one-star reviews because, currently, registrant data is not protected and open to anonymous lookups. Registrants don’t seem to read the verbiage that says their WHOIS information is fully public information. Ray said he’d share the information and screenshots of these complaints as evidence of harm of anonymous access to WHOIS data.

**MNeylon:** Said we used to get those complaints all the time before GDPR.

**CPeterson:** There are some similarities from anonymous action online with GDPR. We have gTLDs that have privacy and proxy services. While privacy and proxy services can hinder public access to data, we have developed an option to help preserve WHOIS data from unfettered (anonymous) and potentially harmful access. At the same time, we want to meet our contractual requirements. This proposal is driving towards that end. We need to know how we can share information for legitimate

and accountable use without violating our agreement.

**ADeacon:** How will usTLD registration data will change?

**CPeterson:** Registry Services would still be managing and maintaining the central registrant database. Users would request access via a web interface. There would be a comprehensive menu of use for access to data. Upon approval, the unredacted data would then be provided via email to a working email address. If the requestor requests access as “Other”, then this would require explanation of why they need the data. If approved, data would be provided within two (2) business days. If there are non-legitimate reasons provided, then that would be rejected.

*How does this meet the contractual requirements?*

- Section C.5.1 (vi)(b) of the existing contract between Registry Services, LLC and the US Department of Commerce (the usTLD Contract) prohibits the use of privacy/proxy services and requires the operator to maintain a publicly accessible, accurate, and up-to-date WHOIS database

**CPeterson:** We continue to prohibit the use of privacy/proxy services. It would be using the same central database that we have today.

**SSokol:** Can you go back to very first slide. What does bullet: Allows but does not mandate use for the system on a registrant-by-registrant basis.

**ADeacon:** Does not mandate who?

**CPeterson:** Part of the policy is that registrants accept submitting correct contact data.

**BBritt:** People lie, what happens when they call all these people and market to them?

**CPeterson:** You do have to provide a working email. Today, this happens consistently with no accountability. If a user says their request is for security or IP performance and we get a complaint, then we do have reporting and reviews to be able to drive towards accountability – unlike today’s options.

**BBritt:** are we limiting how much information they get?

**CPeterson:** There is rate-limiting implemented in the web interface.

**ADeacon:** would there be unauthenticated RDAP access? He wants to read the slides when we’re finished with the presentation.

**CPeterson:** We would be implementing RDAP to provide this service. Authenticated access would be granted upon approval. “Unauthenticated RDAP access” is the use of the accountability request and feature to receive queries by email based on legitimate purpose.

*“Public” & “Publicly Accessible” NOT “Anonymous” & “Unaccountable”*

- In many familiar cases, registration is required to access “public” or “publicly accessible” information

**ADeacon:** What does the anonymous view versus what we're proposing in the email.

**CPeterson:** Provide contact requirements and a message that a requestor can go to in order to request full data. The domain name, sponsoring RR, abuse contact and there are a couple of other fields for anonymous lookups. Whois.us will have an anonymous view of that data. Or you can request full access to unredacted data.

### *Why Accountable WHOIS?*

Anonymous, unaccountable access to usTLD WHOIS data harms registrants and limits the growth and vibrancy of America's namespace. The usTLD operator currently lacks effective tools to hold WHOIS users accountable for misuse of registrant data.

- We just topped 2 million domain names
- We were hoping we could grow and move on from this
- How to grow and get to that next level

**ADeacon:** Can we assume that the accountability feature will be available to registrants and not legal entities? What is our approach? Assume all will be natural citizens (registrants). We'll see how this works later, how the policy will be implemented and implemented.

**CPeterson:** From a standpoint from anonymous access, the system does not differentiate between legal and individual.

**ADeacon:** What is the process? It appears there are technical details that need review.

**BBurr:** It really is simply the way you request data and how you receive data. You're going into a database and will get an email with data. They did discuss this with the council a while ago. The proposal did go to NTIA. It is fundamentally the same proposal, but it had been confused with a previous proposal submitted years ago.

**ADeacon:** I want to know how it will work for the users. I'd like to see the proposal as shared with NTIA, redacted anything needed.

