

.HOW TO GET YOUR OWN TOP LEVEL DOMAIN

VERSION II

*Draft Applicant
Guidebook
Published!*

Understand **ICANN**,
the **Process**, and the **Caveats**

**JOE ALAGNA &
ANDREY INSAROV**

HOW TO GET YOUR OWN TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN

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Perspectives on **ICANN**, the **Process**,
and the **Caveats – Version II**

JOE ALAGNA & ANDREY INSAROV

How to Get Your Own Top-Level Domain (Version II)

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*This book is dedicated to entrepreneurs
and individuals who take on
what others see as great risks.*

Acknowledgments

How to Get Your Own Top-Level Domain could only happen by the grace of God and all the people around me who have helped me in my career. Thanks go out to my wife, Christine, who is always patient with me while I do these things. I want to thank too many people to name, but I must try.

The first is my present employer and partner in this endeavor, Andrey Insarov. Andrey joined the domain name industry of his own accord, before I ever met him. But the first time we met, I knew that we were going to get along and work together for a long time. He founded it.com Domains, a company that offers domain names through registrars to end users under the suffix, .it.com. This is the exact way that I made my living (in the domain space) for my first thirteen years in the industry. Working with Andrey and collaborating on this book has been an extreme pleasure for me. He's one of the most generous and thoughtful people I've ever worked for. This book would not exist without his help and support.

Many others have helped me during my work in the domain name industry, but, for this book, I want to thank my former registry colleagues and customers, Ray King, Jay Westerdal, Daniel Negari, the Merchant Law Group, Aaron Grego and his family, Dan Schindler, and Lars Jensen, most of whom provided interviews for this book.

I also want to thank our amazing it.com team, including Tess, Alessandro, Sergey, Roland, Natalija, Alex, and our amazing marketing, administrative, and technical teams, all of whom I could not do my job without.

I'd be remiss not to thank ICANN, its diligent staff, and all the industry volunteers who work with them, who have made the subject of this book possible.

Thank you!

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

UPDATE: I wrote the first version of this book before the release of the first draft of ICANN's Applicant Guidebook (see below). This version (II) is an update since ICANN released their first Draft Guidebook on May 30, 2025. It has important updates.

Who This Book is for and Why We've Written It?

This book is about a rare and little-known opportunity. Besides ICANN's official "Application Guidebook," we've not seen much else published on the topic. ICANN stands for Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. They manage the global domain name system.

A few things to my industry colleagues and anyone reading this. I know that this book is not the official guidebook. There is only one official Applicant Guidebook, and writing it is a job that belongs to ICANN alone. ICANN does things on a grand scale and considers hundreds of possible scenarios. This book is our read on the things that have happened, the things that are about to happen, and our advice to newcomers on how to navigate it. By design, it will be simple and contain general overviews. It is written from a businessperson's perspective.

To a newcomer, reading this book, we suspect that many of the businesspeople, already in the know regarding this topic, would rather you not know. Why create the competition?

This book is NOT about "registering or flipping domain names." It is about an opportunity to own and operate "Registries"

need access to capital, and you'll need to be willing to take the risks involved (There are risks and we outline them in this book's caveats section).

Most of the information we will discuss in this book is, or will be, available online. ICANN employs hundreds of people, many of them dedicated to the topic. They've learned many things from the last round, but ICANN still suffers from complexity. Figuring out the jargon, the acronyms, and the processes from scratch, in the time you have available to make this happen, is difficult. ICANN's first guide to getting your own top-level domain was called the Applicant Guidebook or AGB. Nowadays, most information on their website related to getting a new gTLD is being referred to as "SubPro" or the Subsequent Process. The employees and volunteers doing deeper planning for this next round of new gTLDs are being called "the IRTs," referring to Implementation Review Teams. ICANN loves acronyms, and these are the least of them.

These are some reasons we named our book with the plain title, "How to Get Your Own Top-Level Domain. In our view, ICANN's complexity gets in the way of its goal, to spread news about this process. ICANN speaks the language of jargon. Many very successful businesspeople know and understand this opportunity. Still, there are MANY MORE who don't and who won't until it is too late, even with the publication of this book.

There are also caveats. I have been through this process before and seen what succeeded and what failed. I'm also familiar with the differences between what ICANN did in 2012 and what they are planning for 2026. Knowing these differences matters. There are some aspects of applying for and running a new gTLD that are easily glossed over by the official channels. I'll help you understand some of them.

I reiterate, some people would rather we not write this book. ICANN is writing tomes about it, but we haven't seen one book, until this one, that is written from the business perspective by people who ICANN doesn't employ. We think it is a significant and necessary contribution to the material that is out there on the topic. So, our goal is to help you sift through the materials, simplify them for you, and help you know what matters and what doesn't. We'll surely miss a few things, but we'll also help you to get closer to making your own TLD a reality.

For my part, I want to be clear—I don't own a top-level domain. I'm not wealthy. I am not an attorney, and this book is not meant to offer legal advice. This isn't a get-rich scheme. But I do have the experience of having worked directly with over 60 of the most successful applications in the last round, including .xyz, .blog, .app, and .club. This is essentially about our advice, ideas, and expertise related to the process. You still need to do your due diligence. We want to help you get through it more successfully if you wish to participate.

I can write this book because clients, employers, and contractors have paid me and allowed me to play a role in helping them to achieve their goal of owning their own gTLDs back in 2012. I've also had the privilege to work for two registries and one registrar over my 25 years in the business. Because of their generosity, I have been able to attend over fifty ICANN meetings and observe the successes and failures within the industry.

Please, take anything said in this book with a grain of salt. The longer I'm alive, the more I realize that experts make mistakes too. We've done our best, but we had to write fast. We often used approximations to make points. Sorry if you don't like that. Deeper research would have taken time that we don't have. We needed to get this book done on time, and we believe that it contains the most essential parts to help you get past the hurdles.

for new generic Top-Level domain names (aka gTLDs). It is about operating meaningful shares of the global Internet.

Verisign, which has the rights to operate the .com and .net databases, is the largest domain name registry in the world. It's also in the top twenty holdings of Berkshire Hathaway, having a market cap of over \$20 billion. If you apply and win your own gTLD, Verisign won't be able to offer what you have. That's what this is about.

This book's shelf life may be less than two years from now because the opportunity, on the scale it's being offered, has only happened once (in 2012). It's happening once more as we write. The window of opportunity is scheduled to open for three months beginning in April 2026 and then close for an undetermined amount of time afterwards. It's been twelve+ years since the last time.

We hope to help companies and individuals who are interested in the idea, because we're involved in it. We offer consulting and the software necessary to run a registry. As a Registry Services Provider (RSP), we manage registry databases that keep track of domains registered, and we direct Internet traffic accordingly to where it is supposed to go. We also connect to domain name retailers (registrars) like GoDaddy, 101domain, and Namecheap, who offer domains to the public. Each database we run is part of the global Internet system called the DNS (Domain Name System). It's part of what makes the Internet work. This is a chance for you to be a real part of the future of the Internet.

We offer consulting to new gTLD applicants and interface with them, or on their behalf, with ICANN to help them turn their new gTLD ideas into realities.

Owning the rights to a new Top-Level Domain name is not for the faint of heart. It is reserved for individuals and organizations that have deep resources. You'll need to work hard. You'll

For Andrey's part, he envisioned and started the registry that I work for today. Together, and with the help of a fantastic team, we have scaled the it.com Registry from zero to over 40,000 domains under management (known as DUM in the industry) in less than two years. He's also built a multi-million-dollar short messaging company that serves telecoms in over 80 countries. Not only does he know about digital businesses, but he's also built them.

At some point soon, maybe by the time you are reading this, ICANN will publish a **final** version of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB). As I write Volume II, it is still in draft. There has been surprising consent that, in most ways, this process will be similar to the last one in 2012. One ICANN estimate placed the date of publication for the final version at Q4 2025. Since April 2026 is the month when the application window is supposed to open, there is very little time to get ready. You need to start on this right now if you're serious. The most recent draft as I write can be downloaded here:

<https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/pages/viewpage-attachments.action?pageId=231309441&preview=%2F231309441%2F322044025%2Fnew-gtld-program-next-round-draft-applicant-guidebook-for-public-comment-30-05-2025-en.pdf> (as of this writing)

ICANN is the governing body of the domain name system. They will publish the official guidebook. But it's important for people who want to apply to have a somewhat unofficial guidebook. That's what this is. And many of you who are interested in this process will benefit by reading it.

Even the official ICANN Applicant Guidebook will change. I had to study at least six versions of that Guidebook during the last round before it was completed. They kept changing it until they got right down to the deadline. In those days, no one knew what to expect, and quite frankly, I still think we don't. Important

things have changed and are still changing as I write this sentence. So, I hope that this, our guide, will simplify the process for you and help you to be a winner and accomplish your goals in this next round of new gTLDs.

Another point I'd like to make is that, in this book, we are trying to avoid giving away any specific word string ideas. A string is simply any group of letters or words that one might want to apply for as a TLD. We also avoid specific company recommendations (besides our own). The reasons are that #1, we are under some NDAs with clients who have begun this process, and #2, confidentiality is a key component for success in applying for a new gTLD. There will be auctions for many of the strings that people are applying for! It won't help you to invite competition for your string ideas.

As to specific service providers, ICANN will be publishing an evaluated but unbiased list of all Registry Services and DNS providers before the application period begins in April 2026. The evaluated service provider lists will likely be managed by the Domain Name Association (www.theDNA.org).

For those who wonder why anyone would need this book since ICANN is publishing its authoritative version of the Applicant Guidebook, we answer that this book will contain several things that won't be in that guidebook. It contains interviews with previous applicants and existing registry operators. It contains advice from 18 years of being on the business side of building and operating registries and another 8 years of working in the registrar business. Registrars are the gatekeepers of the domain business who work with end users. You will need to understand what makes them tick to succeed as a registry operator.

Joe & Andrey

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY

Who Controls the Internet?

As of 2024, there are around 1.1 billion websites on the World Wide Web. Out of all websites in the world, only about 200 million or 17.83% are active (actively maintained and visited). 362.4 million domain name registrations have been made as of Q2 of 2024, and 52.1% of all websites are in English.

But who is in charge?

In 2021, Martin Vargic of Halcyon Maps created the second version of his "Map of the Internet" (I had to order one when I saw it). The map, envisioning the online world, includes continents, seas, and islands, depicting all possible choices. These include companies like Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Apple. It includes huge websites and streamers like Wikipedia, Netflix, and YouTube. Retailers like Amazon and AliExpress are included, too. And he didn't forget the monumental sites of Asia and Europe like Tmall, Taobao, and Baidu. He makes room for the major browsers and office platforms. Even game platforms, the Dark Web, and Malware are included.

The seas and oceans are called Bandwidth, Protocol, POP3, ICANN, and QWERTY.

A group of us could argue for days about who is in charge. Are the big corporations in charge? Are governments? If the map reflects any relative reality, it seems evident that the global Internet stands above all these kinds of entities. I think the artist correctly placed the ICANN Sea and a group of browser and bandwidth controlling atolls near the center of the map. These include

The Role of ICANN and IANA

ICANN manages domain names and the Internet. The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) works in conjunction with ICANN. It's a nonprofit private American corporation that oversees global IP address allocation, domain names, and root zone management in the Domain Name System (DNS).

Prior to the establishment of ICANN in 1998, IANA was administered primarily by Jon Postel at the University of Southern California under a contract USC had with the United States Department of Defense, until ICANN was created to assume the responsibility under a United States Department of Commerce contract. IANA works with the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to do this job and manage the protocols that make the Internet work. What does ICANN generally say about its job? Well, read below. From all I've seen, I wouldn't argue with it.

ICANN exists to keep the Internet running smoothly by managing its unique identifier systems. In simpler terms, ICANN makes sure that the Domain Name System (DNS), the thing that turns website names like “example.com” into the correct technical addresses, stays stable, secure, and reliable. It also manages how domain names are assigned and works closely with technical organizations to allocate IP addresses and support the systems that keep the Internet connected globally. While ICANN plays a significant role in coordination, it's not a part of the government. It doesn't control Internet content or impose rules on services beyond what's necessary for its core mission.

ICANN's commitments reflect its promise to the global Internet community. It's dedicated to keeping the Internet stable, secure, and open, while encouraging competition and innovation. ICANN makes its decisions through a generally transparent, bottom-up process involving a wide range of stakeholders, businesses, governments, civil society, and everyday users. Its policies are applied fairly and consistently, and it holds itself accountable through clearly defined mechanisms to ensure it stays effective and responsive.

At its heart, ICANN is guided by a set of core values. It believes in working with others to ensure decisions reflect the diversity of Internet users and that no single group has too much influence. It promotes competition in the domain name space, operates efficiently and responsibly, and respects the roles of governments in public policy. ICANN also values human rights, but only within its defined mission; it's not a human rights enforcer.

In a nutshell, ICANN is like the Internet's behind-the-scenes coordinator, quietly making sure everything works while staying true to principles of openness, fairness, and collaboration. It doesn't try to do everything; it sticks to what's necessary to keep the Internet reliable, interconnected, and ready for the future.

IP Addresses

IANA delegates allocations of IP address blocks to regional Internet registries (RIRs). Each RIR allocates addresses for a different area of the world. The RIRs divide their allocated address pools into smaller blocks and delegate them to Internet service providers and other organizations in their operating regions.

Domain Names

IANA administers the data in the root nameservers, which form the top of the hierarchical Domain Name System (DNS) tree. This task involves liaising with top-level domain operators, known as registries, the root nameserver operators, and ICANN's policy-making apparatus.

ICANN is Not Evil

Many in our industry complain about ICANN, but in all the years that I've observed, I can honestly say I am a fan. ICANN is a grand and global experiment that involves the management of a vital resource used by billions of people from every civilized country in the world. The Internet works. Somehow, we manage to communicate and to agree (well, not always) on hundreds of methods and disparate ideas. This is not an easy task, but it has worked, and it continues to work.

Decisions are made by the nominated and elected Board of Directors (nineteen in all). They represent various interests, including commercial, non-commercial, government, and technical. There are more, but the deep structure is beyond the intended scope of this book. My point is that ICANN is primarily transparent, and the board consists of amazing people from all around the globe. I have met, interacted and socialized with many of them over the years. I have no reason to think that there is anything underhanded about ICANN. In fact, I have often felt that I have even been able to have some impact on the direction of the Internet and the online world in my small ways.



ICANN Board of Directors at ICANN Meeting in Istanbul (2025)

From left to right: León Sánchez, Alan Barrett, Patricio Poblete, Amitabh Singhal, Catherine Adeya, James Galvin, Chris Chapman, Tripti Sinha, Kurtis Lindqvist, Becky Burr, Nico Caballero, Maarten Botterman, Christian Kaufmann, Sajid Rahman, Miriam Sapiro, Wes Hardaker, Sarah Deutsch, Chris Buckridge, David Lawrence.

ICANN is Transparent

ICANN meetings are open to the public. Debate and comment are allowed in almost all deliberations. Interested parties can join committees. In fact, ICANN has been overly patient with many fools over the years who simply wanted their voices heard. The bottom line is that ICANN is a great manager of the Internet, and if you really care and have the time, you can have an effect there.

ICANN is Global

I have attended regularly for over 20 years. My first ICANN meeting was held in 2001, in Marina del Rey, California. ICANN holds at least three meetings per year in remote cities and countries around the world. They do this because the Internet is a global phenomenon, but only 66% of the world's population has access to the Internet. If you don't count social media, only a small fraction of those people actually use the internet to share a message or offer products and services.

This is why they meet all over the world. They want to reach out to representatives from business, government, and non-profit sectors in every part of the world. Here are just a few of the cities they've held meetings in over the past twenty years: Mexico City, Kuala Lumpur, Toronto, Melbourne, Copenhagen, Marina del Rey, Washington, D.C., Cancun, Rome, Lisbon, Cairo, Durban, Kuala Lumpur, Montreal, Wellington, Johannesburg, Sydney, The Hague.

Why Do I Feel That ICANN Controls the Internet?

At its very essence, the Internet is simply a network. Indeed, that's an understatement. It'd be more accurate to say it is the Network of all Networks as far as the Globe is concerned. Anyone who

understands networking can start their own internet using the same protocols that the Internet uses. In fact, private networks, meant to duplicate the Internet, have been attempted many times in the past, and no one has come near to the success and global scale of ICANN's Internet.

The reason for this is that the Internet has IANA and the Global Root Zone. As I write, there are 1591 top-level domains in the root zone. You don't get into the root zone without ICANN's permission. The root zone is special, it's established, it is historic, and it is an institution that stands above all other "internets" in the world. And when you consider the billions of global websites and users, being one of those 1591 entities (people, governments, or businesses) is a special privilege.

So, if your domain, network, or internet is not part of the IANA root, you stand very little chance of becoming a global online entity. You need ICANN, and you need to follow ICANN's processes. You need to be part of the global IANA root. You need a TLD. And the process of getting one is very specific. It has only happened on a broad basis once before (in 2012). It's happening again in 2026. If you have the resources and understand the process, you can be one or many of those entities, owning the rights to and operating a top-level domain in the global root of the Internet. Now, let's take a closer look at the Domain Name Ecosystem.

The Domain Name Ecosystem

Governance

We can argue more about who really controls the Internet someday over coffee or lunch—I could be wrong in my contention. But for sure, to get control of a top-level domain name in the global IANA root, you'll need to deal with ICANN. ICANN has Registry Contracts or Letters of Agreement with almost every top-level domain name operator (Registries). These include agreements with governments around the world.

It's important to remind you that ICANN is a private corporation. They aren't "required" to listen to everything that every government says (assuming they aren't breaking laws). The philosophy at ICANN is that they are managed "bottom up". This means that they make decisions using consensus and considering the input from most factions, including governments. But once the ICANN board decides, Registries, Registrars, and Registrants generally need to fall in line.

These players are often confused by lay people (and the press, by the way) because they sound so alike, but there are three essential players when it comes to the domain name ecosystem.

Registries

Registries are the wholesale providers of domain names around the world. Although it is not required, most registries don't deal with end users. Their purview is to be the authoritative and sole source database manager for any particular top-level domain.

The biggest registries include Verisign (.com and .net), GoDaddy (.law, .club, and .nyc), and Identity Digital (.org, .info, and .plumbing). These companies run many more. Identity Digital manages over 300 top-level domains, many of which you wouldn't expect. Registries are allowed to manage more than one or two.

Identity Digital was formerly known as "Donuts" and applied for 307 top-level domains in 2012. In 2021, Afilias, which managed at least 40 top-level domains, was sold to Donuts, and the merged companies subsequently changed their name to Identity Digital.

Registry Service Providers provide Registry Services for other entities who wish to become a registry and operate a top-level domain (Disclaimer—The company I work for, it.com Domains, is a Registry Service Provider, aka, an RSP). There will likely be somewhere between forty and eighty RSPs available to assist new TLD Applicants by 2026, so you don't have to know how to operate the software behind a registry to run a new gTLD.

Registrars

Registrars are the retailers of the domain name world. Some of them have normal markups and cater to retail users only, but some cater to hosting companies and web designers who mark up domains at a very low level. They sell through "Reseller" channels, recruiting sub-resellers in a strategy designed to build bulk sales. Resellers are not usually accredited by or connected with ICANN, but they are allowed by the registrar to resell domain names.

Registrar's clients are generally end users or "Registrants." The primary difference between a registry and a registrar, however, is the client. A Registry's clients are primarily Registrars. A Registrar's clients are primarily Registrants (end users) or Resellers (web designers and hosting companies who buy domains in bulk).

Registrants

It helps to understand who registrants really are. Client types, those who buy domain names generally come in three flavors as follows:

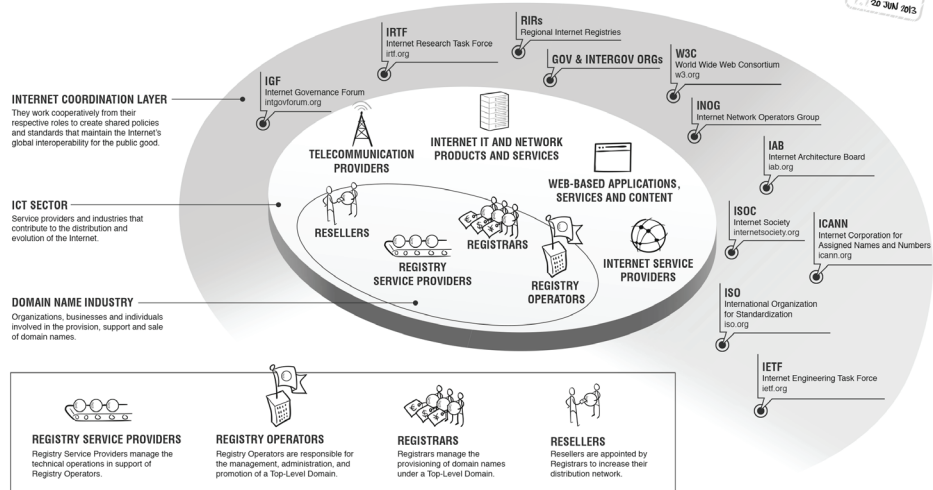
1. **Brand Managers** are end users who manage trademarks or brand names and who need to protect them online. They buy lots of domains but mainly do not develop them. They want to be in control of their brands. They don't want third parties or fraudsters to abuse them. They also renew them year after year. A large portion of these are Enterprise and Institutional users.
2. **Domain Investors**, aka domainers, buy domains to resell them for a profit (in the aftermarket). There is a very active aftermarket for registered domain names. People buy, trade, and sell them regularly for much higher prices than it costs to register them. There is an entire ecosystem of auction sites, drop-catching sites, domain watching services, and more to support this part of the industry. Many registrars actively address and support this activity.
3. **General Domain Buyers**, aka end users, can include:
 - a. Buyers who want to connect to a worldwide community.
 - b. Generic end users include a broad market and can include:
 - o Retailers,
 - o Bloggers,
 - o Non-profits,
 - o Hobbyists,
 - o Influencers,

- Service providers,
- Anyone who needs a website to share a message. These client types can be broken down further.

