



## usTLD Stakeholder Council Annual Report

On October 26, 2016, Neustar and the usTLD Stakeholder Council (“Council”) held the second usTLD Public Stakeholder Town Hall (“Town Hall”). The purpose of the Town Hall was to solicit broader feedback from users with interests in the .US top-level domain to guide further policy discussion and work by the Council, as well as to encourage continued public participation in the activities of the Council.

The Town Hall had 40 attendees, 36 of which were external to Neustar.

### Planning

Planning for the usTLD Public Stakeholder Town Hall was led by the Council Secretariat and the usTLD Stakeholder Council. Neustar began getting the word out about the Town Hall at IGF-USA in July. Subsequently, the Council discussed, both at meetings and off line, ideas for the Town Hall Agenda and for soliciting support. At the August meeting, which was postponed to October 3, Neustar’s registry team presented its fully communications plan for the Town Hall. The Council discussed topics and meeting structure, including presentation materials and the agenda. Additionally, Neustar distributed sample emails and discussion points that Council members could send to their contacts, colleagues, and constituencies or distribute via social media.

The Council determined that the meeting should cover a one hour fifteen minute period and focus on the state of the .US domain, and policies to enhance and grow the .US namespace: privacy and proxy services, premium names, and IDN. Time would be left at the end for public discussion. The Council determined to hold the meeting through Zoom.us given its features (including chat, polling, and Q&A), as well as the fact that it is a .us site. The Council sought to schedule the call mid-week to maximize availability, as well as to avoid major religious and school holiday periods. The meeting was scheduled 3:00-4:15 in order to be as convenient as possible to participants from multiple time zones.

The Council Chair, Vice-Chair, Council Secretariat and presenters held two run-throughs during the week prior to the Town Hall to work through any issues. It was determined that the number of speakers should be kept low to improve flow between the slides and agenda items.

## Publication

The Town Hall was publicized by the Secretariat and the Stakeholder Council through the following channels:

- Blogs Published in [Circle ID](#), Latin American and Caribbean TLD Association, eco Forum, Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Name Association and [About.us](#), ;
- Word of mouth publicity at Internet policy-related events including IGF-USA, small business and university meetups and groups;
- Social media (Twitter/Facebook).

## Agenda

The Stakeholder Council covered two major agenda items during the meeting:

- *The State of the Domain: Review the current state of the domain name industry and building the .US brand in today's world market; and*
- *.US Policies for Growth: Policy considerations to enhance and grow the .US namespace (Privacy Services, Premium Names, IDN).*

### The State of the Domain

#### *Review the current state of the domain name industry and building the .US brand in today's world market*

Crystal Peterson, Neustar's director of registry services, led a presentation in which she looked back on internet history and how we got from a handful of TLDs to having more than 1500 TLDs. Crystal stated that this represents an epic shift in the architecture of the Internet. In this "not com" era, the time is ripe for new types of online neighborhoods, business models, and opportunities for businesses and brands to innovate online. Such a moment in internet history can open potential customers' eyes to naming opportunities outside of .com. In this environment, Neustar aims to re-invigorate the .US namespace in today's expanded TLD world to generate new excitement, use, brand ambassadors and growth.

The target areas and examples that were covered during the meeting included:

- *Advocacy and community groups;*
- *Major brands, both foreign and domestic; and*
- *Communities of developers, designers and creatives.*

Commercial success and economic Growth are key to the American dream and to .US's mission. The USTLD can support small and medium sized American businesses by bringing them online and helping them reach the American market. .US can provide a home to businesses and entities that are engaged in community outreach, including those engaged in grassroots and youth campaigns. The USTLD offers a unique value-add to these organizations

by providing an easy marquee that showcases a commitment to staying active and involved with local communities across this nation. Neustar aims to partner to provide domain scholarships to users and participants to introduce them to how .US can be their online home for projects and startups: Current examples include:

- *Fishackathon;*
- *Code2040; and*
- *SpaceApps Challenge by NASA;*

Ms. Peterson stated that .US can provide value to foreign or multi-national businesses by acting as a window to American Internet users. There are more than 2.1 million .US domains under management. Seventy percent are categorized as US citizens or individuals.