**MNeylon:** I'm the one who is going to take the opposing view to ADeacon. There should be no reason why someone cannot use this. The entire legal versus natural, it has to be nuanced. It's not that simple. But some people would like to characterize it that way. This is a Becky question: Have you been looking at the NIS2? There is something stuck around data maintenance.

**BBurr:** The mandate for publicly assessable data remains in place. We are not changing, the data will be publicly available. As long as they are for non-marketing purposes. We're quite mindful of the provision. All of the requirements here should not result in a collection of data. There are odd bits in there and we haven't gone through them all yet.

**MNeylon:** I don't know how they will transfer the information.

**BBurr:** Registries might have to push down requirements on registrars. That might be a discussion we'll have to have.

### *Secure WHOIS Gateway Proposal Highlights*

- Using the Secure WHOIS Gateway System, Registry Services will:
  - Remain the authoritative database source for all true-registrant information in the usTLD as directed by the Scope of Work, Contract Number 1331L519C13350044 (the “.US Contract”), Section C.4.2 (iv), Core Registry Functions
  - Give usTLD registrants the opportunity (as part of the domain registration purchase path) to prevent anonymous access to personal information contained in a registration record while ensuring that such data remains free and readily accessible to the public, including law enforcement (the LEA), intellectual property rights holders, and other third parties upon request.
  - Continue to work with the LEA and others to ensure that any unique user-type needs (e.g., law enforcement confidentiality) with respect to access and confidentiality are fully met with the authenticated Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP).

### *Secure WHOIS Gateway Technical Highlight*

- Registrants are given the opportunity to elect (or choose to expose), through their sponsoring registrar or reseller, to protect personal data elements from anonymous query and non- personal data would remain available to all queries.

**ADeacon:** Are Registrants allowed to opt out of the system? It covers that everyone is registered with a .us domain.

**CPeterson:** Yes, Registrants will be able to opt-in or opt-out of showing their WHOIS details to anonymous lookups. The current development view is that data defaults to opt-in to having accountability measures. Registrants will be able to change/update that option with their provider to opt-out and showcase their data to anonymous lookups.

### *Secure WHOIS Gateway Reporting & Audits*

- The usTLD Administrator would maintain auditable records of its receipt of and response to WHOIS access requests for personal data.
- The usTLD Administrator would maintain records to audit complaints of technical abuse or against the usTLD Acceptable Use Policy. These records would be available in fully de-identified and aggregated form for analysis, enabling additional data driven policy development informed by the usTLD community via usTLD Stakeholder Council initiatives.
- This data could be used to facilitate NTIA’s compliance with Congressional mandates related to WHOIS data.\*

**BBritt:** The law firm, police access. Do they need a warrant or what is required to get them access to the data.



**CPeterson:** From a standpoint of one-by-one requests that can and would be very similar to any request. It would be a working email and a legitimate reason that would be provided. The authenticated access that would be provided to certain agencies of users. Today, a law enforcement agent can go to whois.us and doesn't have to have a warrant, within this scope they will have to have a legitimate purpose, but we are not expecting to collect actual warrant information.

**BBurr:** Verifying their agency and authentication as long. They will be careful about who gets that access, for example – China LEA would not be granted authenticated access.

**CPeterson:** Next steps from here, we will make this presentation available to the council. CP will add the technical review of what does the anonymous lookup look like. As well as redacted view, via email and etc. that will be in the index.

**CPeterson:** The council won't have access to see the proposal until after any RFC has been by NTIA for public comment on the policy. Due to the length of time, it may seem that there may be some confusion. This has taken a long time but it's a meaty topic.