General Domain Buyers represent the most significant portion of Registrants but often don't know which top-level domains are available until they need one and go to a Registrar's website.

Registrants are bound by the Terms and Conditions in Registry/Registrar contracts. These conditions are how ICANN helps trademark holders to protect their rights, and they also contain the mechanisms by which domain names can be suspended due to fraud or abuse.

THE DOMAIN NAME INDUSTRY ECOSYSTEM



This graphic is a living document, designed to provide a high level view of the relationship between the different parties of the Domain Name Industry. It is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to be a definitive guide. Some of the names of the documents may vary. Please provide feedback at www.globalsign.com/domainnameindustry

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The Domain Name Industry Ecosystem (Courtesy of ICANN)

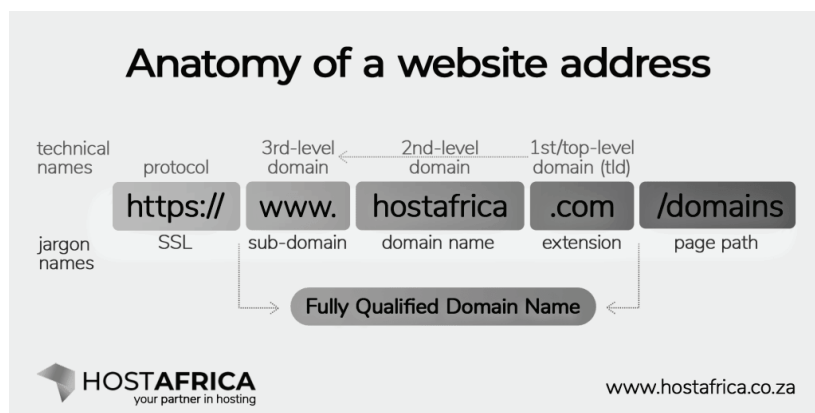
What is a Top-Level Domain (TLD)?

A Top-Level Domain (TLD) is simply the part of a domain name that exists to the right of the last dot in a URL. Examples are the bold parts shown here:

amazon.**COM**,

or verizon.**NET**.

The beauty of a TLD is its simplicity. There is a process of delegation and control that happens online. If you control a top-level domain name, you get to decide (within the law and the rules of ICANN) what happens at the second level. You are the registry.



Host Africa created a nice diagram of the parts of a domain name.

A Second-Level domain is the part of the domain that appears to the left of that same dot (.). These are the most-used URLs in the world. According to Verisign, it is estimated that there were 386 million domain names registered around the world as of the first quarter of 2025. Most of these are second-level domains. The

number of domains in the world grows regularly and is quite resistant to cyclical pressure.

There can be as many second-level domain names as can be thought of within these general rules. Below are the rules that Verisign puts on the use of .com second-level domains. Most registries follow rules like this:

The use of second-level domain names under the .com extension is primarily governed by the policies set by ICANN and enforced through registrar and registry agreements. Below are the generally accepted rules and policies that apply:

1. Availability & Uniqueness

A second-level domain (SLD) under any top-level domain must be unique and cannot be registered if it is already taken by another entity. Domains are registered on a first-come, first-served basis unless subject to a trademark dispute or other restrictions.

2. Naming Restrictions Contain

Only letters (a-z), numbers (0-9), and hyphens (-).

Cannot begin or end with a hyphen.

Cannot use special characters like @, !, %, &, or spaces.

No more than 63 characters (excluding TLD or Suffix part).

3. Trademark and Legal Considerations

Trademark owners can dispute domain registrations through the Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution Policy (UDRP) or the Uniform Rapid Suspension System (URS) if a domain infringes on their rights.

Domains cannot be used for illegal activities such as phishing, fraud, or intellectual property infringement.

4. WHOIS and Privacy Rules

Registrants must provide accurate contact information during registration.

While WHOIS privacy protection is allowed, the registrant must still provide verifiable data to the registrar. WHOIS is being replaced by a new system called Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP). It is a response to new rules and issues about privacy.

5. Registration and Renewal Rules

Initial registration is typically for 1 to 10 years.

Renewals can extend the domain up to a maximum of 10 years.

If not renewed, domains go through an expiration and redemption process, allowing the owner a chance to reclaim them before deletion.

6. Transfer Policies

Registrants can transfer their domain between registrars after 60 days of initial registration or previous transfer.

Transfers must follow ICANN's Transfer Policy, requiring authorization codes and registrar approvals.

7. Use and Compliance with Registry Policies

Domains should be used in compliance with a registry's policies and ICANN regulations. Some uses, such as spam, malware distribution, and DNS abuse, may result in domain suspension or revocation.

Domains can be subdivided further at the third level and more. There is no general limitation on how many second, third, or even fourth-level domains can be created. One needs to add the dot (.) and create DNS zone records that match to make them work. This

is a technical process, but it is commonplace all over the world. Here again, for this book, I'm not going to bother with technical aspects. I'm going to stick here to overviews for context on the main topic of How to Get Your Own TLD.

A Brief History of Domain Names

You can find long, detailed histories of the Domain Name System (DNS) in many places online. But I'd like to include a summary here. In 1984, there were seven generic Top-Level Domain name endings, including .com, .net, .org, .edu, .gov, .mil, and .int. ICANN did not exist yet. Around the same time, the people coordinating domain names also allocated a country-code top-level domain for each country and territory around the world based on the ISO-3166 alpha-codes. There were about 240 of them allocated, including .us, .uk, .cn, .ru, .br, .in, and you get the point. Most of these still exist today and are commonly used within their countries.

From the year 2000 until 2005, various specialized companies, the first registries, lobbied ICANN and convinced them that there was a shortage of good domain names, that they should allow new endings. They were successful and introduced twelve new ones, such as .biz, .info, .pro, .mobi, .travel, and a few others. No one really expected the deluge that was to follow in just a few more short years.

At a Sao Paulo ICANN meeting in 2006, several regular attendees, mainly from Germany, began to circulate the idea of creating a new Top-Level domain for Berlin (.berlin). It seemed like a crazy idea. I mean, how many endings do we need on the Internet? The idea seemed ludicrous at the time, but it gained traction. By the summer of 2008, at the ICANN meeting in Paris, ICANN was allowing interested parties to hold discussions on the idea as part of their general agenda.

New Generic Top-Level Domains (nGTLDs) were being taken very seriously then. Not only were they being taken seriously, but discussions were also being held about how to offer the opportunity to any qualified applicant (There will be more on what qualified means later in this book). Within a few years, approximately 2000 applications were submitted for new endings to be sanctioned by ICANN. This was an unprecedented expansion of the domain name system, resulting in over 600 new, generally available endings such as .xxx and .xyz, .site, .law, .online, and even .plumbing. If you add up the original seven endings, the country codes, and the new ones that began being released in 2013, the present count is 1591 endings.

Here is a **rough** breakdown of these suffixes or endings:

- 22 of them are legacy TLDs (like .com, .net, .org, .biz, .info, and others)
- 240 of them are country-code TLDs (ccTLDs)
- 600 or so are Brand Related TLDs
- 600 or so are newer generic TLDs (gTLD)
- 150 or so are Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs).

Note: ~ 600+ of the ~1.9K applications from 2012 were duplicates (aka “in contention” with others). Contention sets needed to be resolved so that only one entity would oversee any particular TLD. Resolution was accomplished by negotiation or via private or public auctions. I’ll write more about this later.

There is no reason to know exactly how many TLDs exist and which type, unless you are a research scientist. You can always review the latest active list online at the URL below:

<https://data.iana.org/TLD/tlds-alpha-by-domain.txt>

Remember, once your string is on this IANA list, you are on the global Internet, and there is no other way to get on this list besides applying to ICANN and winning your own new gTLD (or buying a TLD that is already on the list).

Registries and Types of Top-Level Domains

There are hundreds of entities that run Top-Level Domains. In 2012, ICANN allowed anyone to apply for any string they wanted to, subject to certain conditions. You couldn't be a criminal, of course. You couldn't choose ones that already existed, for example. There were other rules. The TLD needed to be at least three characters and couldn't start with or include a number.

In general, however, they left it open. You could be in charge of almost anything at the top of the Internet. There were cities, people who got contracts with cities, for example, .nyc and .paris. There were all different ways that people did this. Some TLDs were meant to be limited to specific groups or credentialed types of people, maybe in an association or a particular affinity group like the Association of CPAs (.cpa).

But at least half of them were meant to be generally available to the public. New TLD registries applied for pretty much anything that they wanted.

Generic Top-Level Domains

The most common type of application received was for generic top-level domains (gTLDs). You might not believe this, but one of the most successful gTLDs is .xyz. They are savvy marketers, and they did a fantastic job. Everyone thought .xyz would fail. People questioned, "What does that even mean?"

But what happened next was remarkable. Whether by luck or design, Google decided to use ABC.XYZ as the website for its

parent company, Alphabet. That news spread around the world multiple times over. .xyz could not have received better earned (free) media than that. It was an incredible boost to their brand, and today, .xyz has become the go-to TLD for new generations of Internet users and merchants, Generation X, Generation Y, and beyond. A lot of people are buying .xyz domains.

Other very successful gTLDs are .club and .art. They gained widespread popularity and adoption through strong marketing strategies.

Amazon applied for about 100 very desirable TLDs, including .book and .author. I expected those to be some of the best ones out there. But Amazon still hasn't released .author or .book, even after 12 years. They continue to hold onto them, deciding what to do. Out of the 100 TLDs they applied for, they sold several at auction, ultimately retaining about 40. They have released a few. There is an excuse for this. In the 2012 round, ICANN allowed "closed generics". This meant that you could get a generic TLD for your own use. This won't be allowed in the next round.

Brand-Specific Top-Level Domains

One large group of applicants, about half of them in the 2012 round, were companies that wanted to apply for their brand names. So, think .sky, .bmw, or .sbi (a large bank in India). Several banks and financial services firms applied. One concept is that when a client receives email communiques from a bank or company that uses their own particular new Brand-related TLD, that client could easily tell that the email is legitimate. In some ways, each company could have its own TLD in the same way that the US Government has .gov. When you get an email with a .gov address, you can be pretty sure that it is legitimate. The US government doesn't allow just anyone to register a .gov domain name.

The brand TLD was designed to be a security tool. So, when it all came together, and it's still not complete, about half of the successful applications in 2012 (~ 600) were brands.

There are still TLDs that have not been released from that 2012 round. Neustar, now part of GoDaddy, did its own TLD as a brand. You can go to nic.godaddy and you'll be able to see some of them. Another 600 or so are available to the public.

Here are some examples of brand-related TLDs from 2012 that are in active use today, along with a link you can use to view some of the domains that have been created under them:

.sbi	https://bit.ly/sbitld
.bmw	https://bit.ly/bmwtoplevel
.sky	https://bit.ly/skytld

Geographic Top-Level Domains

Geographic (or Geo) TLDs represent places, cities, or any recognized geographic entity. There are special rules for new gTLD applicants who wish to get a TLD using a geographic name (or indicator, as they are often called). If you wish to apply for a country, province, city, or state, you will generally need their permission. At the least, you will likely need a letter of non-objection from the official government of that place. I'm not going to do deep detail on this topic here; the official guidebook will do that.

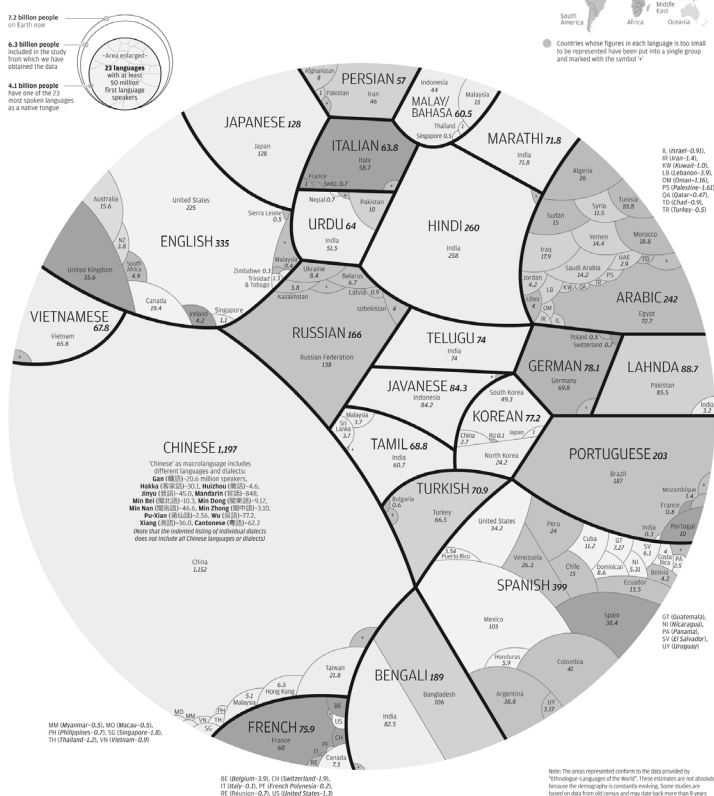
Just know that if you are planning this type of new TLD, you should begin to talk to government officials. There are place name standards from NGOs like the United Nations as well as the International Organization for Standards (ISO), which keep track of this. These are the types that ICANN uses as the criteria. For example, all ccTLDs are based on the ISO-3166 two-letter naming standards.

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)

Some people will be mad at me if I don't write about these. And they'd be justified. It's estimated that at some point in time, more domains will be sold as IDNs than any others. Why? Because most people on the planet don't speak English or other Latin languages, and the Internet hasn't reached all of them yet. Most keyboards for Internet use are based on Latin Characters and put those who speak other-than-Latin languages at a disadvantage.

A world of languages

There are at least 7,102 known languages alive in the world today. Twenty-three of these languages are a mother tongue for more than 10 million people. The 23 languages make up the native tongue of 4.1 billion people. We represent each language within black borders and then provide the number of native speakers (in millions) by country. The colour of these countries shows how languages have taken root in many different regions



<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/world-of-languages.html>

There are still new gTLD opportunities in other languages.

So, IDNs are how ICANN and the DNS world are dealing with that. There were over 100 of them delegated in 2012, and I expect that more will come from the 2026 round. ICANN has organized a Universal Acceptance Working Group to publicize these efforts. The idea is that all types of languages should be able to work on the Internet. It's fascinating, and you can get more information about it here:

<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/idn-2012-02-25-en>

IDNS got special treatment and priority in the 2012 round. I'm sure they will this time around as well.

Community-Based (aka Sponsored) TLDs

Community Top-Level Domains are specialized domain extensions intended for specific, well-defined communities. These communities can be based on ethnicity, geography, profession, or other thematic concepts. The key characteristic of a Community TLD is that its registration policies are tailored to serve the interests of a particular community, with eligibility restrictions and governance structures reflecting the community's needs.

A Brief History of Community-Based TLDs

ICANN introduced the concept of Sponsored Top-Level Domains (sTLDs) some time ago. These are predecessors to today's Community TLDs. They were operated by sponsors representing specific communities and had eligibility requirements for registrants. Examples include:

- .aero: for the air transport industry, sponsored by SITA.
- .coop: for cooperatives, sponsored by DotCooperation LLC.

- .museum: for museums, sponsored by the Museum Domain Management Assoc.
- .post: for postal services, sponsored by the Universal Postal Union.

Some of these have moved away from Community status recently. Over time, the term "Community TLD" became more prevalent, emphasizing the community-based nature of these domains.

The 2012 New gTLD Program allowed for community-based applications, where applicants could propose TLDs serving specific communities. These applications underwent Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) to determine if they met the criteria for community status. Successful community applications received priority over standard applications for the same string.

What's New for 2026 in Community TLDs?

In the upcoming round, ICANN continues to support Community TLDs. Key points include:

- **Application Period:** Expected to open in April 2026 and remain open for 12-15 weeks.
- **Applicant Guidebook (AGB):** A revised AGB will provide detailed guidelines for community-based applications, including eligibility criteria and evaluation processes.
- **Community Priority Evaluation (CPE):** Applicants can opt for CPE to gain priority if their application is determined to serve a clearly defined community.

- **Support Programs:** ICANN offers the Applicant Support Program (ASP) to assist eligible applicants with financial and non-financial support, promoting diversity and inclusivity in the domain name space.

Key Considerations for Community Applicants

- **Defined Community:** Applicants must clearly define the community they intend to serve and demonstrate a strong nexus between the community and the proposed TLD.
- **Registration Policies:** Policies should ensure that only eligible community members can register domains under the TLD.
- **Community Endorsement:** Evidence of support from the community is crucial, including letters of endorsement from representative organizations.
- **Governance Structure:** A governance model that involves the community in decision-making processes is essential.

There is more detailed information and updates in the new Applicant Guidebook.

So, that's some background on how we got to where we are today.

What's Happening in 2026

To understand what's happening in 2026, we need to look back at the only other time that this has occurred on the same scale, 2012. Here is a headline from June 20, 2011...

NEW TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN PROCESS APPROVED

ICANN Approves Historic Change to Internet's Domain Name System—Board Votes to Launch New Generic Top-Level Domains.

Singapore | ICANN's Board of Directors has approved a plan to usher in one of the biggest changes ever to the Internet's Domain Name System. The Board vote was 13 approving, 1 opposed, and 2 abstaining.

During a special meeting, the Board approved a plan to dramatically increase the number of Internet domain name endings, called generic top-level domains (gTLDs) from the current 22, which includes such familiar domains as .com, .org and .net.

"ICANN has opened the Internet's naming system to unleash the global human imagination. Today's decision respects the rights of groups to create new Top-Level Domains in any language or script. We hope this allows the domain name system to better serve all of mankind," said Rod Beckstrom, President and Chief Executive Officer of ICANN.

New gTLDs will change the way people find information on the Internet and how businesses plan and structure their online presence. Internet address names will be able to end with almost any word in any language, offering organizations around the world the opportunity to market their brand, products, community or cause in new and innovative ways.

"Today's decision will usher in a new Internet age," said Peter Dengate Thrush, Chairman of ICANN's Board of Directors. "We have provided a platform for the next generation of creativity and inspiration."

The decision to proceed with the gTLD program follows many years of discussion, debate and deliberation with the Internet community, business groups and governments. The Applicant Guidebook, a rulebook explaining how to apply for a new gTLD, went through seven significant revisions to incorporate more than 1,000 comments from the public. Strong efforts were made to address the concerns of all interested parties, and to ensure that the security, stability and resiliency of the Internet are not compromised.

ICANN will soon begin a global campaign to tell the world about this dramatic change in Internet names and to raise awareness of the opportunities afforded by new gTLDs. Applications for new gTLDs will be accepted from 12 January 2012 to 12 April 2012.

Order of Events in the 2012 Round

There was quite a mad rush to get ready for applications back then. The events went as follows:

January 12, 2012

Ninety-Day Application Window Opened

Applications and Strings-Applied-for Were Confidential.

April 12, 2012

Ninety-Day Application Window Closed

There was a glitch during this period. Due to a rush of last-minute applications, ICANN's TLD Application System (TAS) had to be paused. There were some suspected security issues, and they suspected that some applicants were seeing others' confidential applications. I don't recall the details, but it was resolved, and the application window was reopened for a week or so at the end of May to give applicants time to finish their applications. There was a lot of relief among applicants.

June 13, 2012

Big Reveal Event Was Held

Now that all applications had been received confidentially, ICANN announced all strings-applied-for and put them into contention sets (i.e., where multiple applicants applied for the same string). There were 1930 applied for strings.

The reveal event set in motion several subsequent processes (all outlined in detail in the Applicant Guidebook). ICANN

allowed a period for formal objections to applications. The types of objections included:

- String Confusion Objection
- Legal Rights Objection
- Limited Public Interest Objection
- Community Objection

The objection window ran for about 7 months, closing in March 2013. It ran concurrently with or as part of the following steps listed below

Public Comment Period

A public comment forum was opened immediately after the reveal, enabling anyone (stakeholders, governments, individuals) to comment on any application.

Public comments were fed into the Initial Evaluation process, especially for assessing string similarity and community concerns.

Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) Advice

The GAC reviewed the applications and could issue GAC Early Warnings (late 2012), signaling concerns early.

Later, the GAC provided formal advice (notably in the Beijing Communiqué in April 2013), flagging applications they recommended should not proceed or require extra safeguards.

Initial Evaluation Process

ICANN began reviewing applications on a batch basis.

The Initial Evaluation covered:

- String similarity,
- Applicant background,
- Technical & financial capabilities,
- Registry services.

The first results of the Initial Evaluations were published starting in March 2013.

Contention Resolution

For strings with multiple applicants (contention sets), applicants had options:

1. Negotiate privately, often via private auction,
2. Or go to ICANN's auction of last resort.

Private auctions and contention resolution processes started gaining momentum in 2013–2014. I will discuss private auctions a little later.

Contracting and Pre-Delegation Testing

Successful applicants moved into the contracting phase with ICANN to sign the Registry Agreement. After that, they underwent Pre-Delegation Testing to ensure they could technically run a TLD.

Delegation to the Root

The first batch of new gTLDs was delegated (added to the root zone) starting in October 2013. This is when new extensions like .شباب (shabaka), .guru, and .bike started to go live.

Sunrise and General Availability:

New registries were required to open with a Sunrise period (priority registration for trademark holders), followed by general availability for the public.

Application Fees - Does ICANN Offer Refunds?

Yes, they do! But there are conditions, and the longer you go along the process, the refunds are prorata. So, if you are going through the process and decide that it isn't for you, ICANN will allow you to change your mind and get partial refunds. This is explained further in ICANN's official Applicant Guidebook. Below is the language used in the May 30, 2025 Draft Applicant Guidebook:

2.3.3.1 gTLD Evaluation Fee Refunds

In certain circumstances, applicants may request a partial refund of the fees paid to ICANN as part of the new gTLD application process, as set out below. The refund amount will vary based on the stage of the process at which the withdrawal is requested or the application status changes to Terminated.