Ms. Peterson summarized that in today's world of over 1,500 options for naming an online idea, business or brand, .US must disrupt its status quo to achieve growth. It can do so by:

- *Updating policies that may be holding .US in a past view of the Internet;*
- *Launching new programs, discounts and brand awareness at the point of sale; and*
- *Building strong relationships with our community for brand ambassadors to carry the .US brand into a youthful and connected world.*

## **.US Policies for Growth**

### ***Policy Considerations to enhance and grow the .US namespace (Privacy Services, Premium Names, IDN)***

Kimberly Miller, .US Stakeholder Council Secretariat, led presentation of the second agenda topic, a discussion of .US policy consideration to grow the .US TLD.

Privacy Plan: The presentation raised policy issues and opportunities that have been under consideration by the Council as a result of the previous year's Town Hall and public and/or Council input. Last year, privacy/proxy policy restriction received 45% of the vote from survey respondents regarding the most important policy considerations for .US.

Council members, registrars and the public have asked for a privacy service for the USTLD. Registrants are concerned that the WHOIS information can be used by bad actors for identity theft, social engineering or cyber attacks. In fact, potential registrants may be tempted to either provide false contact information when they register for a .US domain or they may just opt for another domain that offers a privacy service. Registrants who already have a .US domain may censor themselves out of fear of being attacked for their beliefs.

As a result, Neustar, with the consideration of the Council, has developed a .US Privacy Proposal for the Department of Commerce's consideration. Neustar understands that law

enforcement is concerned about criminals hiding behind privacy screens and as such, the privacy proposal attempts to address the concerns of law enforcement.

Under the plan, registrants may sign up for privacy services with their registrar at the time they obtain a .US domain. Neustar will mask certain contact details in the publicly available WHOIS database, but will continue to maintain the unmasked information in a nonpublic version of the database, in order to conduct WHOIS accuracy reviews, Nexus reviews, and to conduct relay/reveal obligations under the policy.

The goal is to make it easy for registrars to resell the privacy services to their registrants. We hope this will incentivize registrars to offer .US domains to registrants who want privacy.

We want to make this privacy service available to commercial and noncommercial entities. This will reduce confusion, maintain low administration costs, and protect legitimate concerns of home-based businesses.

Premium names: More and more companies are leveraging short domains to accommodate the new demands of social media and the way Internet users consume data – from creating branded URL shorteners to protect their brands from being diluted when their content and links are tweeted, texted and shared across the social stream to creating memorable websites from keywords to gain valuable user traffic.

Neustar proposes to release one and two character domain names in connection with the usTLD Premium Domain Name or PDN plan. The primary goal of the proposed PDN Plan is to increase the use and awareness of the .US brand in the consumer marketplace. Additionally, the PDN Plan provides the opportunity for Neustar to allocate .US Premium Names to support organizations or activities that will help spread awareness or encourage growth of the .US domain.

The PDN Plan would make available to the public at a premium price certain high-value, highly-visible, premium .US domain names some of which are currently designated as “reserved” (including one- and two-character .US domain names), and others that would be newly designated as such. Given the level of investment, buyers of high value premium domain names typically put these names to good use – building web properties that are heavily marketed and promoted. This is beneficial to the entire namespace, getting the most coveted names circulated.

IDN: Ms. Peterson spoke briefly about a third policy that came to Neustar’s attention as a result of customers in the .US namespace requesting that IDN or internationalized domain names be made available for .US. IDN refers to the ability to use characters from any language (e.g., á, ç, è, ñ, ö) in domain names. While there is common agreement that introducing IDNs is a worthwhile objective, there are inherent technical challenges complicating implementation. The Domain Name System (DNS) has historically only supported a limited character set (the ASCII characters a-z, 0-9 and the hyphen). Since 1996, the Internet technical community has been developing standards necessary to create domain names in all scripts, for all languages. Today, a simple, efficient encoding method called Punycode is used to register domain names in native

languages by translating non-ASCII characters into characters allowed in host name labels (ASCII letters, digits and hyphens) and back again.

When the .US domain name launched in the second level in 2002, only ASCII characters were made available according to .US registration policies. Neustar intends to review the competitive marketplace to implement additional IDN languages within the .US name space to foster a domain name brand that embraces the early ideas of the founding of the United States – a nation open and welcome to different people, cultures and languages.

## **Open Floor**

The Town Hall then turned to an Open Floor discussion. Participants asked questions regarding the clarification of the presented policies and additionally, how the nexus policy was applied in the .US namespace.

## **Recommendations**

The Council should continue its work on the Privacy and Premium Domain Names plans and solicit public comment on the plans.