**ADeacon:** I look forward to reading the proposal when it's available.

V. AOB & Closing

## 2Q-2023 Stakeholder Meeting

*May 25, 2023*

I. Welcome

II. Roll call and approval of February 2023 minutes

**Attendees:**

Stakeholder Council: Crystal Peterson, Tom Barrett, Michele Neylon, Kristin Johnson, Judy Song-Marshall, Alex Deacon, Dustin Loup, Doug Robinson, Fernando Espana, Laureen Kapin, Bryan Britt, Becky Burr, Melissa Cohen, Jared Hosid, Susan Chalmers

Registry Services: Crystal Peterson, Tom Barrett, Michele Neylon, Kristin Johnson, Judy Song-Marshall, Alex Deacon, Dustin Loup, Doug Robinson, Fernando Espana, Laureen Kapin, Bryan Britt, Becky Burr, Melissa Cohen, Jared Hosid, Susan Chalmers

DLoup motions to approve 1Q meeting minutes. TBarret approved motion, MNeylon seconds motion. Minutes approved.

### III. Q2 Marketing Update

#### *Paid Advertising*

Paid media drives awareness building and brand recall for the .US domain. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

- **Channels:**
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - YouTube
  - Paid Search
- **Highlights:**
  - Paid Impressions: 300K (*through 5/15/23*)
  - April and May paid ads show a shift in performance towards social media driving the highest conversion rates and leads on the about.us site, slightly over paid search efforts.
  - YouTube drives the majority of impressions supporting upper funnel and early awareness efforts. Total of 65K video views (April/May) with a 35% view-thru rate.

**TBarrett:** Regarding paid media, which channel is the most effective for conversion?

**KJohnson:** Paid search on Google

**TBarrett:** Have you looked into other channels like Twitter or LinkedIn?

**KJohnson:** We have tested both platforms but haven't found them as performant for converting domain registrations.

#### *Direct to Channel Advertising*

Paid consumer campaigns run through the Registry Marketing Team direct to .US registrar and reseller partners. Efforts require upfront coordination and negotiation by the Channel Team to establish pricing, package offers, tracking requirements and campaign set-up. Allows for a streamlined path to purchase and supports increased registrations.

- **Highlights:**
  - Total Combined Impressions:1M
  - Platforms:
    - Facebook
    - Instagram
- **Partners:**
  - Dynadot – 8-week campaign

- Namesilo – 8-week campaign

**BBritt:** Curious about engaging Dynadot, Namesilo and over GoDaddy. I like the idea we’re doing this with other retailers.

**KJohnson:** We do run campaigns with GoDaddy as well, but we want to test across our entire retail base. Our team sources the best partner based on pricing, promotions and historical results from these campaigns.

**TBarrett:** What is the typical budget for these campaigns, can we talk about ROI?

**KJohnson:** I’m happy to provide some marketing background offline but because we’re a publicly traded company I won’t be able to discuss budgets and ROI.

**TBarrett:** Can you provide high level what are the biggest lessons learned?

**KJohnson:** One of the biggest takeaways in paid advertising is make sure you run a retargeting audience. Seems standard but is often overlooked. This strengthens brand recall and purchase propensity.

Additionally, including a price point on ads has shown to drive increased engagement and conversions.

### Social Media

Regular posts across native social channels strengthens online presence and increases brand visibility. Facebook and Twitter are ideal for content sharing, which can lead to organic brand exposure, and effectively build brand awareness to stay at the forefront of customer’s minds.

- **Platforms:** Facebook and Twitter
- **Highlights:**
  - Impressions: 771K
  - Engaged Users: 6.4K
  - Posts: 131
- **Brand Ambassadors:**
  - Canceledplans.us – Home goods, candles and etc
  - Babyandco.us – Baby products
  - Kochstelle.us – Cooking/modern cookware
  - Whoisbaby.us – Local boutique

### Content

- **Three new articles posted:**
  - The Small Business Guide to Brand Awareness
  - Leaving Anyone Behind? The Importance of Website Accessibility for Your Business
  - **Brand Feature:** Heritage Steel is Helping Us Rethink How we Shop for Cookware (heritagesteel.us)
- **Highlights:**

- Organic traffic accounts for 24% of overall website traffic to about.us
- Blog views totalled 2,000 in April and May
- Average Session Duration for blog views is double the sitewide average (:46 seconds)

### Partnerships

**Overview:** Ongoing activations with key strategic partners supports brand equity for the .US TLD with entrepreneurial, tech and STEM audiences.