The next round application process will include three distinct refund windows, as follows:

1. The first window spans ***from the receipt of the applicant's gTLD evaluation fee to ten days*** after String Confirmation Day, during which **65%** of the gTLD evaluation fee paid is eligible for refund.
2. The second window covers the period from ***11 days after String Confirmation Day until the start of the Application and Applicant Evaluation***, with **35%** of the gTLD evaluation fee paid eligible as a refund.

3. The third window extends from ***the initiation of an Application and Applicant Evaluation up to the point at which the applicant enters into a Registry Agreement*** with ICANN, allowing for a **20%** refund of the gTLD evaluation fee paid. The refund policy in 2026 is stricter than it was in 2012. This means you will need to be much more prepared and committed in this round.

Although it sounds like a lot, we got through the process. There was a lot of camaraderie among applicants (at least the ones we worked with) and a lot of excitement as the process moved along. You felt like you were on the edge because at any given time, an objection by the GAC or some other interest could hold up or stop your application. In fact, some were stopped. Some are still in legal limbo, like the application for .web. But most got through the process, especially the ones that had no contention.

There were many public comments and GAC warnings, but things progressed to the ultimate point where new gTLDs were being “delegated.” That meant they were being added to the root and offered to the public (or, in the case of brands, being allowed to create sub-domains for use by the brands themselves).

Were/Are New gTLDs Successful?

In my view, they were, and they still are. There is controversy. Many people are critical of the idea and the process. There have been many brands that have allowed their new gTLDs to lapse or even cancel. A few brands sold their TLDs to others to operate generically.

New GTLDs may be a little ahead of their time. Switching over huge, enterprise websites is no small task. Communicating to employees, vendors, customers, and other stakeholders that you now operate your online business on a new corporate-owned

top-level domain is also a monumental task. Many of us in the industry feel that the applicants needed support in the C-suite and may not have had that. If you are an enterprise applicant, I would agree with that. Doing a new gTLD out of a field office, even if you have the budget, is likely not going to work.

There is a subsequent section that explains why I believe brand-specific TLDs are probably the strongest cases if executed correctly. The amount of money spent protecting brands in the domain name world is unfathomable and could be better done through the innovative use of a corporate top-level domain.

As far as generic new TLDs are concerned, success is in the eye of the beholder. Many judge success by the number of domains sold. That's a good measure, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Tremendous business value has been created in this space. This, too, I will discuss in the following sections. Smaller, or one-string applicants have had struggles, but some of them have sold their TLDs for plenty enough to be happy that they did it.

Many critics of the new gTLDs are doing so to protect their interests. For example, some domain investors, who own many .com domains, will say, "Dot.com is king!" They're right by the way, the number of domains registered under .com dwarfs almost all new gTLD numbers. However, times are changing, and a new generation of domain buyers are beginning to accept these new endings. If you only look at Domains Under Management (DUM), you could say that new gTLDs are not successful. They don't come near the numbers of .com. But, from the point of view of applicants, I have seen mostly great financial success. They are either operating their registry on an ongoing basis or have exited at great profit.

A key component for success has been scale. Registries like Identity Digital and GoDaddy Registry are successful because they are too big to be ignored by registrars, the retailers of the domain

business. These large registries are often interested in acquiring reasonably successful smaller TLDs. You might do better by applying for ten TLDs rather than applying for one.

Methods of Resolving Contention

Applicants were encouraged to resolve string contention cases among themselves prior to the string contention resolution stage. This was meant to be a last step before delegation so that all the other steps could play out. In the absence of resolution by the contending applicants, string contention cases were to be resolved either through a community priority evaluation (if a community-based applicant was involved) or through an auction.

Another aspect of success involved private auctions (but that will not be allowed this time around). As part of the process of resolving contention in 2012, ICANN devised “Auctions of Last Resort.” This meant that if a group of applicants could not resolve their contention sets by business agreements, they could participate in an ICANN auction. Whoever won the auction would be the single registry for that string. ICANN would get the auction proceeds.

A smart subset of applicants came up with the idea of “private auctions” as a way of resolving contention in a win/win way. It worked like this: If all parties in a particular contention set could agree, they would hold a private auction run by an impartial auctioneer. The winner of the auction would pay the proceeds into escrow, and the “losers’ would split that money. This was a no-brainer to accept the proposition, and many applicants profited from this program. I gathered some results from the 2012 round, both private and public, for you to see below.

Top 5 Private New gTLD Auction Sales (Since 2012)

#1 **.blog**

\$19 million

The biggest well-known private auction sale went to .blog, which fetched a hefty \$19 million. It was won by a company run by WordPress.com (Automattic). They beat out major contenders like Google and Donuts to get it.

#2 **.baby**

\$3.1 million

Johnson & Johnson took home .baby in a private auction for \$3.1 million. The brand clearly wanted to secure a trusted namespace for baby-related products and content. It was subsequently sold to .xyz (the amount has not been disclosed)

#3 **.sex**

\$3.0 million

ICM Registry, the operator of .xxx, paid \$3 million in a private deal to win .sex. They also picked up .porn and .adult in similar arrangements, building out their adult-themed portfolio.

#4 **.club**

Approx. \$3 million (est.)

The price for .club wasn't officially confirmed, but it's widely believed to be around the \$3 million mark. Private auction participants included Donuts and the Merchant Law Group.

#5 .one

\$1 million

One.com won the rights to .one by paying \$1 million in a private auction. It was a three-way contest where the winning price ended up being public, which is rare for these types of auctions.

Top 5 ICANN “Last Resort” Auction Sales

#6 .web

\$135 million

The blockbuster of all auctions. .web was sold through ICANN's official auction for a staggering \$135 million. The bidder was Nu Dot Co, but behind the scenes, it was Verisign footing the bill. This one is still in court. It's believed that Verisign will get it, but the complainant is not going to give up easily.

#7 .shop

\$41.5 million

Another hot commodity was .shop. GMO Registry from Japan paid \$41.5 million to outbid Amazon, Google, and others. It held the record before .web came along.

#8 .app

\$25 million

Google took home .app for \$25 million in an ICANN auction. There were 12 other applicants, including Amazon and Radix. This was one of the earliest high-profile auctions to break into the \$ 20M+ range.

#9 **.tech**

\$6.8 million

Radix-affiliated Dot Tech LLC spent nearly \$6.8 million for .tech. This one had multiple bidders pushing past the \$6 million mark before Radix secured the win.

#10 **.buy**

\$4.6 million

Amazon picked up .buy for just under \$4.6 million. Another commerce-focused string, it saw competition from Google and others but went to Amazon in the end. Obviously, the ICANN auctions were public and the numbers higher. Most of the private auctions were conducted in private (I mean, the results were not released), but it was a great way to settle contention. It is not going to be the same in 2026. ICANN, after much deliberation, doesn't want new gTLDs to be applied for as part of a "gaming scheme" just to win auction proceeds. I can understand this. Regardless, the lack of this process does not diminish the business value of a new or growing generic TLD. I am sure that successful applicants will eventually be able to sell their businesses, but just not through a private auction as part of contention resolution. You can't blame ICANN. I think they'd rather have those auction proceeds for future growth and new programs. Just recently, they used \$10M of the proceeds from the 2012 auctions to fund grants to non-profit programs that benefit the Internet and increase security online.

The 2026 Application Window

Yes, it's happening again!

ICANN has been working on the plan to open a new window for applications in April of 2026; It's coming up very fast. There has been much discussion on how this new round will be conducted. ICANN has been working on it literally since the last round was closed. In my view, much of ICANN's *raison d'être* has become the new gTLD Program. That might be an exaggeration, but it really does take a lot of their time and resources, and it appears that much of their revenue and funding over the next several years will come from this program.

Why Time is of the Essence

It's happening again! Since the end of the last application round in 2012, ICANN has been releasing and "delegating" those strings into the IANA root and allowing them to be used and sold to the public.

That is why time is of the essence. I'm writing this book as fast as I can because after April 2026, it'll likely be less useful for years to come. The only thing that could change that is if ICANN decides to make the application for new gTLDs a permanent, ongoing feature of the process. They might do that, but no one really knows. In addition, after this round of new gTLDs, there will likely be a diminishing return on investment. Good "Strings" (those groups of alpha-characters strung together) will be harder

to come by. Strings like .art, .club, and .online have already been applied for and implemented. They are “taken” AND so will be the singular and plural expressions of the same. For example, in this coming round, you won’t be able to apply for .clubs, .babies, or .bargains. Their singular or plural alternatives have been delegated, and ICANN is not allowing the alternatives to be applied for this time.

Considering all that there is to be done, it will increase your chance of success if you begin your plan ASAP. As you go through the items below, the importance of planning will become obvious. There is no way to predict the variables. We don’t know how many applications will come in. We don’t know how many entities will apply for the string that you may be interested in. If you are new to the process, you may not even know what string(s) you want to apply for. The quality of the string you choose and the business case you make are all important. Now that I may have discouraged you, let’s look at some more positive aspects and opportunities in applying for a new TLD. The following chapters are about just that for both generic TLDs and Brand TLDs.

Why Would You Want to Own a Top-Level Domain?

How Good is the Domain Name Business?

If you are a potential applicant for a new top-level domain name, you may be asking yourself or your staff, “How good is the domain name business?” or “Should we be involved in a new top-level domain?” I’ve been in the business for over 20 years, and I admit that I ask myself this same question each year, just as part of my professional self-assessment. I must say that I always come back with the decision to stay in this business. Here are some reasons why:

Profitability

Although profit margins on most domain names are squeezed because of competition, it is a “transactional sale”. This means that, if you keep the processes automated (which is generally easy to do in the domain name business), any amount of net profit is high because the cost of provisioning the product is so low.

This formula changes if you are operating a sponsored or restricted registry because there is a cost involved in verification (making sure that a registrant qualifies for the domain name). But certainly, the process of verification can be automated in many ways as well. In any event, manual processes raise your costs. The domain industry thrives on automation.

Predictability

One of the most valuable aspects of the domain name business is that once registrants choose a domain, they tend to keep it. Renewal rates in the industry are in the realm of 40% to 85% and improve with age. This allows for business predictability and steady growth. In effect, the success of your customers' businesses (and/or hobbies or personal interests) is directly tied to your domain business. Because renewal rates are predictable, this ensures much easier business planning. Renewal rates generally rise with every year a domain stays registered (up to ten years at a time).

Business Risk

The domain name industry is digital. You are selling digital assets that have plenty of upside and really have little risk of loss. If you are defrauded by credit card fraud, you just cancel the domain. You've not borne the cost of shipping, you've not lost any physical goods, and you control the asset entirely (as a registry). You can turn domain names on or off in an instant simply by changing the DNS record. It is painful to see how many businesses that ship physical goods nationally and internationally lose their shirts on fraud or mistakes. The domain name business carries none of this kind of loss potential.

Repeat / Cross-Selling Opportunities

Almost every business/or non-profit, or organization in the world needs a website today. This has become a fact of life. A website is often the most practical and basic need in business communications. In fact, it is often one of the first things that a company does when opening its doors. A domain name registry (or registrar) has access to businesses from the moment of their inception,

so it is a grand entree for other business services. Most domain name registrars also offer web hosting, merchant accounts, privacy services, directory listings, marketing services, etc. The potential for upgrades and additional business services offered to domain name registrants is limited only by your imagination.

Growth Potential

When I started in the industry, I couldn't believe it when we (the industry) passed the million-domain-names-registered mark. Today, according to Verisign's Domain Name Brief, the industry is at 386+ million domain names registered across all top-level domains. Many experts believe that this is just the beginning. Certainly, the Internet is widely being used and known as a medium, but, from a business standpoint (businesses using the Internet as a channel for communication and sales), it is only just beginning. I do not doubt that as more and more businesses and individuals find uses for the Internet, these numbers will double.

New top-level domain names will open several opportunities for companies and individuals worldwide, and it will become easier for entities to find a practical, useful domain name that they identify with because there will be so many more choices. I don't buy the idea that the Internet will become confusing because of these new choices. If the Internet existed when I was in second grade, I would have been able to tell the difference between `ford.com`, `ford.car`, and even `car.ford`. It's basic second-grade reading; not that complicated. Internet users will be able to tell the difference and understand the choices. Services will be provided to assist people in finding their way around.

Stability

Many businesses are cyclical and dependent on the economy and business cycles. Think real estate or retail. They are often also dependent on locales. California and Nevada have been hard hit by recessions over the years. The Internet is global and thus more resistant to local and national business cycles. It has its ups and downs, booms and busts, but overall, it has continued to grow.

Security

Just like we still use physical addresses to identify the locations of our homes and businesses in the 21st century, we will need virtual addresses to identify our virtual locations for the foreseeable future. This need should be a staple for many years to come, and domain names are at the very heart of this system.

The Domain Name System was born out of a very human attribute: we remember names easier than we do numbers. That attribute seems unlikely to change. Staking your claim in the virtual world via the domain name industry (or a new Top-Level Domain) seems to be a safe bet on the future, assuming you choose and win a TLD with a market behind it.

Competition

A domain name registry is a natural monopoly. Although registrants can register other names and other endings, if they want your ending bad enough, you are the only place they can get it. And there is still a ton of growth waiting to happen in the e-commerce world.

Lifestyle

Because of the global nature of domains, the business offers you a chance to travel all over the world as part of your job. I've been

to over 50 countries as part of my work in the domain name industry. There is a group of people in the business who regularly travel and work together. It's a fun business to be in.

Domain Strings, the Spectrum of Words, And Value

The parts of a domain name are often referred to as "strings". Strings have intrinsic value depending on several things. The attributes below represent required and desirable attributes of a string. Under .com, desirable strings have been traded and transferred for tens of millions of dollars over the years. There are many reasons for that, and it may not be the same for all new gTLDs. But the principles are the same. See below:

What is Generally Required in a Domain Name?

- Uniqueness—No two domains can be alike
- Certain characters a-z, 0-9, dashes (-)
- One dot (.) or more
- Between 1 and 63 alphanumeric characters

What is Desirable in a Domain Name?

- .com—New gTLDs are accepted, but .com is still the gold standard of suffixes.
- Generic (or)
- Descriptive and/or Brandable
- Short
- Easy-to-Spell

- Not tricky or cute (e.g. “names-4-u.com”— Consider all the variants of that.

What Creates Value?

- Scarcity
- Commercial Value of the string (finance sector vs. crocheting)
- Desirability
- Memorability

The Domain Spectrum

I like to think of domains the same way the world looks at the radio spectrum. There are unlimited frequencies, but only a small number of them are useful for communications. Wide frequencies are too low to be heard, and tight frequencies are dangerous. In the middle, there exists a group of frequencies that are useful for radio and cellular transmissions. The U.S. government has auctioned these frequencies to private companies for billions of dollars over the years.

My favorite story is that of Craig McCaw's. Mr. McCaw began buying up wireless spectrum in the 1980s, when most people felt it was worthless. Small, local radio stations struggled to sell advertising and stay in business. McCaw bought them and gathered up radio rights everywhere he could. In the 1990s, he sold his rights to AT&T for billions of dollars.

I'm not suggesting that a new TLD applicant will be able to do this, but I know that there is much value in certain commercial strings. There is rarity, and there is still low-hanging fruit. You will hear from many corners that the best strings are taken.

Well, that is true, but this entire process is still hardly known to the widest and most resourceful people in the world. Opportunity still exists, and I am sure that many people wish they had applied last time. In fact, I'm sure of it.

In either event, many good strings are still available, and I am sure that when this is over, we'll see a new set of entrepreneurs who will be very pleased, to say the least.

Premium Domains

Many gTLD registries have discovered that domain buyers are willing to pay a “premium” for valuable generic terms under their suffixes, opening new revenue possibilities. Registries have charged anywhere from a few hundred dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars for premium domains.

My observation as someone who has worked in both the retail and wholesale sides of the industry is that a registry should designate a reasonable set of premiums at higher-than-normal prices, using an easy-to-explain set of tiered pricing levels. If you go too high, you stand to gain an undesirable reputation among domain investors. But a balanced approach is OK. My view is that there are somewhere between 3000 to 30,000 strings that can reasonably be allocated as premiums, depending on your TLD string.

I want to point out that most of my observations are based on the English language, an area in which I have expertise. However, there are many opportunities in other languages, including non-Latin-script strings (Internationalized Domain Names, IDNs). I'm not as familiar with other languages, but surely opportunities exist.

Top-Level Domains (or Registries) as Assets

In Defense of Domain Names and the Domain Name Industry

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a realist and not afraid to look at problems and risks. In fact, I often worry that I look at negative or real problems too much!

But now I want to make a few points in defense of domain names...

All humans need easy-to-understand addresses. Despite decades of digital transformation around the world, we have not given up our addresses, yes, I mean physical addresses, we still need them.

I believe the same is true for digital addresses (That means domain names).

Domains are the digital equivalent of physical addresses. People need them to direct prospects and clients. People and companies will never want to resign to agents and let agents control where potential customers are sent. People will always want an address that they fully control (a domain name). They will print or use their domain names on any communications they use, including social networks, emails, brochures, billboards, signs, and trade show booths. None of these methods of communication is going away.

General Motors, BMW, Ford, Chrysler, Audi, etc., will each want their own domain name forever. None of them will be

willing to let an agent or a search engine decide where people are sent online. They are competitors. This isn't going to change, and it applies to every industry category.

Domain names are the definitive method of determining fraud. Every security company around the world uses them to tell the difference between fact, fiction, and fraud. Remove domain names, and you disrupt much of the existing online fraud detection in the world. It would cause global chaos.

For over twenty years, some have predicted that other technologies will replace domains. First, it was Google (search engines), then apps, then social media, then IOT, then QR codes, then blockchain, Web 3, and even virtual reality. All these predictions have been wrong, and the growth of domains has steadily continued.

Artificial Intelligence is not going to replace domains. It might replace many kinds of jobs, maybe even mine (LOL), but I don't see AI replacing domain names. Domains are essential to real people and real companies. They are personal and human understandable. People need them for basic online communications. As long as there are people with something to say, something to share, or something to teach others, they will need domain names.

Domains are a part of who people are and who they are becoming (their online identity). And like food, clothing, homes, and physical addresses, they will continue to grow along with the population naturally. I believe that domains will never become defunct and continue to grow (at least as long as people exist). Let's delve deeper into the latest potential "disrupter" of domains, AI and AI Agents.

Domain Names

Still the Best Way to Maintain

Your Free Agency

AI and AI Agents are the newest trends in marketing and technology. According to Afternic, the word "agent" recently entered the top twenty most important keyword list. AO (Agent Optimization) is the new SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Students and workers in business and government are using ChatGPT to innovate, create, and improve their plans and their writing.

But what do agents do for your entrepreneurial independence? How are they affecting the worlds of education, business, and government? Closer to home, how will these trends affect you as you go about your business and your world? Does AI matter to domain names? Will AI replace domain names?

AI Agents Can Reduce Your Independence

I've been concerned for some time about how young people are becoming dependent on ChatGPT to write answers, papers, and more. We risk becoming part of "the Borg" (for you Star Trek fans). Don't get me wrong, I use ChatGPT, but I'm leaning more toward using it to correct grammar and punctuation. I don't like the idea of OpenAI using my writing to train. Where does that training end up? I don't really know, and I'm not sure it's in my best interest. I'd rather pay for a Grammarly subscription and hope that it's mine only (I could be wrong).

AI Will Not Replace Domain Names

The reason is that we love our independence. Over the years, new technologies have affected domain names. But none of them will replace domain names, and neither will AI and Intelligent

Agents. Domain names have become the digital equivalent of our home or business addresses.

Do you still have an address for your home or office? How do people find you if they want to visit you physically? You give them your address. An address is even needed to enter into your GPS. Addresses matter. And so do domain names. They are the single best tool to identify you, who you are, what you do, and how to find you (online).

Maintaining Your Free Agency

Whenever we abdicate our free agency as individuals, non-profits, businesses, and government agencies to an AI, an app, a search engine, a social network, or an AI agent, we lose. We give that entity the power to choose for us. Any thinking person can see that this is a mistake. We don't want others to have that power. Domain names remain the best way for us to control our message, to control our destiny.

Identifying Fraud Online

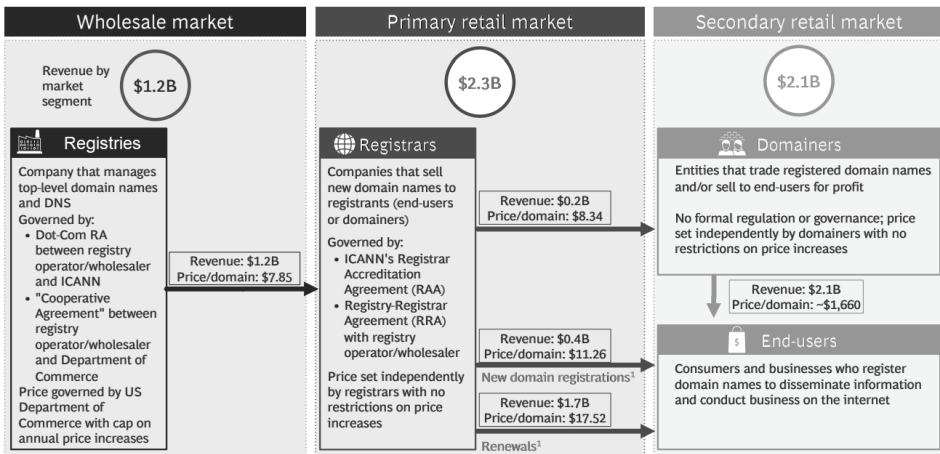
The use of DNS and domain names is at the very heart of the entire online security industry! Experts in the field of domain names started many, if not most, sizeable online security firms. Education for lay people on how to detect fraud, phishing, and pharming in email almost always relies on teaching them how to dig into an email header and see where that email began and where it ended. It all goes back to understanding domain names and the Domain Name System (DNS).

Domain Name Value

A Domain Name Aftermarket Study

Domain names have become assets. In 2021, the Boston Consulting Group conducted a study on the domain industry and included the “secondary market” as a factor. They concluded that the secondary market in domain names is almost as large as the primary retail market, close to \$2.1 billion. These are domain names, already registered by domain name investors (aka domainers) who register them, hold them, and resell them for a profit. It has grown into much more than a cottage industry. There are thousands of domain investors around the world with websites listing their domains for (re)sale at prices ranging from a few hundred to tens of millions. Of course, those multi-million-dollar sales are outliers, but they happen every year, often monthly. Most commonly, aftermarket domains average sale prices are between a few hundred and a few thousand dollars (still a hefty profit when you consider the average registration prices of less than \$50 per year).

The secondary market is therefore almost as big as the primary market!



A very essential aspect of value is rarity.

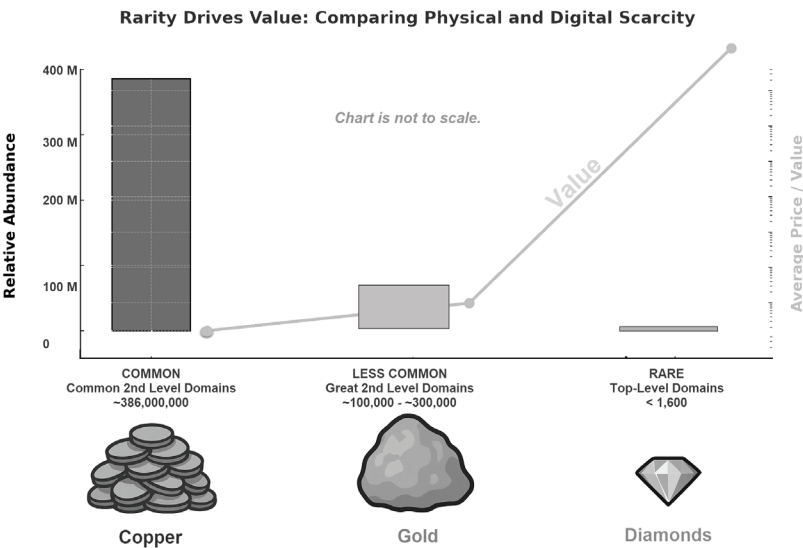
There are ~386,000,000 registered second-level domain names.

*There are only ~1,500 Top-Level Domains
in the whole world.*

People have been saying there are no more inventions to be made or no more new ideas since the history of mankind.

When it comes to top-level domains, I believe it is entirely false that there are no more good choices. I have already begun my research and see many possibilities. For example, hundreds of good foreign language terms are still not applied for. My point is that there are still words and strings to apply for.

Rarity Drives Value



Now consider this.

As of the first quarter of 2025, Verisign reported that there are ~386 million domain names registered worldwide. At the same time, there are only about 1,500 Top-Level Domain names in existence. Word strings are a limited resource, with each holding varying value. No two are the same. They can be similar but not the same. Some word strings, like finance, travel, and business, represent wide-ranging and significant commercial value. Others, like yarn and pens, represent a more limited value.

My point is that Top-Level Domains are rare digital objects with value. If 386 million registered domains represent \$2.1 billion in value, how much value is represented by 1,500 top-level domains? No one really knows. But I think it is safe to assume that the value is significant.

Please understand that I'm not "selling" the idea of applying for top-level domain names. These are my perspectives, the basics of how to apply, and my thoughts on what we might expect in the coming year. But I can say that some of the most successful people I know in the industry are going to apply. This section of the book simply points out the pros.

Business Models & Opportunities for Brands

Should You Apply if You Are a Brand Manager?

My personal view is that any brand that spends \$1M or more per year on advertising should apply for their brand or some version of it. In this section, I will make my case. Then I will detail nine new TLD Scenarios for you to consider, along with possible actions to take.

Why Brands Should Consider Applying for Their Own Top-Level Domain

Anyone involved in branding, marketing, or digital strategy knows the challenge: maintaining control of your brand online is a constant battle. No matter how thoroughly companies register domain names and cover their bases, there always seem to be loopholes that others exploit, whether through typo squatting, cybersquatting, or simple opportunism.

Having worked in this industry for many years, I have seen how brands have been forced into a defensive posture. But with the next round of new Top-Level Domains (TLDs) on the horizon, there is a significant opportunity for companies to shift from defense to offense and take greater control of their digital identities.

The Unintended Consequences of Building the Dot-Com Brand

Since 1997, when the internet became a mainstream platform, U.S. advertisers have invested more than 11 trillion dollars across various media. A large portion of that investment has included their website addresses, most often ending in .com. This has had a powerful, if unintended, side effect: brands have not only promoted themselves but also reinforced the dominance of the .com namespace.

By conservative estimates, if even 1% of that total advertising spend strengthened the .com brand, that equates to over 110 billion dollars in indirect promotion of .com. In 2023 alone, U.S. advertising spending was approximately 360 billion dollars, suggesting that .com benefited from an estimated 3.6 billion dollars of additional brand reinforcement.

In other words, businesses have spent decades investing their advertising dollars in a system they do not own, and one that, ironically, often works against them by enabling cybersquatting and typo squatting.

How Cybersquatting and Typo Squatting Persist

The familiar pattern is still very much alive today. Two key behaviors continue to create challenges for brands:

- Typo squatters register misspelled versions of well-known domain names, capitalizing on accidental traffic.
- Cybersquatters acquire domain names that closely match famous brands or their slogans, often

using them to generate advertising revenue or to resell at a premium.

This remains a global issue. I have personally seen companies spend substantial amounts of money, sometimes in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, recovering domains that should have been theirs by default. One well-known example is Utube.com, a legitimate pipe manufacturing business that saw its traffic explode when YouTube rose to prominence. Rather than fight the tide, they monetized the unexpected visitors by displaying advertising. The case highlights how quickly a domain, even one registered in good faith, can take on an entirely new function simply because of public attention and human error.

Legal and regulatory efforts such as UDRP have provided mechanisms for recourse, but the cost and complexity of defending a brand across multiple TLDs and jurisdictions remain significant.

The Hidden Costs of Defensive Strategies

Most brands today have adopted defensive measures to protect their digital presence. These include:

- Registering multiple domain name variations and common misspellings.
- Acquiring ccTLDs in countries where they operate or might operate in the future.
- Engaging digital brand consultants to monitor and manage domain portfolios.
- Pursuing legal action to recover infringing domain names.

However, there are additional, often overlooked costs:

- Brand dilution. The presence of similar domain names in the market can weaken the clarity and distinctiveness of a brand.
- Loss of goodwill. When consumers land on a deceptive or unrelated domain, any negative experience is often associated, unfairly, with the legitimate brand.
- Wasted advertising spend. Brands may find themselves paying for clicks and impressions that are effectively correcting consumer misdirection caused by typos or cybersquatting.

In short, even robust defensive measures often result in a patchwork approach that fails to eliminate the underlying problem.

The Value of Owning a Brand-Specific TLD

The introduction of brand-specific TLDs offers a fundamentally different approach. Instead of continually defending a position within someone else's namespace, a company can own its own.

This provides several clear advantages:

- Total control. Only the brand owner determines who can register domains within the TLD.
- Focused brand equity. All advertising and marketing efforts serve to strengthen the

brand exclusively, rather than reinforcing a third-party namespace like .com.

- Elimination of cybersquatting risk. With full ownership of the namespace, no third party can register confusingly similar domains within it.
- Shaping consumer behavior. Over time, consumers come to associate the brand with its own unique TLD, increasing trust and recognition.

While it requires an upfront investment and a long-term commitment, the benefits of a brand TLD extend well beyond technical control. It becomes a strategic asset, one that can reinforce brand integrity across every market and platform.

Reflections on Brand Behavior During the First New TLD Round

I was closely involved with the domain industry during the 2012 new TLD application round, and one moment stands out: the public reveal of the applied-for TLDs. It was an exciting time. The atmosphere was filled with curiosity and anticipation, but also with a surprising level of caution from many global brands.

At that time, a significant number of well-known companies either declined to participate or took a "wait-and-see" approach. Some were skeptical about the need for their own TLD; the perceived complexity and cost deterred others. In retrospect, many of those same brands later found themselves wishing they had been more proactive, especially as issues of online security, brand dilution, and consumer trust continued to escalate.

What was most interesting to me was how willing brands were to spend significant sums on defending their trademarks within existing namespaces, yet hesitant to invest in something that would have given them lasting ownership and control.

Looking at the landscape now, more than a decade later, it is clear that brand owners are far better informed and much more aware of the risks posed by cybersquatting and brand impersonation. Consumers, too, have grown accustomed to a broader range of TLDs, making the environment even more favorable for brand-specific namespaces.

Taking the Next Step

For many brands, a TLD may no longer be a novelty but a practical tool for enhancing security, improving brand integrity, and building long-term digital assets.

I believe that the next few years will mark a pivotal shift. Brands that choose to invest in their own TLDs will secure a stronger, more independent position in the digital marketplace, one that is less vulnerable to external threats and more capable of sustaining consumer trust.

The opportunity is there. The question is whether brands are ready to seize it this time. Of course, this may not be true for all brands. Let's examine some specific scenarios and possible actions.

Nine Brand TLD Scenarios and Possible Actions to Take

Some situations warrant applying for your brand name in a new TLD. Some situations may not warrant an application. There are also scenarios where you may want to apply in cooperation with others in your trade, creating an industry effort. No one really knows how the next round of new TLDs will play out, but I hope this section will help you in your decision.

Cost is a factor with smaller brands. If you have your brand name registered under .com or if you have a category-defining .com domain registered, that should factor into your decision process.

I only discuss .com domain names here because they are exponentially more valuable than other TLD endings, and they are exponentially more important. Dot.com domain names get more global direct navigation traffic than any other TLD ending and will likely continue to do so for an unforeseen amount of time.

*Direct Navigation Traffic means that end users type in the domain name into their browser bar—Yes, it still happens.

Nine Brand & TLD Scenarios

There aren't many detailed breakdowns of the scenarios like the ones we will look at below to help you in your decision process. Let's cross-reference some scenarios with other factors and discuss the pros and cons of each. You can decide on your own which scenarios justify your decision(s).

Examples I use here are purely that, for example. They are meant to indicate nothing about the subject’s interest or non-interest in a new TLD or my knowledge thereof. Some of them already have their own TLDs. They are just for example here. Some of my examples have already been applied for and delegated.

Nine Types of Scenarios		Suggested Actions
1.) You Have A Famous Brand and Have Already Registered It in .com	2.) You Have Registered One or More high-level Level Business Category .com domains	A.) Brainstorm a Name Suitable to Promote As a New TLD Or Hire an Expert In Corporate or Strategic Naming. Develop an Acceptable New Brand / Identity That Can Qualify
3.) You are a Conglomerate and Have Many Famous Brands (P&G).	4.) You Have a Famous Brand that Will Qualify as a New TLD (SKY)	B.) Apply for a New TLD for Your Brand.
5.) You have a Famous Brand that doesn't qualify as a New TLD Because In Its Best-Known Form, it Only Has Two Characters (GM)	6.) You have a Famous Brand That Doesn't qualify as a New TLD because, in its Best-Known Form, it is Already Taken By an Existing ccTLD or gTLD (CA)	C.) Apply for a New Category-Defining TLD On Your Own.
7.) You Have A Famous Brand That Doesn't qualify as a New TLD because in its Best-Known Form, it contains an Unqualified TLD Character (3M, AT&T, or P&G)	8.) You Have A Famous Brand That in its Best-Known Form Would Be Difficult to Shorten for Use as a TLD (Mutual of Omaha). A Shorter URL is a Distinct Advantage.	D.) Apply for a New Category-Defining TLD In Cooperation with Your Industry.
9.) You Are Looking for a New Business or Revenue Opportunity.		E.) Don't Apply for New TLD. Continue to Promote Your .com Domain Name.

Quick-Reference Table - Scenarios
and Possible Actions

Nine Scenarios—Summary:

- 1.** You Have A Famous Brand and Have Already Registered It in .com
- 2.** You Have Registered One or More high-level business Category .com Domain Names in Your Industry.
- 3.** You are a Conglomerate and Have Many Famous Brands (P&G).
- 4.** You Have a Famous Brand that Will Qualify as a New TLD (SKY).
- 5.** You have a Famous Brand that doesn't qualify as a New TLD because, In Its Best-Known Form, it Only Has Two Characters (GM)
- 6.** You Have a Famous Brand That Doesn't Qualify as a New TLD Because, in its Best-Known Form, it is Already Taken By an Existing ccTLD or gTLD (CA)
- 7.** You Have A Famous Brand That Doesn't Qualify as a New TLD Because in its Best-Known Form, it Contains an Unqualified TLD Character (3M, AT&T, or P&G)
- 8.** You Have A Famous Brand That, in its Best-Known Form, Would Be Difficult to Shorten for Use as a TLD (Mutual of Omaha). A Shorter URL is a Distinct Advantage.
- 9.** You Are Looking for a New Business Or Revenue Opportunity.

Possible Action Summary

1. Brainstorm a Name Suitable to Promote As a New TLD Or Hire an Expert In Corporate or Strategic Naming. Develop an Acceptable New Brand / Identity That Can Qualify.
2. Apply for a New TLD for Your Brand.
3. Apply for a New Category-Defining TLD On Your Own.
4. Apply for a New Category-Defining TLD In Cooperation with Your Industry.
5. Don't Apply for a New TLD. Continue to Promote Your .com Domain Name.

Possible Scenarios – Details and Suggested Actions

1. You have a Famous Brand and Have Already Registered it in .com

This brings up some interesting questions. If you already have the .com version of your brand, you are in a strong position online. Is it worth applying for the new TLD as well? If you apply for and win the new TLD, which should you promote and advertise, the .com version or the new TLD?

I believe that brands that own the .com version of their brand (most of them do) should apply for their new TLD. I think it will bring distinction and many other benefits to the brand over time that will

last as long as the brand and for less than the cost of a single extensive television ad campaign. There is an argument that since you own the trademark and the dot.com version of the brand, you can object if someone else tries to apply for it and likely preside, saving your company the expense of running a new TLD. That's a legitimate argument if you don't buy into the value of new TLDs.

2. You Have Registered One or More high-level business Category .com Domain Names in Your Industry.

Registering a business-category domain name under .com has proven to be a significantly positive strategy. Many successful brands are built on this concept. They have either been started from scratch or bought the business-category domain to build their brand upon. Examples include Hotels.com or 1800Contacts.com. So, if you are one of these companies, the primary consideration now is, "Do I want a new competitor in my space?" I have special experience in this area since I have worked for companies that own successful business category dotcoms. My former employer owned US.COM and, since 1999, sold the sub-domains all around the world. When the .us domain name was re-delegated and made freely available, we saw a surge in traffic to us.com. We see the same thing at it.com, the company I work for now. We get .it traffic almost every day (.it is the ccTLD for Italy). I believe that this is because many people around the world are used to typing .com at the end of domain names. So, if you allow someone else to apply for the same string as your dot.com domain in a new TLD, it will have a positive effect on your traffic. But I would not like

having someone else own my brand in a new gTLD at all. By the way, it can happen. What if they are in a completely different class of business? It's possible they could prevail in a dispute based on that. Of course, many factors would have to be considered (How famous are you?). The problem is that things will be different in a new TLD world. Suppose consumers and end users become accustomed to the new paradigm offered by new TLDs. In that case, you may find yourself with a well-funded competitor who has a differentiated and possibly more trusted ending to their domain. This is a call that only you can make.

3. You Are a Conglomerate and Have Many Famous Brands (P&G).

There are a few things to consider. One thing is the idea of using one unifying TLD for the entire brand. For example, Unilever could apply for dot.unilever or P&G could apply for dot.pandg. The idea here is that the conglomerate could use its new TLD for all its brands. They would no longer advertise dot.com domain names and spend their money only advertising brands under their new TLD. Another angle is to give responsibility to each division or brand. Some brands are well known only in certain circles or vertical markets and may not justify the spending on a new TLD. The application process requires one application for each string of letters, so this may be best decided on a per-brand basis. It may be best to consider each brand under the scenarios to be discussed next.

4. You Have a Famous Brand That Will Qualify as a New TLD (SKY).

Many brands could have an easy qualification process. They are famous, have the money to preside in an auction, and are the most obvious brands for specific new TLDs. If the new TLD paradigm takes hold with companies and consumers, it may become the norm for large brands to have their own TLDs, and it may become prudent for large brands to do so. This will differentiate them in consumers' minds and could end up being expected. Since a barrier to entry is desirable in competitive environments and new TLDs are naturally rare, a TLD for famous brands may become the norm. Not having a specialized TLD will be seen by consumers as less professional.

5. You have a Famous Brand that doesn't qualify as a New TLD because, in its Best-Known Form, it Only Has Two Characters (GM)

ICANN is not allowing 2-letter domains to be used in new TLDs. If your brand is commonly known by two letters and you don't own the .com version of your brand, and you want to play in the new TLD space, you may want to consult an expert in corporate naming or come up with a new TLD that will tie in with your brand. If you own the .com or most strategic ccTLD for your brand, then you may want to stay with that and stay away from new TLDs. But keep your eye on the process, in case someone else applies for a string that matters to your company. You can object.

6. You have a Famous Brand that doesn't qualify as a New TLD because, in its Best-Known Form, it Is Already Taken by an Existing ccTLD or gTLD (CA)

There are a few strategies to consider. I put forward the idea in an article once on my blog that a company like GM might consider approaching Gambia (.gm) to see if they can strike a deal. It wouldn't be the first time that a country farmed out its TLD for extra revenue, and it could be a win/win program.

If your brand doesn't qualify as a new TLD and you don't own the .com version of your brand, and you want to play in the new TLD space, you may want to consult an expert in corporate naming or come up with a new TLD that will tie in with your brand.

If you own the .com or most strategic ccTLD for your brand, then you may want to stay with that and stay away from new TLDs.

7. You Have a Famous Brand That Doesn't Qualify as a New TLD Because in its Best-Known Form, it Contains an Unqualified TLD Character (3M, AT&T, or Yahoo!)

ICANN is not allowing numbers to be used in this round of TLDs, so one consideration (not desirable but possible) is to spell out your name. 3M could be dot.threeM. I don't like it, but that is a consideration.

The other scenario is where your brand name contains a symbol, ampersand, or other punctuation such as Yahoo!. You could drop it. I think AT&T is famous enough to get by and be easily recognized without the ampersand, but this may not always work.

Consider consulting an expert in corporate naming, or come up with a new TLD that will tie in with your

brand. If you own the .com or most strategic ccTLD for your brand, then you may want to stay with that.

8. You Have a Famous Brand That in its Best-Known Form Would Be Difficult to Shorten for Use as a TLD (Mutual of Omaha).

There is a distinct advantage to a short URL. This is evidenced by 1.) Virtue of their rarity (There are only 17,576 possible three-letter combinations available and many fewer that are truly desirable), 2.) the fact that ICANN is not allowing two-letter TLDs to be created, and 3.) the high aftermarket values in three-letter dot.com & ccTLD domain names.

You can consider a rebranding effort with a shorter name. Consider consulting an expert in corporate naming, or come up with a new TLD that will tie in with your brand.

9. You Are Looking for a New Business or Revenue Opportunity.

All business ideas contain risk. Successful businesses are often funded at amounts above three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand dollars. That is around the minimum you should budget for a new TLD. And, depending on the particular string you are considering, it could be substantially more. The .web TLD sold for 135 million dollars in an ICANN auction last time. So, if you are planning to apply for a widely known and obvious string for a new TLD, you'd better be well funded. Why not control a generic TLD within the industry that you operate? I think that some of the best opportunities lie in lesser obvious niche TLDs where markets exist, but the competition will be lower. It appears to me that there

are going to be significant opportunities in this space. Although I've always believed that dot.com domain names offer the best starting place for vertical markets and still do, I think that certain niche TLDs will make a dent and possibly dominate their sectors. This is simply because they hold the possibility of capturing the attention and interest of those niche audiences. Niche audiences are interested in their niches. They think about them. They identify with them. They want news about them, and they will likely become aware of their new niche TLD. I think they will want to begin using domains that end with their niche. At the very least, they will register the names they want that are not available in .com or their ccTLD. If you decide to apply for a Brand TLD, the next chapter will give you a strategy to migrate over time.

Building Your New Brand TLD: A Practical Rollout Strategy

Securing your own Top-Level Domain (TLD) is a significant achievement, but owning the namespace is only the beginning. The real value comes in how you implement and integrate your new TLD into your overall digital strategy.

One of the key lessons I have learned over the years is that a new TLD should not be viewed as a quick replacement for existing assets. Instead, it should be approached as a long-term investment that gradually strengthens your brand's independence and digital authority.

Here is a practical rollout strategy I recommend for any brand launching its own TLD.

1. Conduct a Full Audit of Your Online Presence

Before making any changes, it is essential to understand your current digital footprint.

This involves a thorough inventory of:

- Your existing websites and microsites
- Social media profiles across all platforms
- Customer portals, apps, and digital tools
- Affiliate marketing links and partner pages

- Email domains and campaign URLs
- Any third-party platforms where your brand has a presence

This audit establishes a baseline and highlights areas where your brand may be vulnerable to inconsistency or fragmentation. It also serves as the roadmap for how you will leverage your new TLD moving forward.

2. Build a Parallel Online Presence

Rather than overhauling your entire online identity overnight, which can disrupt SEO, user experience, and backend systems, it is wise to build a foundational presence within your new TLD namespace.