- **Startup Weekend**
  - 27 Events in April
  - 1,444 Attendees
- **Major League Hacking**
  - 7 Events in April
  - 1,046 Attendees
    - 4/7 Hardware Hackfest
    - 4/7 Wittyhacks
    - 4/7 Electrothon 5.0
    - 4/14 HackBattle: Mobile vs Web
    - 4/15 Hack The League - Chapter 2
    - 4/21 Design & Hack
    - 4/28 BeginnerHacks
  - **Domains registered include:** sharksense.us, hardtrack.us, devprojects.us, paramountlearning.us, and more!

## IV. Administrator, Policy & Security Updates

### *ICANN - 12-15 June 2023, Washington D.C.*

- .US hosting ccNSO: Registry Services will be attending the ICANN event: 12-15 June 2023, Washington DC - .US hosting a ccNSO event on Tuesday during ICANN. All Stakeholder Council are welcome to join.
- usTLD Locality Tool: We have been developing a platform to help better manage our usTLD Locality Delegated Managers and locality registrants. The next phase of that product development is moving forward. Bryan will hear from us next week to help test. We're very excited to move this to the next step.

**BBritt:** We'll need a terms of service or addendum on that contract. I don't want that to be overlooked.

**CPeterson:** We'll address that during the testing.

### *Accountable WHOIS in the usTLD Namespace*

The NTIA has posted a request for comments and it's been made available at the following link. Check link: [A Proposal for More Privacy in Domain Name Personal Data | National Telecommunications and Information Administration \(ntia.gov\)](https://www.ntia.gov/propose)

**TBarrett:** Have you seen any pushback on this proposal that concerns you?

**CPeterson:** We are not in receipt of any of those comments as it was the NTIA set that up. Susan, are you able to share or do you have to wait until it's fully closed?

**SChalmers:** The comment process is still open. I will say we've not received any comments to date. We expect to get a robust amount of feedback after ICANN 77.

**TBarrett:** What is the level of support within the US Congress?

**SChalmers:** I don't know if I can respond to that definitely today. It's certainly a topic of conversation on the hill.

**ADeacon:** People have asked for the proposal and asked how they comment when the proposal doesn't exist. I've asked them to focus on the policy questions. I hope that's an okay response.

**CPeterson:** Yes that's fine.

**BBurr:** Can we share the deck?

**CPeterson:** We can share the deck again. We can do a quick follow-up after this meeting.

**CPeterson:** From the town hall, we had the majority of that deck. That is a public-facing request for download.

**TBarrett:** Will you do outreach with the ccNSO or other parties?

**CPeterson:** Yes, we're covering this at ICANN77

## V. AOB & Closing

### *Closing Statements*

**CPeterson:** We had a very good meeting with Alex last week. He had a great question. He asked, "what is next?". As we are starting to close on accountable WHOIS and next steps. At the next meeting, we can discuss other topics the council can dig into. There have been other topics that have come up for discussion, that were previously tabled based on competing priorities. We'll bring those back to the forefront. During our next meeting, I'd like to have an open discussion there. Where are we going next?

**ADeacon:** We should all re-acquaint ourselves with charter and the scope of work within the council. There are things like the compliance report that we don't want to forget about. How can we make these calls more policy focused? We want to be doing the work we volunteered to do.

**DLoup:** We should meet together before our official meeting to prepare and be as efficient as possible.

**DLoup:** Glad to see things moving forward. Are there any other items of business that anyone wants to raise? Or any other questions or thoughts.

#####

### *.GOV Updates*

**DRobinson:** I wanted to give an update on the .GOV namespace. They advocated to remove the \$400 fee to register a .GOV domain. We're about 15 years out to have all states and localities mandated to use a .GOV domain. For example: Utah said to move to .GOV by 2025. I expect that bill will ultimately pass. K12 are not eligible for .EDU or .GOV. They will probably stay on .US.

**DLoup:** To what extent are you coordinating with to handle the local engagement piece?

**DRobinson:** There continues to be a fairly stiff opposition to migrate over to a .GOV. They want that to be done over time. Pure speculation: It requires the .GOV domain to gain federal funds and grants. We're not actively campaigning at the local level.

## 3Q-2023 Stakeholder Meeting

*September 7, 2023*

- I. Welcome
- II. Roll call and approval of May 2023 minutes

### **Attendees:**

Stakeholder Council: Dustin Loup, Judy Song-Marshall, Tom Barrett, Ray King, Doug Robinson, Bryan Britt, Becky Burr, Alex Deacon, Susan Chalmers, Stacey Cheney, Kenneth Merrill

Registry Services: Crystal Peterson, Kristin Johnson, Melissa Cohen, Fernando Espana

**DLoup:** Motions to approve 2Q meeting minutes. TBarrett seconds motion. Minutes approved.

- III. Administrator, Policy & Security Updates

### *NTIA RFC Accountable Whois*

Comments Closed: **May 31, 2023**

- <https://ntia.gov/federal-register-notice/2023/introduction-accountable-measures-regarding-access-personal>

**CPeterson:** Susan, are there any updates you can make at this time?

**SChalmers:** We are still reviewing the additional areas of focus that were brought to our attention

from the RFC and working with Registry Services and interagency to explore those comments.

### *.US Stakeholder Charter*

The Council will address matters related to the operation of the usTLD in the interest of the usTLD user community. The work of the Council will be focused on:

- Recommending to Registry Services policies and other improvements to the management of the usTLD;
- Ensuring that the needs of current usTLD domain name holders are considered in the management of the usTLD;
- Providing input on mechanisms to enhance and improve the user experience and utility of the usTLD space; and
- Improvements to the security within the usTLD and stable management of the space

### *Stakeholder Future Topics*

**CPeterson:** Stakeholder future topics we've previously considered include:

- Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)
- Premium Names

Both topics have been discussed previously as potential considerations. We wanted to bring these back to the forefront.

#### *ADeacon raises hand*

**ADeacon:** I had planned to review the Charter before this call but was unable. Somewhere in the Charter there is a discussion about a compliance report. I don't remember the Council ever working on this project. What role, if any, will the council play in security services?

**CPeterson:** To clarify the question around the compliance report, are you asking what is the goal of the registry for security and how does the Council play a part?

**ADeacon:** What is the Council's goal to build the registry? Is it security or to grow the product?

**CPeterson:** Part of the scope of work is to recommend improvements or policies for the ccTLD in regards to the needs of current registrants as well as helping to grow the space. We do want to ensure the stability and security of the .US namespace. For the compliance report, I will look into this and get back to you with an update.

#### *BBurr raises hand*

**BBurr:** I think it is important for everyone to understand that the Stakeholder Council's responsibility for what we do is clearly laid out. The point here is that the Stakeholder Council is advising Registry

Services, LLC. There is a role of the utilization of space, that is why Accountable WHOIS was relevant.

*TBarrett raises hand*

**TBarrett:** I just wanted to raise a future topic to consider. That would be Web3. You'll see registries integrating this and we should entertain this as well.

**DLoup:** If there are additional topics we want to discuss. Send me a note, if there is a quorum of support then we'd be happy to talk about any ideas.

**DLoup:** What are the next steps to move forward with these?

**CPeterson:** We will create a proposal statement which will answer why we're looking into a particular topic. We'll come forward with briefing documents. During that time too, we can discuss factors related to the two topics.

### *2023 .US Townhall Agenda*

**Date:** November 2, 2023 at 12:00pm EST

**Sign-up:** [about.us/townhall](https://about.us/townhall)

**Agenda:**

- State of the Domain
- Marketing Review
- .US Brand Use-Case Feature
- Administrator Updates
- Stakeholder Council Updates
- Q & A

**KJohnson:** We have the townhall coming up and want to get approval and sign off from the Council as we begin to open registrations to join. This is the proposed agenda. Are there any questions or can we move forward with this outline for the townhall?

**TBarrett:** Under what agenda item would you be discussing the Accountable WHOIS?

**CPeterson:** That would be under admin updates and future topics we would like to

discuss. **JSong-Marshall:** Under stakeholder council updates, what would that be?