This might include:

- A primary landing page or gateway site explaining your new TLD
- Key microsites or subdomains (for example, **Products.YourBrand** or **support.YourBrand**)
- Early-use cases such as vanity URLs for marketing campaigns or personalized client portals

The goal at this stage is not to dismantle what you have already built, especially if your existing infrastructure has been optimized over many years. Instead, you are laying the foundation for the next phase of your digital growth.

3. Phase In New Processes Gradually

Once your new TLD is live and the basic structure is in place, begin shifting new initiatives to the new namespace. Examples include:

- Launching new products and services under your new TLD
- Creating dedicated landing pages for new campaigns using your new URL
- Updating internal systems, including email addresses, intranet portals, and documentation, to align with the new namespace
- Using your new TLD for partnerships, public relations, and media outreach

By introducing the new TLD incrementally, you minimize disruption while signaling a clear direction to your stakeholders and audience. Your legacy domains should remain live to preserve search rankings, shopping carts, and other essential systems, but the focus should begin to shift.

4. Shift Promotional Spend to the New TLD

A key part of successful adoption is making a deliberate effort to promote your new namespace. This means:

- ***Ending promotional spending that reinforces your old .com or other domains***
- Featuring the new TLD prominently across advertising, product packaging, and corporate communications

- Encouraging customers, partners, and employees to engage with your new namespace
- You can continue linking to legacy systems as needed, but all new marketing and outreach should emphasize your new TLD. Over time, this will naturally shift both audience behavior and market perception.

Engage and Educate Your Audience

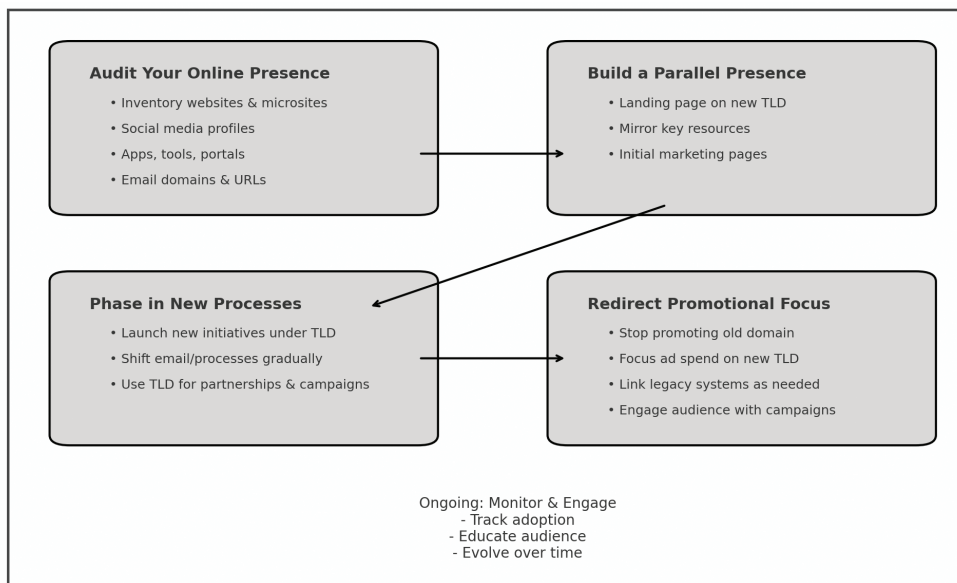
Remember that a new TLD is not just a technical change; it is an opportunity to re-engage your stakeholders. Consider strategies such as:

- Campaigns that highlight your new digital identity and what it means for your brand
- Exclusive offers or experiences available only through your new TLD
- Storytelling that reinforces why your new TLD increases security, trust, and brand cohesion
- The more you involve your community in this transition, the stronger the long-term association with your brand will be.

A Strategy for the Long Game

A new brand TLD is not a short-term project. It is a strategic asset designed to serve your brand's interests for decades to come. By

auditing your presence, building a solid foundation, phasing in new initiatives, and directing your promotional energy toward your new namespace, you position your brand for long-term strength and autonomy in an evolving digital landscape.



Three Brand TLDs that are Working

Here are a few brand-related new TLDs that are actively building their brands online, along with some examples of domains that exist within their zones. This process is young, but evolving.

- **.sky**—<https://bit.ly/skytld>
- **.sbi**—<https://bit.ly/sbitld>
- **.bmw**—<https://bit.ly/bmwtoplevel>

If you go the Generic Route, Some Successful Examples from the Past

Although the scope of this round of new TLDs is unprecedented, there is a body of knowledge to pull from if you are interested in knowing your chances of success.

The record shows that the success or failure of a TLD lies in the interest and enthusiasm of the Manager. Some TLDs that may seem obscure have done quite well. An example is .cat, which is the TLD representing the Catalanian people. This TLD has been well promoted amongst its constituents, and it has been accepted. It is a successful commercial venture. Others are .shop, .rest, and most recently .bond.

.Bond is crafted specifically for the world of finance. Launched in November of 2019, .bond is for finance businesses looking to establish a formidable online presence as well as for financial professionals looking to differentiate themselves from the herd and show their clients, they are an expert in their field. These all show that there is still an appetite for new TLDs and that an opportunity for success exists.

On the other hand, domains like .coop, .aero, and .museum have languished. Their registration numbers are low, and there seems to be little interest in expanding them. They exist, but there isn't a lot of excitement or promotion within their industries. The difference seems to be how they are managed. Some of these are small parts of extensive TLD portfolios and don't get a lot of attention.

Finally, there are a few TLDs that began mired in controversy but then pivoted to success. DotPro was initially intended for Dentists, Doctors, Engineers, and other professionals. The idea was that it would become standard for professionals online. There

were a lot of rules around who could register a .Pro domain name, and what the minimum qualifications consisted of.

The problem with overly onerous rules for registration became apparent as the operators tried to qualify each registrant. This was often a manual process and increased the cost of doing business.

Over time, it appeared that convenience and profit ruled, and the registry filed to change the rules, making it easier for registrants. The TLD has survived and seems to be doing well.

A few other great examples of successful launches, perhaps the most successfully and smartly launched TLDs in recent history, include club, .xyz, and .co (although not technically a new TLD).

The .club TLD was excellently executed, beginning with a proper balance of holding back premium domains but not so many that it affected their Sunrise, Landrush, and general sales. This meant that they were able to capitalize on their domain, publicize the sale of high-quality generics, and retain a reasonable amount but not a greedy amount of control over their TLD space.

DotCo, the ccTLD for Colombia, which did a relaunch for “Companies” in 2009, also ran a brilliant introductory campaign. Although they had the advantage of super-funding and a globally recognized set of characters (co for company or corporation), anyone planning a new TLD launch would benefit from a study of their campaigns over time.

The .xyz TLD is a fantastic study. They benefited from a massive amount of earned media when Google’s parent company decided to use ABC. xyz as their URL. The news of this spread around the world and made .xyz fashionable. Today, the suffix is coveted by new startups, cryptos, and tech startups worldwide. They also garner very high prices in the aftermarket.

Trade Associations and Co-ops

To end this section, I'd like to suggest that, in most cases, the way to go, if you are considering a generic new TLD, is to cooperate with your trade. Maybe you can avoid an auction that way.

Trade associations have the most to gain by being active champions in the new TLD process. This will give them a new revenue model, will spread the risk evenly, and there is a natural separation between their most prominent members, who can afford their own TLDs, and their smaller members, who may stand to gain by getting their chosen brands or generics within the realm of their new industry-focused TLD.

There was a lot of thought about Intellectual Property that went into ICANN's planning. The most active community in the process was the Intellectual Property community. Although whether you should get a new TLD is up in the air, planning for how new TLDs affect your business and brand should be a certainty in your business planning today.

Crypto/Web3 Domains: Hype vs. Reality

Are Web 3 domains really on the Internet? Of course, they are, but there is a point that many "Web 3 domain" practitioners are missing. They will not have access to the global Internet unless and until they own the right to their matching top-level domain name in the IANA root database. This is the true root of the Internet.

According to some experts, "Web 3 domains" are somewhat misnamed. They should be called Web 3 identifiers. Web 1 is essentially the Internet that existed from the beginning and was primarily a one-way communication, where companies and bloggers communicated to the public. Still, there was little feedback and input from the larger Internet audience.

Web 2 was born as blogs, forums, and mostly, social networks that allowed for input by the Internet world at large. User-generated content (UGC) became a thing and defines the Internet as it is known today. The biggest sites like Facebook, Instagram, and X.com are made up of user-generated content, especially in developing nations.

Web 3 has become popular since the introduction of Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies. In the past 10 years, many of them have built their own alternate-root Internet systems. Alternate Roots are not new. They are legitimate, though. Anyone has the right to start their own Internet using the same open-source protocols the global Internet uses or using a blockchain. It has been done many times in the past, but none of them scale or succeed like ICANN has. This is because alt-nets don't work natively in

browsers, and they don't have the reach of the global IANA root that ICANN manages.

End users of these networks must first install extensions or plugins to their browsers to connect. That's not practical. It is an enduring chicken-and-egg problem. Global Internet users don't know about or like using plugins, and so far, only one or two browsers support Web 3 identifiers. This approach does not work.

Web 3 operators still have one of the most significant opportunities in the new 2026 gTLD round, though, because many of them have a large audience to start with. If they can succeed in matching their Web 3 identifiers with Web 2 strings, they will truly have created a global network for their end users, but more importantly, for new users who don't know them yet.

I know that web3 is big and growing fast. But they will miss the boat if they ignore the 2026 round of new gTLDs. I like to tell them, "You don't need us (Web2), and honestly, we don't need you... But together we can create phenomenal value and scale much quicker than either of us would do alone.

PART 2

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How to Get Your Own Top-Level Domain

This chapter is based on what ICANN did in 2012. It will be different in 2026; however, many, if not most of the processes, are the same. If, by the time you read this, the new Applicant Guidebook is released, that is the definitive and most detailed guide for this process. This is simply a summary with my comments.

Planning comes first. You will need to think through your entire plan, including:

- 1. The Purpose of Your TLD**
- 2. Your Market**
- 3. Registrar Distribution, Market Positioning, Messaging, and Promotional Practices**
- 4. Policy Development for:**
 - Pricing
 - Premiums
 - Reserved Names
 - Terms and Conditions
 - Abuse
 - IDNs—Will you support them, and if so, which tables?
 - Dispute Resolution
 - Privacy Policies
 - Registry Service Provider and Integrations

- Registry Launch Schedule and Domain Lifecycle

I'm not trying to discourage anyone, but knowing your plan is essential. In the past, some registries have had a tough time changing their plans after delegation. The above points are key to your long-term success as a Registry.

Overview Of the Application Process

If you've looked at the ICANN Applicant Guidebook, you know it's not exactly light reading. It's long, detailed, and last time, it was missing something that seemed like a basic requirement: a Table of Contents. I had to create my own last time and will be sharing it here in the Resource Section in case you want to cross reference anything. This time, the Guidebook has one.

So, here we go. Let's talk about what it really takes to get through the process of applying for a new generic top-level domain (gTLD). This is the roadmap, the key steps, with a bit of color and context added in. The idea is to give you an overall picture of the main steps. A few vital points:

Most important, remember that none of the steps below can occur until ICANN opens the application window. This will be a period of about 3 months that is scheduled to begin in April 2026. You'll want to be ready to do all the following before (and during) that period.

For the 2026 round, you'll want to have an alternative string ready for your application. This will allow you to continue if your applied-for, primary string turns out to be too contentious or objected to for some reason that you can't overcome.

Remember that when you apply, it is private. No one will know what you applied for until a special day that will likely be called

the “Reveal Day” or something like that. This will be a very public event and will be the time that all contention sets are revealed.

If you seek help as you are getting ready, make sure to get a signed Mutual NDA. Confidentiality is paramount. Don’t brag about your string unless you want to invite contention and an ICANN auction.

Step 1: Get Registered and Get Real

The process starts with something straightforward: registering as a user in ICANN’s application portal. Back in 2012, this was a system called TAS (TLD Application System). This time they are calling it TAMS (the TLD Applicant Management System), but the concept isn’t changing. You’ll need to:

- Create a secure user account
- Put down a deposit to reserve your application “slot”
- Gain access to the complete application form

You’ll also be warned often not to wait until the last minute. And they’re right. The system involves identity verification, security layers, and fee processing. If you start late, you might not finish on time.

Step 2: Fill Out the Application (It’s Long but Doable)

The heart of the process is filling out the actual application. And this is not your average web form. It’s long, detailed, and technical. You’ll answer questions about:

- Who you are (legal structure, ownership, leadership, etc.)
- What string are you applying for (and why it matters)
- How do you plan to run the registry (technical operations)
- How do you plan to keep it financially viable (a three-year business plan)
- What kinds of registry services will you offer
- Your policies around abuse, privacy, and security
- And more...

This is where you show that you've done your homework. It's not enough to say, "We'll use a backend provider." You need to show that you know what that means and that you have a plan if things go sideways. One big difference in 2026 will be that ICANN (or another organization to be named) will publish a list of evaluated back-end registry service providers (RSPs). They will also publish evaluated DNS operators.

Most people will use consultants or legal advisors here. It's a smart move. But remember, at the end of the day, you are still the applicant. You'll sign the contracts, you'll be on the hook, and ICANN will be reviewing your ability to perform.

Step 3: Pay the Application Fee (or it might just be a deposit)

This one is simple on paper: Pay the evaluation fee. In 2012, it was \$185,000 per application. It is expected to be \$227,000 this time around. This is a serious barrier to entry, and it's intentional.

ICANN wants applicants who are committed and well-capitalized. What you're paying for is a thorough, multi-phase review process.

Step 4: Administrative Completeness Check

Once the application window closes, ICANN does a pass over every submitted application to make sure it's complete. They're looking for basic stuff:

- Are all the required fields filled out?
- Did you attach the necessary supporting documents?
- Did the payment go through?

This isn't where they judge the quality of your answers, but if you skipped questions or uploaded the wrong files, you might be disqualified before they even get to the real review.

Step 5: Initial Evaluation

Now we're into the real meat of it: Initial Evaluation. This is the primary review process, and it has several parallel tracks:

String Review

They look at the gTLD you're applying for. Is it confusingly similar to an existing TLD or another application? Is it a reserved name? Does it raise any red flags from a public interest or technical standpoint?

A big difference this time around is that ICANN is not going to allow plurals of singulars that are already in the zone or singulars of plurals in the zone. This is to avoid end-user confusion. So, if the idea you have is to apply for a string very similar to one

that exists, you might want to think a little further. I had that idea until the most recent ICANN meeting.

Technical Review

This is where they look at your technical plans, your DNS infrastructure, your DNSSEC compliance, your failover systems, and so on. You either prove you can operate a secure and stable registry, or you don't. Most any back-end registry provider will have been evaluated by the time you apply, so this is not as hard as it sounds. Note that in 2026, this may be a moot point depending on how the RSP and DNS evaluations will be done. In any event, you will need to have and show technical capabilities, whether you do it yourself or hire someone to help you.

Financial Review

They'll dig into your funding model. Can you sustain operations for three years? What happens if you lose your source of funding? Did you scribble down some numbers, or is this a real business plan?

The good news? If you pass all of this, you're nearly there. The bad news? If you don't, you're not necessarily out, but you're in for a longer road.

Step 6: Extended Evaluation (If needed)

If your Initial Evaluation didn't go perfectly, maybe your financial documentation was thin, or your tech vendor didn't provide enough detail, you can opt for an Extended Evaluation.

This is basically your chance to respond to concerns, submit additional documents, or clarify what wasn't clear the first time around. It takes longer, and it's more intense, but a lot of applicants went this route and still made it to the delegation.

Step 7: Objections and Dispute Resolution

While all of the above is happening, ICANN opens a period for objections. And this is where things can get tricky. There are four official grounds for objection:

- String Confusion – Someone thinks your gTLD is too close to theirs and could cause confusion.
- Legal Rights – A rights holder (usually a trademark owner) believes your string violates their rights.
- Community Objection – A group says your TLD targets their community, but you don't have their backing.
- Limited Public Interest – The applied-for string is considered offensive or harmful under international norms.

Last time objections went to independent dispute resolution providers, not ICANN. You may need legal representation, expert witnesses, and a solid rebuttal. If you lose one of these, your application could be terminated (and may be entitled to a partial refund).

Step 8: String Contention

If more than one applicant goes after the same gTLD (and this happened a lot, think .app, .web, .music), then you're in what ICANN calls string contention. There are two ways this gets resolved:

- Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)
 - If one applicant claims to represent

a community, and they can prove it under a stringent set of criteria, they might be awarded the TLD outright.

- Auction – If CPE doesn't settle it, or if nobody qualifies, then ICANN runs an auction. The highest bidder wins. This is why some TLDs cost tens of millions of dollars in the last round.

It's not ideal, but it's the fallback when private negotiations fail. And yes, it can get ugly.

Step 9: Pre-Delegation Testing

If you've made it this far, congratulations. You've cleared the evaluations, fought off any objections, survived contention (or were lucky enough not to have any), and now you're headed for pre-delegation testing.

This is where ICANN checks your live technical setup to make sure it performs the way you said it would in your application. They'll simulate live conditions, check redundancy, look at DNS responses, and test everything from failover to WHOIS performance.

Think of it like a final exam before your gTLD is added to the root zone.

Step 10: Signing the Registry Agreement

Once everything else is done, it's time to sign the Registry Agreement with ICANN. This contract locks in your responsibilities as a registry operator. It covers:

- Data protection and escrow requirements

- Service level agreements (SLAs)
- Abuse mitigation policies
- Compliance and audit terms
- ICANN fees and reporting obligations

It's a serious contract. You'll need lawyers, and you'll need to be sure you can live up to what you're agreeing to.

Step 11: Delegation and Launch

Finally, the moment you've been waiting for: delegation. Your gTLD is added to the root zone of the DNS. At that point, you're live. The TLD exists. You can start onboarding registrars, registering domains, and building out whatever ecosystem you've envisioned.

Of course, the work is just beginning. You'll need to maintain your systems, stay compliant with ICANN, respond to abuse reports, and, ideally, build a successful namespace. But that's a whole different story.

Wrapping It Up

So, that's it, the whole gTLD application process. It's not for the faint of heart, but it's also not just for mega-corporations with deep pockets and 100-person legal teams. If you're organized, thoughtful, and committed, you can get through it. And the next application window, expected in 2026, is shaping up to be even more competitive.

If you're considering applying, start planning now. Build your team, line up your vendors, and think about your mission. Because once the window opens, the clock starts ticking, and like last time, there won't be a second chance for a while.

What if You Can't Afford it —The Applicant Support Program (ASP)

For this round, ICANN has introduced the Applicant Support Program (ASP). The ASP aims to make the application process for new gTLDs more accessible to entities that may face financial and resource constraints, thereby promoting diversity and inclusivity in the domain name system. This program is already open in 2025.

Objectives of the ASP

The primary goals of the ASP are to:

- **Enhance Global Diversity:** Encourage participation from underrepresented regions and communities.
- **Promote Inclusivity:** Provide opportunities for organizations that might otherwise be unable to apply due to financial limitations.
- **Support Public Interest:** Assist entities that serve the public good, ensuring that the internet reflects a broad range of voices and interests.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for the ASP, applicants must demonstrate:

- **Financial Need:** Evidence that the cost of applying for a gTLD would pose a significant financial hardship.
- **Financial Viability:** Assurance that the applicant can sustain the operations of a gTLD registry post-delegation. (I know these first two seem contrary to each other, but the ASP guidebook explains more details).
- **Organizational Type:** Applicants should fall into one of the following categories:
 - Nonprofits, non-governmental organizations, or charities.
 - Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).
 - Indigenous or tribal peoples' organizations.
 - Micro or small businesses that are social enterprises or based in a less-developed economy.

Support Offered

Qualified applicants can get financial and/or non-financial assistance:

Financial Support

- **Fee Reduction:** A 75-85% reduction in the New gTLD Program evaluation fees.
- **Bid Credit:** Applied to supported applicants participating in contention resolution procedures.

Non-Financial Support

- **Capacity Development Program:** Training materials and resources to understand the New gTLD Program.
- **Pro Bono Services:** Access to volunteer professional service providers.
- **Applicant Counselor:** Guidance on the gTLD application process and available resources.

ASP Application Process

- **Submission Period:** The ASP application window has already begun. It opened on 19 November 2024 and will close on 19 November 2025.
- **Evaluation:** Applications are assessed by the Support Application Review Panel (SARP) on a pass/fail basis against the eligibility criteria.

- **Notification:** Applicants will be informed of their eligibility status and the level of support granted.

Important Considerations

- **Separate Application:** The ASP application process is distinct from the New gTLD Program application. Applicants must apply for the ASP before submitting a gTLD application.
- **No Guarantee of gTLD Approval:** Qualifying for the ASP does not guarantee approval of the gTLD application.
- **Limited Support:** ICANN has allocated a \$10 million fund to the ASP, expecting to support up to 45 applicants.

Kinds of Strings You Can't Get (Restrictions)

Although some of you may have ideas about what new Top-Level Domains you'd be interested in. Many people aren't exactly sure about what TLDs cannot be created because they already exist, or they are ICANN-reserved names that aren't allowed. Among the rules put forth by ICANN for new TLDs, one of the most basic ones is that a new top-level domain cannot be the same as an existing one (and in this round, not even too similar). It looks like they are not allowing plurals of existing TLDs, nor singulars of the same (.car vs. .cars and vice versa). In the last round and for the history of ICANN, this seemed not to matter.

I've seen several different figures about how many top-level domains exist today. My most recent count from IANA's site is 1,591. But then there are at least 34 "reserved names," which means that any new registry will have to prevent at least these 34 strings from being issued. These are 1,591 existing strings that you will surely not be able to get as a new top-level domain.