**CPeterson:** I misspoke before. In the stakeholder council section would be the future topics we want to dig into.

**JSong-Marshall:** Are we talking to an audience or what format will the townhall be in?



**CPeterson:** It's an audience forum. It's not a discussion.

### IV. Q3 Marketing Update

#### *4<sup>th</sup> of July Promos*

**Overview:** Global .US celebration with special domain promotions and pricing across the retail network.

- Partners promoted with dedicated posts on social media channels.
- .US marketing amplified via paid marketing and cross-promotion of tweets and posts.

#### *Paid Advertising*

Paid media drives awareness building and brand recall for the .US domain. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

#### **Channels:**

- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Paid Search

#### **Highlights:**

- Social media has seen a big lift in engagement and conversions for Q3 due to campaign optimizations for creative and audience targeting. Website conversion rates for social media are double the average for organic website traffic, signifying quality visits and effective marketing strategies.

#### *Social + Content*

**Content:** 3x articles published

- INTERVIEW: *How CivicCommons.US Is Creating a New Model for Urban Revitalization*
- *Crafting Your Online Identity: How to Choose the Perfect Domain Name*
- *How to Create a Campaign Landing Page that Converts Visitors and Drives Growth*

#### **Highlights:**

- Social Media: (Facebook + Twitter)
- Reach: 568K

- Posts: 128 posts
- Blog traffic:
- Accounts for 47% of total organic traffic to the website
- Average engagement time and engagement rate is more than double sitewide average.

### Partnerships

**Overview:** Ongoing activations with key strategic partners supports brand equity for the .US TLD with entrepreneurial, tech and STEM audiences.

- **Startup Weekend**
  - Events – 13 (July)
  - Attendees – 825 (July)
- **Major League Hacking**
  - New expanded partnership launching September 2023 with increased reach in North America and European regions
  - Events – 1 (August)
  - *8/12 StatusCode 0 - Participants have the opportunity to compete in a variety of categories or tracks, demonstrating their skills and ingenuity while collaborating with like-minded individuals.*
- **Lean Gap (US Students)**
  - Lean Gap (program 1): June 19 – July 14
  - Lean Gap (program 2): July 17 – August 11
  - Total Participants - 80

## V. AOB & Closing

### Closing Statements

**DLoup:** Thank you to the council for the topics brought up in the May 2023 meeting. Looking forward to opening up some new threads of work with the council. If there are other topics that you'd like to discuss, please reach out.

## 2023 Town Hall

November 2, 2023

- I. State of the Domain
  - Overview of Domains Under Management
    - *2.1M domains under management in .US namespace (as of Oct 23)*
    - *5% growth in total domains under management year over year*
    - *Locality domains total 12.5K (as of Oct 23)*
  - Accredited Registrars and Delegated Managers
    - *240 .US Accredited Registrars*
    - *268 .US Delegated Managers (locality specific)*
  - Usage
    - *68% of .US namespace is considered “in use” based on the following usage categories: websites, parked pages, redirects, holding/coming soon and other*
    - *Top Hosting Companies for .US*
      - GoDaddy
      - Cloudflare
      - Dan.com
      - Namecheap
      - Google Domains (now Squarespace)
        - *Top .US Site Categorization*
          - Other contractors
      - Other shopping
      - Air conditioning
      - Cleaners
      - Marketing
  - .US Fun Facts
    - *Domain Top Keywords word cloud – most frequent keywords in .US URL string (partial list below sourced from Domainsbot)*
      - Health
      - Tech
      - Cleaning
      - Repair
      - Family
    - *.US Website Keywords – most frequent keywords found on developed .US websites (partial list below sourced from Domainsbot)*
      - Service
      - Home
      - Cleaning