An interesting hypothetical example could be .GM. General Motors is not going to be able to get .GM, that is, assuming they want a new TLD and I'm not aware that they do. .GM is already allocated to the country of Gambia. Now that doesn't mean General Motors couldn't pay the government of Gambia to let them use .GM. Many ccTLDs are already being used for reasons different than their original intent because of agreements with governments (e.g. .tv, .fm, .me...). Since GM's gross revenues are 30 times that of Gambia's GDP, it would seem that they could cut a deal if

both parties wanted to. Who knows? Maybe it would be cheaper for them that way :-). But GM is not getting .GM any other way.

On top of the stated problem, new TLDs must be at least three letters in length. (Note: The longest they can be is 63 characters, and they cannot include numbers.) So, maybe General Motors could get .GMC if they wanted to.

Even that could be problematic since it is very close to .GM. Only time will tell how these things will go.

The new guidebook will have a

So, that said, below are my lists of the TLDs that are “already taken.”

I apologize to my ICANN associates if some of this seems elementary, but condensed printed lists like this are helpful to me and, I think, to newcomers who don’t work in this industry every day.

You can use this list to match against your ideas. Remember this is not an official listing, just my personal research. I created it for convenience, apologize for any mistakes, and take no responsibility for errors or omissions:

Existing Types

.COMGENERIC	.ASIASPONSORED/GENERIC
.INFOGENERIC	.CATSPONSORED
.NETGENERIC	.COOPSPONSORED
.ORGGENERIC	.EDUSPONSORED
.BIZGENERIC	.GOVSPONSORED
.NAMEGENERIC	.INTSPONSORED
.PROGENERIC	.JOBSSPONSORED/GENERIC
.AEROSPONSORED	.MILSPONSORED

.MOBISPONSORED/GENERIC

.MUSEUMSPONSORED

.TELSPONSORED

.TRAVELSPONSORED/GENERIC

.ARPAINFRASTRUCTURE

Country-Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs) and Country Represented

.AC ASCENSION ISLAND

.AD ANDORRA

.AE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

.AF AFGHANISTAN

.AG ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

.AI ANGUILLA

.AL ALBANIA

.AM ARMENIA

.AN NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

.AO ANGOLA

.AQ ANTARCTICA

.AR ARGENTINA

.AS AMERICAN SAMOA

.AT AUSTRIA

.AU AUSTRALIA

.AW ARUBA

.AX ALAND ISLANDS

.AZ AZERBAIJAN

.BA BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

.BB BARBADOS

.BD BANGLADESH

.BE BELGIUM

.BF BURKINA FASO

.BG BULGARIA

.BH BAHRAIN

.BI BURUNDI

.BJ BENIN

.BL SAINT BARTHELEMY

.BM BERMUDA

.BN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

.BO BOLIVIA

.BR BRAZIL

.BS BAHAMAS

.BT BHUTAN

.BV BOUVET ISLAND

.BW BOTSWANA

.BY BELARUS

.BZ BELIZE

.CA CANADA	.EC ECUADOR
.CC COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS	.EE ESTONIA
.CD CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC	.EG EGYPT
.CF CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	.EH WESTERN SAHARA
.CG CONGO	.ER ERITREA
.CH SWITZERLAND	.ES SPAIN
.CI COTE D'IVOIRE	.ET ETHIOPIA
.CK COOK ISLANDS	.EU EUROPEAN UNION
.CL CHILE	.FI FINLAND
.CM CAMEROON	.FJ FIJI
.CN CHINA	.FK FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS)
.CO COLOMBIA	.FM MICRONESIA, FEDERATED STATES
.CR COSTA RICA	.FO FAROE ISLANDS
.CU CUBA	.FR FRANCE
.CV CAPE VERDE	.GA GABON
.CX CHRISTMAS ISLAND	.GB UNITED KINGDOM
.CY CYPRUS	.GD GRENADA
.CZ CZECH REPUBLIC	.GE GEORGIA
.DE GERMANY	.GF FRENCH GUIANA
.DJ DJIBOUTI	.GG GUERNSEY
.DK DENMARK	.GH GHANA
.DM DOMINICA	.GI GIBRALTAR
.DO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	.GL GREENLAND
.DZ ALGERIA	

.GM	GAMBIA	.IQ	IRAQ
.GN	GUINEA	.IR	IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF
.GP	GUADELOUPE	.IS	ICELAND
.GQ	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	.IT	ITALY
.GR	GREECE	.JE	JERSEY
.GS	SOUTH GEORGIA SANDWICH ISLES	.JM	JAMAICA
.GT	GUATEMALA	.JO	JORDAN
.GU	GUAM	.JP	JAPAN
.GW	GUINEA	.KE	KENYA
.GY	GUYANA	.KG	KYRGYZSTAN
.HK	HONG KONG	.KH	CAMBODIA
.HM	HEARD AND MCDONALD ISLANDS	.KI	KIRIBATI
.HN	HONDURAS	.KM	COMOROS
.HR	CROATIA	.KN	SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS
.HT	HAITI	.KP	KOREA, DPR
.HU	HUNGARY	.KR	KOREA, REPUBLIC OF
.ID	INDONESIA	.KW	KUWAIT
.IE	IRELAND	.KY	CAYMAN ISLANDS
.IL	ISRAEL	.KZ	KAZAKHSTAN
.IM	ISLE OF MAN	.LA	LAO PEOPLE'S DR
.IN	INDIA	.LB	LEBANON
.IO	BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY	.LC	SAINT LUCIA
		.LI	LIECHTENSTEIN
		.LK	SRI LANKA
		.LR	LIBERIA

.LS	LESOTHO	.MW	MALAWI
.LT	LITHUANIA	.MX	MEXICO
.LU	LUXEMBOURG	.MY	MALAYSIA
.LV	LATVIA	.MZ	MOZAMBIQUE
.LY	LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA	.NA	NAMIBIA
.MA	MOROCCO	.NC	NEW CALEDONIA
.MC	MONACO	.NE	NIGER
.MD	MOLDOVA, REPUBLIC OF	.NF	NORFOLK ISLAND
.ME	MONTENEGRO	.NG	NIGERIA
.MF	SAINT MARTIN	.NI	NICARAGUA
.MG	MADAGASCAR	.NL	NETHERLANDS
.MH	MARSHALL ISLANDS	.NO	NORWAY
.MK	MACEDONIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV	.NP	NEPAL
.ML	MALI	.NR	NAURU
.MM	MYANMAR	.NU	NIUE
.MN	MONGOLIA	.NZ	NEW ZEALAND
.MO	MACAO	.OM	OMAN
.MP	NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS	.PA	PANAMA
.MQ	MARTINIQUE	.PE	PERU
.MR	MAURITANIA	.PF	FRENCH POLYNESIA
.MS	MONTSERRAT	.PG	PAPUA NEW GUINEA
.MT	MALTA	.PH	PHILIPPINES
.MU	MAURITIUS	.PK	PAKISTAN
.MV	MALDIVES	.PL	POLAND
		.PM	SAINT PIERRE AND MIQUELON

.PN	PITCAIRN	.SO	SOMALIA
.PR	PUERTO RICO	.SR	SURINAME
.PS	PALESTINIAN TERRITORY	.ST	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE
.PT	PORTUGAL	.SU	SOVIET UNION
.PW	PALAU		(BEING PHASED OUT)
.PY	PARAGUAY	.SV	EL SALVADOR
.QA	QATAR	.SY	SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
.RE	REUNION	.SZ	SWAZILAND
.RO	ROMANIA	.TC	TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS
.RS	SERBIA	.TD	CHAD
.RU	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	.TF	FRENCH SOUTHERN TERRITORIES
.RW	RWANDA	.TG	TOGO
.SA	SAUDI ARABIA	.TH	THAILAND
.SB	SOLOMON ISLANDS	.TJ	TAJIKISTAN
.SC	SEYCHELLES	.TK	TOKELAU
.SD	SUDAN	.TL	TIMOR
.SE	SWEDEN	.TM	TURKMENISTAN
.SG	SINGAPORE	.TN	TUNISIA
.SH	SAINT HELENA	.TO	TONGA
.SI	SLOVENIA	.TP	PORTUGUESE TIMOR
.SJ	SVALBARD AND JAN MAYEN	.TR	TURKEY
.SK	SLOVAKIA	.TT	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
.SL	SIERRA LEONE	.TV	TUVALU
.SM	SAN MARINO	.TW	TAIWAN
.SN	SENEGAL		

.TZ	TANZANIA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF	.VG	VIRGIN ISLANDS, BRITISH
.UA	UKRAINE	.VI	VIRGIN ISLANDS, U.S.
.UG	UGANDA	.VN	VIET NAM
.UK	UNITED KINGDOM	.VU	VANUATU
.UM	UNITED STATES MINOR ISLANDS	.WF	WALLIS AND FUTUNA
.US	UNITED STATES	.WS	SAMOA
.UY	URUGUAY	.YE	YEMEN
.UZ	UZBEKISTAN	.YT	MAYOTTE
.VA	HOLY SEE (VATICAN CITY STATE)	.YU	YUGOSLAVIA
.VC	SAINT VINCENT GRENADINES	.ZA	SOUTH AFRICA
.VE	VENEZUELA	.ZM	ZAMBIA
		.ZW	ZIMBABWE

Internationalized Character Domain Names (IDNs)

(IDNs represented as “.IDNTLD”; see ICANN site for actual representations). They look like these:

.IDNTLD-AR-ARAB	TEST TEST:AR-ARAB
.IDNTLD-EL-GREK	TEST TEST:EL-GREK
.IDNTLD-FA-ARAB	TEST TEST:FA-ARAB
.IDNTLD-HI-DEVA	TEST TEST:HI-DEVA
.IDNTLD-JA-KANA	TEST TEST:JA-KANA
.IDNTLD-KO-HANG	TEST TEST:KO-HANG
.IDNTLD-RU-CYRL	TEST TEST:RU-CYRL
.IDNTLD-TA-TAML	TEST TEST:TA-TAML
.IDNTLD-YI-HEBR	TEST TEST:YI-HEBR
.IDNTLD-ZH-HANS	TEST TEST:ZH-HANS
.IDNTLD-ZH-HANT	TEST TEST:ZH-HANT

Reserved Names

These names are held back by ICANN for administrative, collision, or testing purposes. There's an entire set of names related to the Olympics, Red Cross, and other NGOs that are also not allowed for new gTLDs. You'll see info on that in the guidebook once it's released.

AFRINIC	LACNIC
ALAC	LOCAL
APNIC	LOCALHOST
ARIN	NIC
ASO	NRO
CCNSO	RFC-EDITOR
EXAMPLE * *and translations	RIPE
GAC	ROOT-SERVERS
GNSO	RSSAC
GTLD-SERVERS	SSAC
IAB	TEST * *AND VARIOUS
IANA	TRANSLATIONS
IANA-SERVERS	TLD
ICANN	WHOIS
IESG	WWW
IETF	
INTERNIC	
INVALID	
IRTF	
ISTF	

2012 Round List of New gTLDs

Alpha-Sorted with Date Released

STRING DATE

.AAA	28-AUG-15	.AFAMILYCOMPANY	31-JUL-16
.AARP	3-NOV-15	.AFL	28-MAR-15
.ABARTH	4-AUG-16	.AFRICA	15-FEB-17
.ABB	25-APR-15	.AGAKHAN	16-APR-16
.ABBOTT	7-MAR-15	.AGENCY	14-JAN-14
.ABBVIE	6-APR-16	.AIG	2-MAY-15
.ABC	28-JUL-16	.AIGO	16-AUG-16
.ABLE	21-JUN-16	.AIRBUS	10-JUN-16
.ABOGADO	15-OCT-14	.AIRFORCE	30-APR-14
.ABUDHABI	6-APR-16	.AIRTEL	8-JUL-15
.ACADEMY	17-DEC-13	.AKDN	16-APR-16
.ACCENTURE	9-MAY-15	.ALFAROMEIO	2-AUG-16
.ACCOUNTANT	25-MAR-15	.ALIBABA	16-JAN-16
.ACCOUNTANTS	7-MAY-14	.ALIPAY	16-JAN-16
.ACO	27-AUG-15	.ALLFINANZ	1-OCT-14
.ACTIVE	26-JUN-14	.ALLSTATE	14-JUL-16
.ACTOR	26-FEB-14	.ALLY	24-MAR-16
.ADAC	26-JAN-16	.ALSACE	4-OCT-14
.ADS	24-MAR-15	.ALSTOM	10-JUN-16
.ADULT	6-DEC-14	.AMAZON	2-JUN-20
.AEG	20-JUN-15	.AMERICANEXPRESS	8-AUG-16
.AETNA	20-MAY-16	.AMERICANFAMILY	26-JUL-16

.AMEX	8-AUG-16	.AUDIBLE	7-JUN-16
.AMFAM	23-JUL-16	.AUDIO	15-MAY-14
.AMICA	29-AUG-15	.AUSPOST	17-AUG-16
.AMSTERDAM	25-DEC-14	.AUTHOR	5-DEC-15
.ANALYTICS	21-DEC-15	.AUTO	2-MAY-15
.ANDROID	12-NOV-14	.AUTOS	22-MAY-14
.ANQUAN	30-MAR-16	.AVIANCA	9-MAR-16
.ANZ	21-JUN-16	.AWS	25-MAR-16
.AOL	4-NOV-16	.AXA	19-MAR-14
.APARTMENTS	10-FEB-15	.AZURE	6-JUN-15
.APP	2-JUL-15	.BABY	8-APR-16
.APPLE	3-NOV-15	.BAIDU	5-JAN-16
.AQUARELLE	2-DEC-14	.BANAMEX	28-JUL-16
.ARAB	23-MAY-17	.BANANAREPUBLIC	4-AUG-16
.ARAMCO	15-OCT-15	.BAND	15-OCT-14
.ARCHI	31-MAR-14	.BANK	9-JAN-15
.ARMY	4-JUN-14	.BAR	27-FEB-14
.ART	23-JUN-16	.BARCELONA	8-JUL-15
.ARTE	20-OCT-15	.BARCLAYCARD	24-JAN-15
.ASDA	14-AUG-16	.BARCLAYS	24-JAN-15
.ASSOCIATES	11-APR-14	.BAREFOOT	24-MAR-16
.ATHLETA	4-AUG-16	.BARGAINS	23-JAN-14
.ATTORNEY	31-MAY-14	.BASEBALL	30-OCT-16
.AUCTION	18-JUL-14	.BASKETBALL	19-OCT-16
.AUDI	25-NOV-15	.BAUHAUS	5-APR-15

.BAYERN	3-MAY-14	.BLOG	18-MAY-16
.BBC	21-MAR-15	.BLOOMBERG	5-NOV-14
.BBT	15-JUL-16	.BLUE	5-FEB-14
.BBVA	27-MAY-15	.BMS	22-SEP-15
.BCG	9-MAR-16	.BMW	21-JUN-14
.BCN	8-JUL-15	.BNL	26-JUN-15
.BEATS	3-NOV-15	.BNPPARIBAS	14-AUG-14
.BEAUTY	15-JUL-16	.BOATS	25-FEB-15
.BEER	15-MAY-14	.BOEHRINGER	25-NOV-15
.BENTLEY	9-JUL-15	.BOFA	2-AUG-16
.BERLIN	8-JAN-14	.BOM	26-SEP-15
.BEST	27-FEB-14	.BOND	27-MAR-15
.BESTBUY	19-JUL-16	.BOO	30-AUG-14
.BET	24-JUL-15	.BOOK	5-DEC-15
.BHARTI	14-JUN-15	.BOOKING	23-JUL-16
.BIBLE	2-JUN-15	.BOOTS	5-AUG-15
.BID	2-MAR-14	.BOSCH	24-DEC-15
.BIKE	14-NOV-13	.BOSTIK	25-NOV-15
.BING	10-JUN-15	.BOSTON	29-NOV-16
.BINGO	4-FEB-15	.BOT	5-DEC-15
.BIO	2-JUN-14	.BOUTIQUE	23-JAN-14
.BLACK	27-MAR-14	.BOX	11-NOV-16
.BLACKFRIDAY	23-APR-14	.BRADESCO	26-JUN-15
.BLANCO	21-JUN-16	.BRIDGESTONE	1-MAY-15
.BLOCKBUSTER	4-AUG-16	.BROADWAY	18-NOV-15

.BROKER	29-APR-15	.CARAVAN	14-AUG-14
.BROTHER	12-MAY-15	.CARDS	11-FEB-14
.BRUSSELS	18-JUN-14	.CARE	23-APR-14
.BUDAPEST	23-SEP-14	.CAREER	11-APR-14
.BUGATTI	25-NOV-15	.CAREERS	17-DEC-13
.BUILD	18-JAN-14	.CARS	2-MAY-15
.BUILDERS	28-DEC-13	.CARTIER	11-DEC-14
.BUSINESS	22-AUG-14	.CASA	23-SEP-14
.BUY	5-DEC-15	.CASE	30-OCT-16
.BUZZ	18-DEC-13	.CASEIH	30-OCT-16
.BZH	17-JUN-14	.CASH	23-APR-14
.CAB	17-DEC-13	.CASINO	19-FEB-15
.CAFE	5-APR-15	.CATERING	4-FEB-14
.CAL	15-SEP-14	.CATHOLIC	1-DEC-16
.CALL	5-DEC-15	.CBA	22-JUN-15
.CALVINKLEIN	4-AUG-16	.CBN	13-FEB-15
.CAM	16-JUN-16	.CBRE	2-JUL-16
.CAMERA	6-NOV-13	.CBS	4-AUG-16
.CAMP	17-DEC-13	.CEB	8-AUG-15
.CANCERRESEARCH	3-JUL-14	.CENTER	17-DEC-13
.CANON	4-FEB-15	.CEO	28-DEC-13
.CAPETOWN	19-JUN-14	.CERN	16-AUG-14
.CAPITAL	11-APR-14	.CFA	2-MAY-15
.CAPITALONE	10-AUG-16	.CFD	13-MAR-15
.CAR	9-SEP-15	.CHANEL	5-AUG-15

.CHANNEL	15-SEP-14	.CLUB	18-JAN-14
.CHARITY	7-JUN-18	.CLUBMED	2-OCT-15
.CHASE	27-FEB-16	.COACH	26-NOV-14
.CHAT	4-FEB-15	.CODES	28-DEC-13
.CHEAP	14-JAN-14	.COFFEE	28-DEC-13
.CHINTAI	7-JUN-16	.COLLEGE	10-APR-14
.CHRISTMAS	26-FEB-14	.COLOGNE	19-MAR-14
.CHROME	15-SEP-14	.COMCAST	7-JUL-16
.CHRYSLER	28-JUL-16	.COMMBANK	22-JUN-15
.CHURCH	15-MAY-14	.COMMUNITY	27-JAN-14
.CIPRIANI	9-OCT-15	.COMPANY	17-DEC-13
.CIRCLE	5-DEC-15	.COMPARE	15-JAN-16
.CISCO	15-MAY-15	.COMPUTER	17-DEC-13
.CITADEL	23-JUL-16	.COMSEC	16-NOV-15
.CITI	28-JUL-16	.CONDOS	11-FEB-14
.CITIC	29-APR-14	.CONSTRUCTION	14-NOV-13
.CITY	10-JUL-14	.CONSULTING	1-APR-14
.CITYEATS	10-NOV-15	.CONTACT	22-DEC-15
.CLAIMS	7-MAY-14	.CONTRACTORS	14-NOV-13
.CLEANING	4-FEB-14	.COOKING	31-MAR-14
.CLICK	16-AUG-14	.COOKINGCHANNEL	23-JUN-16
.CLINIC	23-APR-14	.COOL	23-JAN-14
.CLINIQUE	28-DEC-15	.CORSICA	16-MAY-15
.CLOTHING	6-NOV-13	.COUNTRY	31-MAR-14
.CLOUD	26-JUN-15	.COUPON	19-FEB-16

.COUPONS	13-MAY-15	.DEAL	7-JUN-16
.COURSES	25-FEB-15	.DEALER	24-DEC-15
.CPA	20-SEP-19	.DEALS	10-JUL-14
.CREDIT	7-MAY-14	.DEGREE	30-MAY-14
.CREDITCARD	29-APR-14	.DELIVERY	1-NOV-14
.CREDITUNION	10-NOV-15	.DELL	14-OCT-15
.CRICKET	17-NOV-14	.DELOITTE	29-JAN-16
.CROWN	19-JUN-15	.DELTA	11-JUL-15
.CRS	15-OCT-14	.DEMOCRAT	14-JAN-14
.CRUISE	12-NOV-16	.DENTAL	23-APR-14
.CRUISES	4-FEB-14	.DENTIST	31-MAY-14
.CSC	1-SEP-15	.DESI	10-APR-14
.CUISINELLA	3-JUL-14	.DESIGN	24-JAN-15
.CYMRU	8-AUG-14	.DEV	18-DEC-14
.CYOU	3-APR-15	.DHL	2-JUN-16
.DABUR	24-JAN-15	.DIAMONDS	19-NOV-13
.DAD	30-AUG-14	.DIET	16-AUG-14
.DANCE	14-JAN-14	.DIGITAL	7-MAY-14
.DATA	20-DEC-16	.DIRECT	2-JUL-14
.DATE	25-MAR-15	.DIRECTORY	19-NOV-13
.DATING	27-JAN-14	.DISCOUNT	23-APR-14
.DATSUN	4-MAR-15	.DISCOVER	28-JUL-16
.DAY	30-AUG-14	.DISH	10-AUG-16
.DCLK	24-JAN-15	.DIY	25-AUG-16
.DDS	11-MAY-16	.DNP	11-MAR-14

.DOCS	18-DEC-14	.EMERCK	22-OCT-14
.DOCTOR	21-JUL-16	.ENERGY	1-NOV-14
.DODGE	4-AUG-16	.ENGINEER	4-JUN-14
.DOG	29-APR-15	.ENGINEERING	11-APR-14
.DOHA	25-MAR-15	.ENTERPRISES	19-NOV-13
.DOMAINS	17-DEC-13	.EPOST	7-JUN-16
.DOOSAN	13-DEC-14	.EPSON	3-MAR-15
.DOT	18-MAY-16	.EQUIPMENT	6-NOV-13
.DOWNLOAD	25-MAR-15	.ERICSSON	10-JUN-16
.DRIVE	20-JUN-15	.ERNI	12-MAR-15
.DTV	27-MAY-16	.ESQ	29-AUG-14
.DUBAI	7-JAN-16	.ESTATE	14-NOV-13
.DUCK	21-JUL-16	.ESURANCE	23-JUL-16
.DUNLOP	10-JUN-16	.ETISALAT	1-JUN-17
.DUNS	23-JUL-16	.EUROVISION	6-DEC-14
.DUPONT	10-JUN-16	.EUS	11-APR-14
.DURBAN	19-JUN-14	.EVENTS	4-FEB-14
.DVAG	27-SEP-14	.EVERBANK	26-NOV-14
.DVR	30-SEP-16	.EXCHANGE	23-APR-14
.EARTH	14-MAY-15	.EXPERT	23-JAN-14
.EAT	30-AUG-14	.EXPOSED	4-FEB-14
.ECO	28-AUG-16	.EXPRESS	5-APR-15
.EDEKA	21-JAN-16	.EXTRASPACE	25-MAR-16
.EDUCATION	28-DEC-13	.FAGE	8-AUG-15
.EMAIL	2-JAN-14	.FAIL	23-APR-14

.FAIRWINDS	13-NOV-15	.FIT	9-JAN-15
.FAITH	25-MAR-15	.FITNESS	23-APR-14
.FAMILY	11-AUG-15	.FLICKR	13-FEB-16
.FAN	16-MAR-15	.FLIGHTS	4-FEB-14
.FANS	19-FEB-15	.FLIR	10-MAY-16
.FARM	28-DEC-13	.FLORIST	28-DEC-13
.FARMERS	25-JUN-16	.FLOWERS	25-DEC-14
.FASHION	6-DEC-14	.FLSMIDTH	15-OCT-14
.FAST	5-DEC-15	.FLY	15-SEP-14
.FEDEX	25-JUN-16	.FOO	19-APR-14
.FEEDBACK	10-APR-14	.FOOD	10-NOV-16
.FERRARI	2-AUG-16	.FOODNETWORK	23-JUN-16
.FERRERO	7-NOV-15	.FOOTBALL	19-FEB-15
.FIAT	2-AUG-16	.FORD	18-DEC-15
.FIDELITY	4-AUG-16	.FOREX	12-MAR-15
.FIDO	20-SEP-16	.FORSALE	1-OCT-14
.FILM	24-MAR-15	.FORUM	1-JUL-15
.FINAL	26-SEP-15	.FOUNDATION	11-FEB-14
.FINANCE	29-APR-14	.FOX	24-DEC-15
.FINANCIAL	23-APR-14	.FREE	8-NOV-16
.FIRE	7-JUN-16	.FRESENIUS	9-JAN-16
.FIRESTONE	5-DEC-15	.FRL	30-AUG-14
.FIRMDALE	20-NOV-14	.FROGANS	19-APR-14
.FISH	21-FEB-14	.FRONTDOOR	23-JUN-16
.FISHING	31-MAR-14	.FRONTIER	6-FEB-16

.FTR	17-APR-16	.GIFTS	8-AUG-14
.FUJITSU	7-JUL-16	.GIVES	4-JUN-14
.FUJIXEROX	15-JUL-16	.GIVING	6-AUG-15
.FUN	21-DEC-16	.GLADE	28-JUL-16
.FUND	23-APR-14	.GLASS	28-DEC-13
.FURNITURE	23-APR-14	.GLE	15-SEP-14
.FUTBOL	11-FEB-14	.GLOBAL	6-JUN-14
.FYI	22-MAY-15	.GLOBO	3-MAY-14
.GAL	11-APR-14	.GMAIL	27-AUG-14
.GALLERY	14-NOV-13	.GMBH	9-MAR-16
.GALLO	22-MAR-16	.GMO	3-MAY-14
.GALLUP	11-FEB-16	.GMX	5-SEP-14
.GAME	8-JUL-15	.GODADDY	7-JUL-16
.GAMES	2-JUN-16	.GOLD	24-MAR-15
.GAP	4-AUG-16	.GOLDPOINT	19-FEB-15
.GARDEN	13-DEC-14	.GOLF	24-MAR-15
.GAY	9-AUG-19	.GOO	3-MAR-15
.GBIZ	27-AUG-14	.GOODHANDS	14-JUL-16
.GDN	13-FEB-15	.GOODYEAR	10-JUN-16
.GEA	28-AUG-15	.GOOG	24-JAN-15
.GENT	13-JUL-14	.GOOGLE	15-SEP-14
.GENTING	20-JUN-15	.GOP	4-APR-14
.GEORGE	18-AUG-16	.GOT	5-DEC-15
.GEE	25-DEC-14	.GRAINGER	13-NOV-15
.GIFT	18-JAN-14	.GRAPHICS	14-NOV-13

.GRATIS	23-APR-14	.HIPHOP	15-MAY-14
.GREEN	19-JUN-14	.HISAMITSU	2-JUN-16
.GRIPE	11-APR-14	.HITACHI	1-MAY-15
.GROCERY	28-JUN-17	.HIV	31-MAY-14
.GROUP	8-AUG-15	.HKT	12-MAY-16
.GUARDIAN	13-MAY-16	.HOCKEY	7-MAY-15
.GUCCI	27-OCT-15	.HOLDINGS	6-NOV-13
.GUGE	24-MAR-15	.HOLIDAY	28-DEC-13
.GUIDE	15-MAY-14	.HOMEDEPOT	4-JUN-15
.GUITARS	18-JAN-14	.HOMEGOODS	15-JUL-16
.GURU	6-NOV-13	.HOMES	22-MAY-14
.HAIR	2-DEC-16	.HOMESENSE	15-JUL-16
.HAMBURG	4-JUN-14	.HONDA	30-APR-15
.HANGOUT	24-JAN-15	.HONEYWELL	26-JUL-16
.HAUS	31-MAR-14	.HORSE	31-MAR-14
.HBO	14-AUG-16	.HOSPITAL	9-DEC-16
.HDFC	16-AUG-16	.HOST	31-MAY-14
.HDFCBANK	11-FEB-16	.HOSTING	16-AUG-14
.HEALTH	26-JAN-16	.HOT	10-AUG-16
.HEALTHCARE	30-JUL-14	.HOTELES	26-JUN-15
.HELP	16-AUG-14	.HOTELS	7-APR-17
.HELSINKI	26-JAN-16	.HOTMAIL	10-JUN-15
.HERE	29-AUG-14	.HOUSE	28-DEC-13
.HERMES	24-JAN-15	.HOW	16-AUG-14
.HGTV	23-JUN-16	.HSBC	10-JUL-15

.HUGHES	10-AUG-16	.INTUIT	12-JUL-16
.HYATT	28-JUL-16	.INVESTMENTS	23-APR-14
.HYUNDAI	26-SEP-15	.IPIRANGA	26-JUL-15
.IBM	1-OCT-14	.IRISH	2-DEC-14
.ICBC	13-MAY-15	.ISELECT	15-JAN-16
.ICE	22-JUL-15	.ISMAILI	16-APR-16
.ICU	2-MAY-15	.IST	11-JUL-15
.IEEE	21-JUL-16	.ISTANBUL	11-JUL-15
.IFM	24-JAN-15	.ITAU	22-JUL-15
.IINET	9-JUL-15	.ITV	21-JUN-16
.IKANO	1-JUL-16	.IVECO	30-OCT-16
.IMAMAT	16-APR-16	.IWC	13-DEC-14
.IMDB	7-JUN-16	.JAGUAR	27-OCT-15
.IMMO	27-AUG-14	.JAVA	3-MAR-15
.IMMOBILIEN	2-JAN-14	.JCB	23-JAN-15
.INC	17-JUL-18	.JCP	30-MAR-16
.INDUSTRIES	21-FEB-14	.JEEP	28-JUL-16
.INFINITI	4-MAR-15	.JETZT	15-MAR-14
.ING	30-AUG-14	.JEWELRY	16-APR-15
.INK	11-MAR-14	.JIO	15-NOV-16
.INSTITUTE	28-DEC-13	.JLC	10-JUN-15
.INSURANCE	3-DEC-15	.JLL	22-MAY-15
.INSURE	29-APR-14	.JMP	18-DEC-15
.INTEL	28-JUL-16	.JNJ	8-APR-16
.INTERNATIONAL	28-DEC-13	.JOBURG	19-JUN-14

.JOT	5-DEC-15	.KRED	27-FEB-14
.JOY	5-DEC-15	.KUOKGROUP	5-MAR-16
.JPMORGAN	27-FEB-16	.KYOTO	28-JAN-15
.JPRS	8-JUL-15	.LACAIXA	18-JUL-14
.JUEGOS	15-MAY-14	.LADBROKES	29-JUL-16
.JUNIPER	2-AUG-16	.LAMBORGHINI	25-NOV-15
.KAUFEN	28-DEC-13	.LAMER	24-DEC-15
.KDDI	9-JAN-15	.LANCASTER	15-JUL-15
.KERRYHOTELS	5-MAR-16	.LANCIA	4-AUG-16
.KERRYLOGISTICS	5-MAR-16	.LANCOME	15-JUL-16
.KERRYPROPERTIES	5-MAR-16	.LAND	14-NOV-13
.KFH	15-DEC-15	.LANDROVER	27-OCT-15
.KIA	26-SEP-15	.LANXESS	26-JAN-16
.KIDS	4-APR-22	.LASALLE	11-JUN-15
.KIM	23-JAN-14	.LAT	9-JAN-15
.KINDER	9-OCT-15	.LATINO	4-AUG-16
.KINDLE	7-JUN-16	.LATROBE	2-DEC-14
.KITCHEN	19-NOV-13	.LAW	26-JUN-15
.KIWI	3-JAN-14	.LAWYER	31-MAY-14
.KOELN	5-MAR-14	.LDS	19-NOV-14
.KOMATSU	26-MAR-15	.LEASE	11-APR-14
.KOSHER	10-JUN-16	.LECLERC	3-MAR-15
.KPMG	4-APR-16	.LEFRAK	14-JUL-16
.KPN	15-DEC-15	.LEGAL	26-NOV-14
.KRD	18-JUL-14	.LEGO	16-JUN-16

.LEXUS	26-JUL-15	.LOFT	4-AUG-16
.LGBT	18-JUL-14	.LOL	2-MAY-15
.LIAISON	2-MAY-15	.LONDON	22-MAR-14
.LIDL	13-DEC-14	.LOTTE	14-JAN-15
.LIFE	15-MAY-14	.LOTTO	19-JUN-14
.LIFEINSURANCE	19-JAN-16	.LOVE	2-APR-15
.LIFESTYLE	10-NOV-15	.LPL	19-JUL-16
.LIGHTING	6-NOV-13	.LPLFINANCIAL	19-JUL-16
.LIKE	5-DEC-15	.LTD	23-SEP-15
.LILLY	31-JUL-16	.LTDA	16-AUG-14
.LIMITED	23-APR-14	.LUNDBECK	15-JUL-16
.LIMO	17-DEC-13	.LUPIN	16-MAY-15
.LINCOLN	18-DEC-15	.LUXE	15-MAY-14
.LINDE	16-SEP-15	.LUXURY	18-JAN-14
.LINK	18-JAN-14	.MACYS	12-JUL-16
.LIPSY	3-MAY-16	.MADRID	20-NOV-14
.LIVE	8-JUL-15	.MAIF	3-MAR-15
.LIVING	28-DEC-15	.MAISON	11-FEB-14
.LIXIL	30-JUL-15	.MAKEUP	15-JAN-16
.LLC	22-FEB-18	.MAN	26-JUL-15
.LLP	5-DEC-19	.MANAGEMENT	17-DEC-13
.LOAN	25-MAR-15	.MANGO	16-FEB-14
.LOANS	15-MAY-14	.MAP	29-JUN-17
.LOCKER	27-MAY-16	.MARKET	31-MAY-14
.LOCUS	9-MAR-16	.MARKETING	14-JAN-14

.MARKETS	12-MAR-15	.MLS	20-APR-16
.MARRIOTT	14-JAN-15	.MMA	31-MAR-15
.MARSHALLS	15-JUL-16	.MOBILE	20-DEC-16
.MASERATI	4-AUG-16	.MOBILY	23-DEC-15
.MATTEL	28-MAY-16	.MODA	14-JAN-14
.MBA	22-MAY-15	.MOE	31-MAR-14
.MCKINSEY	31-JUL-16	.MOI	7-OCT-15
.MED	3-DEC-15	.MOM	19-AUG-15
.MEDIA	11-APR-14	.MONASH	18-JAN-14
.MEET	27-MAR-14	.MONEY	26-NOV-14
.MELBOURNE	10-JUL-14	.MONSTER	14-SEP-16
.MEME	30-AUG-14	.MOPAR	2-AUG-16
.MEMORIAL	26-NOV-14	.MORMON	19-NOV-14
.MEN	20-MAY-15	.MORTGAGE	31-MAY-14
.MENU	30-NOV-13	.MOSCOW	24-APR-14
.MEO	29-OCT-15	.MOTO	12-NOV-16
.MERCKMSD	10-JUL-17	.MOTORCYCLES	22-MAY-14
.METLIFE	11-MAY-16	.MOV	30-AUG-14
.MIAMI	31-MAR-14	.MOVIE	25-MAR-15
.MICROSOFT	10-JUN-15	.MOVISTAR	26-JUN-15
.MINI	24-JUN-14	.MSD	23-JUL-16
.MINT	12-JUL-16	.MTN	25-MAR-15
.MIT	6-JUL-16	.MTPC	4-MAR-15
.MITSUBISHI	7-JUL-16	.MTR	7-OCT-15
.MLB	25-MAY-16	.MUSIC	29-OCT-21

.MUTUAL	4-APR-16	.NIKON	28-JAN-16
.MUTUELLE	23-OCT-15	.NINJA	28-DEC-13
.NAB	18-AUG-16	.NISSAN	4-MAR-15
.NADEX	2-MAY-15	.NISSAY	30-MAR-16
.NAGOYA	29-JAN-14	.NOKIA	15-JUL-15
.NATIONWIDE	15-JUL-16	.NORTHWESTERNMUTUAL	6-APR-16
.NATURA	11-FEB-16	.NORTON	3-DEC-15
.NAVY	4-JUN-14	.NOW	7-JUN-16
.NBA	2-AUG-16	.NOWRUZ	5-DEC-15
.NEC	9-MAY-15	.NOWTV	11-MAY-16
.NETBANK	22-JUN-15	.NRA	18-JUL-14
.NETFLIX	28-MAY-16	.NRW	11-JUL-14
.NETWORK	22-AUG-14	.NTT	3-FEB-15
.NEUSTAR	19-FEB-14	.NYC	20-MAR-14
.NEW	30-AUG-14	.OBI	23-SEP-15
.NEWHOLLAND	30-OCT-16	.OBSERVER	27-SEP-16
.NEWS	21-MAR-15	.OFF	21-JUL-16
.NEXT	3-MAY-16	.OFFICE	23-JUN-15
.NEXTDIRECT	3-MAY-16	.OKINAWA	2-MAR-14
.NEXUS	15-SEP-14	.OLAYAN	3-MAY-16
.NFL	23-JUN-16	.OLAYANGROUP	6-MAY-16
.NGO	18-JUL-14	.OLDNAVY	4-AUG-16
.NHK	4-JUN-14	.OLLO	27-MAY-16
.NICO	10-FEB-15	.OMEGA	26-JUN-15
.NIKE	9-JUL-16	.ONE	22-JAN-15

.ONG	28-JUL-14	.PCCW	11-MAY-16
.ONL	28-DEC-13	.PET	26-JUL-15
.ONLINE	16-MAR-15	.PFIZER	15-JUL-16
.ONYOURSIDE	15-JUL-16	.PHARMACY	5-SEP-14
.OOO	16-AUG-14	.PHD	29-JUN-17
.OPEN	8-AUG-16	.PHILIPS	9-MAY-15
.ORACLE	3-MAR-15	.PHONE	20-DEC-16
.ORANGE	9-JUL-15	.PHOTO	18-JAN-14
.ORGANIC	13-JUN-14	.PHOTOGRAPHY	19-NOV-13
.ORIENTEXPRESS	22-JUN-16	.PHOTOS	17-DEC-13
.ORIGINS	24-DEC-15	.PHYSIO	19-JUN-14
.OSAKA	13-DEC-14	.PIAGET	16-MAR-15
.OTSUKA	27-AUG-14	.PICS	18-JAN-14
.OTT	27-MAY-16	.PICTET	7-MAR-15
.OVH	19-JUN-14	.PICTURES	11-APR-14
.PAGE	16-MAR-15	.PID	22-DEC-15
.PANASONIC	15-JUL-16	.PIN	5-DEC-15
.PANERAI	25-MAR-15	.PING	29-OCT-15
.PARIS	19-APR-14	.PINK	18-JAN-14
.PARS	7-DEC-15	.PIONEER	2-JUN-16
.PARTNERS	4-FEB-14	.PIZZA	27-AUG-14
.PARTS	11-FEB-14	.PLACE	2-JUL-14
.PARTY	17-NOV-14	.PLAY	20-JUN-15
.PASSAGENS	2-MAR-16	.PLAYSTATION	7-NOV-15
.PAY	10-AUG-16	.PLUMBING	14-NOV-13

.PLUS	24-MAR-15	.QVC	4-AUG-16
.PNC	1-JUL-16	.RACING	3-APR-15
.POHL	27-SEP-14	.RADIO	12-OCT-16
.POKER	15-OCT-14	.RAID	21-JUL-16
.POLITIE	23-JUN-16	.READ	5-DEC-15
.PORN	6-DEC-14	.REALESTATE	23-MAY-16
.PRAMERICA	28-JUL-16	.REALTOR	30-JUL-14
.PRAXI	18-JUL-14	.REALTY	1-JUL-15
.PRESS	31-MAY-14	.RECIPES	17-DEC-13
.PRIME	7-JUN-16	.RED	18-JAN-14
.PROD	29-AUG-14	.REDSTONE	28-MAR-15
.PRODUCTIONS	11-FEB-14	.REDUMBRELLA	11-DEC-15
.PROF	15-SEP-14	.REHAB	4-JUN-14
.PROGRESSIVE	20-APR-16	.REISE	22-MAY-14
.PROMO	31-DEC-15	.REISEN	11-APR-14
.PROPERTIES	4-FEB-14	.REIT	12-NOV-14
.PROPERTY	16-AUG-14	.RELIANCE	15-NOV-16
.PROTECTION	13-SEP-15	.REN	27-MAR-14
.PRU	28-JUL-16	.RENT	30-APR-15
.PRUDENTIAL	28-JUL-16	.RENTALS	4-FEB-14
.PUB	26-FEB-14	.REPAIR	28-DEC-13
.PWC	11-FEB-16	.REPORT	4-FEB-14
.QPON	12-FEB-14	.REPUBLICAN	4-JUN-14
.QUEBEC	16-APR-14	.REST	2-APR-14
.QUEST	6-FEB-16	.RESTAURANT	8-AUG-14

.REVIEW	25-MAR-15	.SAKURA	2-JUL-15
.REVIEWS	11-FEB-14	.SALE	25-DEC-14
.REXROTH	24-DEC-15	.SALON	5-DEC-15
.RICH	18-JAN-14	.SAMSCLUB	18-AUG-16
.RICHARDLI	11-MAY-16	.SAMSUNG	10-DEC-14
.RICOH	22-JUN-15	.SANDVIK	27-MAY-15
.RIGHTATHOME	21-JUL-16	.SANDVIKCOROMANT	27-MAY-15
.RIL	15-NOV-16	.SANOFI	24-JUL-15
.RIO	22-MAY-14	.SAP	26-MAR-15
.RIP	15-OCT-14	.SAPO	29-OCT-15
.RMIT	24-NOV-16	.SARL	8-AUG-14
.ROCHER	7-NOV-15	.SAS	18-DEC-15
.ROCKS	10-APR-14	.SAVE	7-JUN-16
.RODEO	31-MAR-14	.SAXO	10-FEB-15
.ROGERS	20-SEP-16	.SBI	16-APR-16
.ROOM	5-DEC-15	.SBS	29-OCT-15
.RSVP	30-AUG-14	.SCA	14-AUG-14
.RUGBY	7-APR-17	.SCB	11-JUL-14
.RUHR	10-DEC-13	.SCHAEFFLER	24-DEC-15
.RUN	7-MAY-15	.SCHMIDT	3-JUL-14
.RWE	27-OCT-15	.SCHOLARSHIPS	2-APR-15
.RYUKYU	3-APR-14	.SCHOOL	19-FEB-15
.SAARLAND	2-APR-14	.SCHULE	19-APR-14
.SAFE	5-DEC-15	.SCHWARZ	13-DEC-14
.SAFETY	24-DEC-15	.SCIENCE	15-NOV-14