- Repair
- Business

## II. Marketing Review

- Students in STEM
  - *Conrad Challenge - In its 17<sup>th</sup> year, the Conrad Challenge is a global innovation competition that challenges students to create products and/or services to address some of the most pressing global and local challenges. Founded by Nancy Conrad, wife of the late Apollo 12 astronaut and third person to walk on the Moon, Pete Conrad, the Conrad Challenge was established to carry on Pete's legacy of innovation and entrepreneurship.*
    - The Challenge launched in August of this year and runs through April 2024. All participants in the program, are offered a .US domain and websites builder to launch their idea.
  - *Lean Gap - Currently in its 9th year Leapgap is an-intensive startup incubator that empowers and supports high school students to build their own real, scalable companies and non-profits. Every year, they receive more than 1,000 applications from over 20 countries, with only 80 students admitted to the program annually. The LeanGap program prides itself on offering small class sizes with a 1 on 1 approach for students to launch a real-world company.*
    - All applicants, not only program attendees are offered a .US domain and website scholarship as part of this program.
- Global Partnerships
  - *Major League Hacking- Powers weekend-long competitions to students around the world. A focus on invention competitions that teach computer science skills for developers.*
  - *Startup Weekend – Global innovation competition that focuses on entrepreneurship for university, post graduate students and entrepreneurs.*
- NASA International Space Apps Challenge
  - *An international hackathon for coders, scientists, designers, storytellers, makers, builders, technologists, and others in cities around the world.*
- Who's Using .US?
  - *Dedicated outreach efforts to the .US community for brand ambassador features.*
  - *Includes dedicated reels, written interviews published to the blog and social media features on Facebook and Twitter*
- Paid Advertising
  - *Paid platforms: Facebook, Instagram, SEM, YouTube*
- Registrar Collaboration
  - *Direct to Channel Campaigns running dedicated media spend to .US registrar leaf page (ex. Dynadot and Namesilo)*

- *Integrated Efforts for global retail channel activation (ex. Independence Day .US promotions)*
- Content Engine
  - *High-quality SEO friendly topical SMB articles*

### III. Guest Speaker

- Don McMoran, Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program (WRASAP) [FARMSTRESS.US](https://www.farmstress.us)
  - *WRASAP is a group of organizations and community members across the Western region of the United States, including 13 states and 4 territories. The group works together to strengthen the resilience within the agricultural community by supporting communication and collaboration with partners across the region to offer funding opportunities, support in navigating resources, compassion, and education for mental health.*
  - *To fund solutions, the WRASAP Mini Grants Program offers up to \$10,000 for efforts to reduce agriculture-related stress and/prevent suicide through outreach, professional development, and translation of resources.*
  - *To help navigate resources, WRASAP operates a Resource Clearinghouse for a wide range of resources available in each state and territory across the region. The clearinghouse is designed to enable farmers, farmworkers, and their families to identify, locate, and understand how to access the resources they need to address the many potential stress factors they face as part of their everyday lives.*
  - *Beyond funding and resources, WRASAP also educates and builds community, through a series of events across the region in both Spanish and English. These events, such as “Pizza for Producers,” provide a space for learning and sharing that can be critical to breaking down stigmas and easing feelings of isolation.*
  - *“It’s been an honor to lead the Western Region Agricultural Stress Assistance Program,” said Principle Investigator, Don McMoran, of Washington State University. What started as nothing has now become an Army of like-minded individuals and institutions located in the western United States and territories to reduce farm stress and prevent suicides in farmers and farm workers.”*
  - *In the event of a mental health crisis, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached 24/7 by calling 988. The Lifeline is staffed by professionals that provide free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.*

### IV. Stakeholder Council Updates

- Review of 2024 potential .US Stakeholder Council topics for future consideration: Premium Names, Internationalized Domain Names

### V. Q & A

- Will this video be made available after?
  - *We will post the meeting minutes and presentation 7 business days following the event.*
- How is Registry Services looking to grow and expand awareness for 2024 to keep the namespace growing?
  - *One of the biggest opportunities for growth in continued and increased registrar collaboration, especially in regard to direct to channel efforts where we can streamline the path to purchase for consumers and drive more traffic directly to the point of sale. We will be looking to expand these efforts and test new campaign activations in 2024. Additionally, we will continue to experiment with new and emerging platforms such as influencer marketing and video to ensure we are filling the funnel and driving awareness across all points of the customer journey.*

### 4Q-2023 Stakeholder Meeting

*December 7, 2023*

*Minutes pending final Stakeholder Council review and will be posted by March 31, 2024.*