.SCJOHNSON	21-JUL-16	.SHOPPING	21-JUN-16
.SCOR	23-JUN-15	.SHOUJI	30-MAR-16
.SCOT	13-JUN-14	.SHOW	16-APR-15
.SEARCH	29-JUN-17	.SHOWTIME	4-AUG-16
.SEAT	18-APR-15	.SHRIRAM	30-DEC-14
.SECURE	10-AUG-16	.SILK	7-JUN-16
.SECURITY	17-SEP-15	.SINA	30-MAR-16
.SEEK	11-AUG-15	.SINGLES	6-NOV-13
.SELECT	15-JAN-16	.SITE	16-MAR-15
.SENER	1-MAY-15	.SKI	30-MAY-15
.SERVICES	11-APR-14	.SKIN	15-JAN-16
.SES	9-JUL-16	.SKY	12-DEC-14
.SEVEN	26-SEP-15	.SKYPE	23-JUN-15
.SEW	13-DEC-14	.SLING	10-AUG-16
.SEX	18-APR-15	.SMART	15-JUL-16
.SEXY	14-NOV-13	.SMILE	5-DEC-15
.SFR	1-DEC-15	.SNCF	3-JUN-15
.SHANGRILA	2-JUL-16	.SOCCER	13-MAY-15
.SHARP	5-DEC-15	.SOCIAL	14-JAN-14
.SHAW	22-MAR-16	.SOFTBANK	16-JAN-16
.SHELL	15-DEC-15	.SOFTWARE	31-MAY-14
.SHIA	5-DEC-15	.SOHU	25-MAR-14
.SHIKSHA	18-JAN-14	.SOLAR	28-DEC-13
.SHOES	17-DEC-13	.SOLUTIONS	28-DEC-13
.SHOP	23-MAY-16	.SONG	24-FEB-16

.SONY	16-APR-15	.STYLE	4-FEB-15
.SOY	19-APR-14	.SUCKS	25-FEB-15
.SPA	17-OCT-20	.SUPPLIES	25-FEB-14
.SPACE	30-MAY-14	.SUPPLY	21-FEB-14
.SPIEGEL	18-JUL-14	.SUPPORT	18-DEC-13
.SPORT	10-JAN-18	.SURF	18-JUN-14
.SPOT	19-FEB-16	.SURGERY	23-APR-14
.SPREADBETTING	13-MAR-15	.SUZUKI	2-JUL-14
.SRL	24-JUL-15	.SWATCH	26-JUN-15
.SRT	28-JUL-16	.SWIFTCOVER	21-JUL-16
.STADA	13-SEP-15	.SWISS	29-APR-15
.STAPLES	15-JUL-16	.SYDNEY	5-NOV-14
.STAR	22-DEC-15	.SYMANTEC	3-DEC-15
.STARHUB	22-JUN-15	.SYSTEMS	17-DEC-13
.STATEBANK	16-APR-16	.TAB	13-NOV-15
.STATEFARM	24-DEC-15	.TAIPEI	23-OCT-14
.STATOIL	19-JUN-15	.TALK	25-MAR-16
.STC	29-AUG-15	.TAOBAO	21-JAN-16
.STCGROUP	28-AUG-15	.TARGET	4-AUG-16
.STOCKHOLM	26-SEP-15	.TATAMOTORS	24-JUL-15
.STORAGE	18-DEC-15	.TATAR	7-AUG-14
.STORE	22-FEB-16	.TATTOO	14-NOV-13
.STREAM	18-MAR-16	.TAX	23-APR-14
..STUDIO	8-JUL-15	.TAXI	7-MAY-15
.STUDY	25-FEB-15	.TCI	5-DEC-15

.TDK	7-JUN-16	.TOOLS	23-JAN-14
.TEAM	16-APR-15	.TOP	3-AUG-14
.TECH	21-MAR-15	.TORAY	1-MAY-15
.TECHNOLOGY	14-NOV-13	.TOSHIBA	4-FEB-15
.TELECITY	25-FEB-16	.TOTAL	9-MAR-16
.TELEFONICA	26-JUN-15	.TOURS	24-MAR-15
.TEMASEK	24-JAN-15	.TOWN	11-APR-14
.TENNIS	4-FEB-15	.TOYOTA	26-JUL-15
.TEVA	13-APR-16	.TOYS	11-APR-14
.THD	22-MAY-15	.TRADE	19-MAR-14
.THEATER	6-MAY-15	.TRADING	13-MAR-15
.THEATRE	13-SEP-15	.TRAINING	28-DEC-13
.TIAA	20-JUL-16	.TRAVELCHANNEL	23-JUN-16
.TICKETS	25-MAR-15	.TRAVELERS	5-DEC-15
.TIENDA	23-JAN-14	.TRAVELERSINSURANCE	15-DEC-15
.TIFFANY	21-JAN-16	.TRUST	6-DEC-14
.TIPS	19-NOV-13	.TRV	11-DEC-15
.TIRES	18-DEC-14	.TUBE	11-JAN-16
.TIROL	4-JUN-14	.TUI	27-SEP-14
.TJMAXX	15-JUL-16	.TUNES	25-FEB-16
.TJX	15-JUL-16	.TUSHU	14-DEC-15
.TKMAXX	15-JUL-16	.TVS	13-FEB-16
.TMALL	21-JAN-16	.UBANK	18-AUG-16
.TODAY	19-NOV-13	.UBS	11-JUL-15
.TOKYO	29-JAN-14	.UCONNECT	28-JUL-16

.UNICOM	4-FEB-16	.VIVA	28-AUG-15
.UNIVERSITY	11-APR-14	.VIVO	15-JUL-16
.UNO	30-NOV-13	.VLAANDEREN	18-JUN-14
.UOL	16-AUG-14	.VODKA	31-MAR-14
.UPS	31-MAY-16	.VOLKSWAGEN	9-JAN-16
.VACATIONS	21-FEB-14	.VOLVO	24-OCT-16
.VANA	10-NOV-15	.VOTE	2-MAR-14
.VANGUARD	28-AUG-16	.VOTING	29-JAN-14
.VEGAS	31-MAR-14	.VOTO	2-MAR-14
.VENTURES	6-NOV-13	.VOYAGE	6-NOV-13
.VERISIGN	25-NOV-15	.VUELOS	2-MAR-16
.VERSICHERUNG	22-MAY-14	.WALES	7-AUG-14
.VET	31-MAY-14	.WALMART	18-AUG-16
.VIAJES	17-DEC-13	.WALTER	27-MAY-15
.VIDEO	25-DEC-14	.WANG	3-JAN-14
.VIG	6-APR-16	.WANGGOU	15-DEC-15
.VIKING	22-FEB-16	.WARMAN	3-MAY-16
.VILLAS	11-FEB-14	.WATCH	23-JAN-14
.VIN	5-AUG-15	.WATCHES	14-DEC-15
.VIP	25-NOV-15	.WEATHER	12-JAN-16
.VIRGIN	7-OCT-15	.WEATHERCHANNEL	28-JAN-16
.VISA	28-JUL-16	.WEBCAM	19-MAR-14
.VISION	11-FEB-14	.WEBER	22-DEC-15
.VISTA	22-JUN-15	.WEBSITE	30-MAY-14
.VISTAPRINT	22-JUN-15	.WED	23-JAN-14

.WEDDING	15-OCT-14	.WOODSIDE	23-JUN-16
.WEIBO	6-APR-16	.WORK	23-SEP-14
.WEIR	17-APR-15	.WORKS	23-JAN-14
.WHOSWHO	18-JUL-14	.WORLD	19-SEP-14
.WIEN	3-JAN-14	.WOW	26-SEP-16
.WIKI	19-FEB-14	.WTC	29-APR-14
.WILLIAMHILL	28-JUL-14	.WTF	23-APR-14
.WIN	25-MAR-15	.XBOX	4-JUN-15
.WINDOWS	10-JUN-15	.XEROX	16-APR-15
.WINE	5-AUG-15	.XFINITY	7-JUL-16
.WINNERS	15-JUL-16	.XIHUAN	30-MAR-16
.WME	10-SEP-14	.XIN	7-MAR-15
.WOLTERSKLUWER	11-FEB-16		

.vermögensberater

xn--vermgensberater-ctb

German for ("financial advisor")

27-Sep-14

.vermögensberatung

xn--vermgensberatung-pwb

German for ("financial advice")

27-Sep-14

.कॉम

xn--11b4c3d

Hindi for "com" (/koma/)

28-Jul-15

.セール

xn--1ck2e1b

Japanese for "sale" (/seru/)

19-Feb-16

.慈善

xn--30rr7y

Chinese for "charity" (/cishan/)

31-Mar-15

.大众汽车

xn--3oq18vl8pn36a

Chinese for "Volkswagen" (/dazhong qiche/)

16-Aug-16

.点看

xn--3pxu8k

Chinese for "dot com" (/dian kan/)

28-Jul-15

.คอม

xn--42c2d9a

Thai for "com" (/khxm/)

28-Jul-15

.八卦

xn--45q11c

Chinese for "gossip" (/bagua/)

17-Nov-14

.香格里拉

xn--5su34j936bgsg

Chinese for "Shangri-La" (/xianggelila/)

2-Jul-16

.网站

xn--5tzm5g

Chinese for "website" (/wangzhan/)

17-Apr-16

.كيليوٹاك

xn--80aqecdr1a

Arabic for "Catholic" (/katolik/)

1-Dec-16

.联通

xn--8y0a063a

Chinese for "Unicom" (/liantong/)

6-Feb-16

.דוד

xn--9dbq2a

Hebrew script (no label given)

28-Jul-15

.时尚

xn--9et52u

Chinese for "vogue" (/shishang/)

27-Mar-15

.微博

xn--9krt00a

Chinese for "Weibo" (/weibo/)

6-Apr-16

.தெமசேக்

xn--b4w605ferd

Tamil for "Temasek" (/danmaxi/)

24-Jan-15

.ファッション

xn--bck1b9a5dre4c

Japanese for "fashion" (/fasshon/)

21-Feb-16

.नेट

xn--c2br7g

Hindi for "net" (/neta/)

28-Jul-15

.ストア

xn--cck2b3b

Japanese for "store" (/sutoa/)

19-Feb-16

.เซ็นทรัล

xn--cckwxcetd

Thai (no label given)

2-Jun-20

.商店

xn--czrs0t

Chinese for "shop" (/shangdian/)

6-Dec-14

.ポイント

xn--eckvdtc9d

Japanese for "point" (/pointo/)

14-Dec-15

.新闻

xn--efvy88h

Chinese for "news" (/xinwen/)

24-Aug-15

.工行

xn--estv75g

Chinese for "ICBC" (/gonghang/)

7-May-15

.家电

xn--fct429k

Chinese for "consumer electronics" (/kaden/)

25-Mar-16

.คอม

xn--fhbei

Thai for "com" (/kom/)

28-Jul-15

.娱乐

xn--fq720a

Chinese for "entertainment" (/yule/)

9-May-15

.谷歌

xn--flw351e

Chinese for "Google" (/guge/)

20-Nov-14

.電訊盈科

xn--fzys8d69uvgm

Chinese for "PCCW" (/dianxun yingke/)

11-May-16

.购物

xn--g2xx48c

Chinese for "shopping" (/gouwu/)

16-Jan-16

.クラウド

xn--gckr3f0f

Japanese for "cloud" (/kuraudo/)

19-Feb-16

.通販

xn--gk3at1e

Japanese for "online shopping" (/tsuhan/)

30-Sep-16

.网店

xn--hxt814e

Chinese for "webstore" (/wang dian/)

2-Dec-14

.餐厅

xn--imr513n

Chinese for "restaurant" (/canting/)

30-May-15

.kom

xn--j1aef

Cyrillic for "com" (/kom/)

28-Jul-15

.セントラル

xn--jlq480n2rg

Japanese (no label given)

2-Jun-20

.诺基亚

xn--jlq61u9w7b

Chinese for "Nokia" (/nuojiya/)

18-Dec-15

.食品

xn--jvr189m

Chinese for "food" (/shokuhin/)

22-Feb-16

.飞利浦

xn--kcrx77d1x4a

Chinese for "Philips" (/feilipu/)

7-Apr-15

.手表

xn--kpu716f

Chinese for "watches" (/shoubiao/)

15-Dec-15

.وڪم ارام

xn--mgb3a3ejt

Arabic for "Aramco" (/aramko/)

15-Oct-15

.نايلعلا

xn--mgb7c0bbn0a

Arabic for "Olayan" (/al-alian/)

3-May-16

.اتالاصت

xn--mgbakc7dvf

Arabic for "Etisalat" (/itissalat/)

10-Jun-17

.يلي ابوم

xn--mgb9fbpob

Arabic for "Mobily" (/mobayli/)

23-Dec-15

.يبظوبا

xn--mgbca7dzdo

Arabic for "Abu Dhabi" (/abu thabi/)

6-Apr-16

كپل وٹاك.

xn--mgbi4ecexp

Arabic for "Catholic" (/katholik/)

1-Dec-16

ھارمہ.

xn--mgbt3dhhd

Arabic for "comrade" (/hamra/)

7-Dec-15

.닷컴

xn--mk1bu44c

Korean for "dot com" (/datkeom/)

28-Jul-15

.政务

xn--mxtq1m

Chinese for "government" (/zhengfu/)

3-Mar-15

كتيب.

xn--ngbe9e0a

Arabic for "home" (/baytak/)

15-Dec-15

برع.

xn--ngbrx

Arabic for "Arab" (/arab/)

23-May-17

.健康

xn--nyqy26a

Chinese for "healthy" (/jiankang/)

2-Apr-15

.招聘

xn--otu796d

Chinese for "recruitment" (/zhaopin/)

24-Jan-18

.珠宝

xn--pbt977c

Chinese for "jewelry" (/zhubao/)

15-Dec-15

.닷넷

xn--pssy2u

Korean for "dot net" (/da na/)

28-Jul-15

.グーグル

xn--qcka1pmc

Japanese for "Google" (/guguru/)

20-Nov-14

.書籍

xn--rovu88b

Japanese for "book" (/shoseki/)

19-Feb-16

.닷넷

xn--t60b56a

Korean for "dot net" (/datnet/)

28-Jul-15

.コム

xn--tckwe

Japanese for "com" (/komu/)

29-Jul-15

.天主教

xn--tiq49xqyj

Chinese for "Catholic" (/tianzhujiao/)

1-Dec-16

.信息

xn--vuq861b

Chinese for "information" (/xinxi/)

18-Mar-15

.嘉里大酒店

xn--w4r85el8fhu5dnra

Chinese for "Kerry Hotels" (/jia li da jiudian/)

5-Mar-16

.嘉里

xn--w4rs40l

Chinese for "Kerry" (/jia li/)

16-May-16

.дети

xn--d1acj3b

Russian for "kids/deti"

26-Feb-14

.москва

xn--80adxhks

Russian for "Moscow/moskva"

24-Apr-14

.онлайн

xn--80asehdb

Russian for "online"

23-Oct-13

.org

xn--c1avg

Russian for "organization/org"

5-Mar-14

.рус

xn--p1acf

Russian for "Russian"

27-Sep-14

.сайт

xn--80aswg

Russian for "site"

23-Oct-13

.みんな

xn--q9jyb4c

Japanese for "everyone"

23-Nov-13

.رازاب

xn--mgbab2bd

Arabic for "bazaar/bazar"

18-Feb-14

.شبّك

xn--ngbc5azd

Arabic for "web/network"

23-Oct-13

.عقروم

xn--4gbrim

Arabic for "site"

28-May-14

.संगठन

xn--i1b6b1a6a2e

Hindi for "organization/sangathana"

9-Mar-14

.삼성

xn--cg4bki

Korean for "Samsung/Samseong"

21-Feb-14

.世界

xn--rhqv96g

Chinese for "world/shijie"

12-Mar-14

.中信

xn--fiq64b

Chinese for "CITIC"

18-Jan-14

.中国网通

xn--fiq228c5hs

Chinese for "Chinese network"

3-Jan-14

.企业

xn--vhquv

Chinese for "enterprise"

22-Aug-14

.佛山

xn--1qqw23a

Chinese city of "Foshan"

14-Aug-14

.公司

xn--55qx5d

Chinese for "company"

18-Jan-14

.公益

xn--55qw42g

Chinese for "charity"

17-Dec-13

.商城

xn--czru2d

Chinese for "mall"

31-Mar-14

.商标

xn--czt694b

Chinese for "trademark"

22-May-14

.在线

xn--3ds443g

Chinese for "online"

2-Jan-14

.广东

xn--xhq521b

Chinese province of "Guangdong"

14-Aug-14

.我爱你

xn--6qq986b3xl

Chinese for "I love you"

3-Jan-14

.手机

xn--kput3i

Chinese for "cell phone"

17-Jun-14

.政务

xn--zfr164b

Chinese for "government"

17-Dec-13

.机构

xn--nqv7f

Chinese for "agencies/institutions"

9-Mar-14

.游戏

xn--unup4y

Chinese for "game(s)"

23-Oct-13

.移动

xn--6frz82g

Chinese for "mobile"

5-Feb-14

.组织机构

xn--nqv7fs00ema

Chinese for "organization"

9-Mar-14

.网址

xn--ses554g

Chinese for "network address"

10-Apr-14

.网络

xn--io0a7i

Chinese for "network"

18-Jan-14

.集团

xn--3bst00m

Chinese for "group"

3-Jan-14

.XPERIA	5-Aug-15
.XYZ	19-Feb-14
.YACHTS	22-May-14
.YAHOO	13-Feb-16
.YAMAXUN	7-Oct-15
.YANDEX	18-Jul-14
.YODOBASHI	19-Feb-15
.YOGA	15-Oct-14
.YOKOHAMA	3-Apr-14
.YOU	25-Mar-16
.YOUTUBE	29-Aug-14
.YUN	30-Mar-16
.ZAPPOS	2-Jun-16
.ZARA	27-Oct-15
.ZERO	5-Dec-15
.ZIP	15-Sep-14

.ZIPPO	2-Jul-16
.ZONE	14-Jan-14
.ZUERICH	25-Dec-14

Singulars, Plurals, and Roots

In the last round of new gTLDs, ICANN allowed the following strings to be offered in both their singular and plural forms. So, these have already been taken both ways.

.COUPON(S)
 .DEAL(S)
 .GIFT(S)
 .REVIEW(S)
 .GAME(S)
 .PHOTO(S)
 .LOAN(S)
 .ACCOUNTANT(S)
 .CAREER(S)
 .AUTO(S)
 .CAR(S)

Singulars and Plurals, not in the Root Zone (and Which Likely Will Not Be Allowed)

This next group contains strings, many of which, I wish, could be allowed in the 2026 round, but it seems like the new rules will disallow plurals of singulars already in the zone and vice versa. These do NOT exist in the IANA root zone today.

.ACADEMIES

.ACTORS

.ADULTS

.AGENCIES

.ANALYTIC

.APARTMENT

.ARCHITECT(S)

.ASSOCIATE

.ATTORNEYS

.AUCTIONS

.APPS

.AUDIBLES

.AUTHORS

.AUDIOS

.BABIES

.BANDS

.BANKS

.BARS

.BARGAIN

.BLOGS

.BOAT

.BOOKS

.BOOKINGS

.BOTS

.BOUTIQUES

.CAMPS

.CALLS

.CAFES

.CABS

.BUSINESSES

.BUILDER

.BROKERS

.CARD

.CASINOS

.CENTERS

.CLINICS

.CITIES

.CIRCLES

.CHATS

.CLUBS

.COACHES

.CODES

.COFFEES

.COLLEGES

.COMMUNITIES

.COMPANIES

.COMPUTERS

.CONDO

.CONTACTS

.CHANNELS

.CHURCHES

.CIRCLES

.CLAIM

.CONSULTANT(S)

.CREDITUNIONS

.CREDITCARDS

.CPAS

.COURSE

.COUNTRIES

.CONTRACTOR

.DANCES

.DAYS

.DEALERS

.DEGREES

.DELIVERIES

.DEMOCRATS

.DENTISTS

.DOTS

.DOMAIN

.DOGS

.DOCTORS

.DISCOUNTS

.DIRECTORIES

.DIETS

.EATS

.ENTERPRISE

.ESTATES

.EVENT

.FINALS

.FASHIONS

.FARMER

.FARMS

.FAMILIES

.EXPERTS

.EXCHANGES

.FLIGHT

.FLORIST

.FLOWER

.FOODS

.FORUMS

.GAPS

.GAMES

.GALLERIES

.FUNDS

.FOUNDATIONS

.HANGOUTS

.GUITAR

.GUIDES

.GROCERIES

.GRIPES

.GREENS

.GRAPHIC

.HELPS

.HOLDING

.HOLIDAYS

.HOUSES

.HOSPITALS

.HOTELS

.INDUSTRY

.INSTITUTES

.INVESTMENT

.JOYS

.KITCHENS

.LATINOS

.LAWYERS

.LEASES

.LIVES

.LIFESTYLES

.LIMOS

.LUXURIES

.LOCKERS

.LIVES

.MEETS

.MEMORIALS

.MAN

.MORTGAGES

.MONSTERS

.MOMS

.MOBILES

.MOBIS

.MINTS

.MENUS

.MOTORCYCLE

.MOVIES

.ORGANICS

.OFFICES

.PARTNER

.PART

.PARTIES

.PETS

.PHARMACIES

.PHONES

.PIC

.PICTURE

.PRODUCTION

.PLUMBER(S)

(There is a **.PLUMBING**)

.PLACES

.PLAYS

.PIZZAS

.PROTECTIONS

.RADIOS

.READ

(I suppose this depends on whether it is a verb or a noun?)

.REALTORS

.RECIPE

.RODEOS

.REVIEWS

(Here too. It depends if this is a verb or a noun. I don't know.)

.RESTAURANTS

.REPUBLICANS

.REPORTS

.REPAIRS

.RENTAL

.RENTS

.REITS

.REHABS

.ROOMS

.SALES

.SALONS

.SAVES

.SERVICE

.SECURITIES

.SEATS

.SCHOOLS

.SCHOLARSHIP

.SHOPS

.SINGLE

.SITES

.STORES

.STREAMS

.STARS

.SPOTS

.SPORTS

.SPACES

.SPAS

.SONGS

.SOLUTION

.SOCIALS

.STUDIOS

.STUDIES

.SUCK

.SYSTEM

.TALKS

.TARGETS

.TATTOOS

.TAXES

.TAXIS

.TIRE

.TICKET	.VIPS
.THEATERS	.VODKAS
.THEATRES	.VOTES
.TECHNOLOGIES	.VOYAGES
.TEAMS	.WATCH
.TOOL	.WORLDS
.TOTAL	.WINES
.TOUR	.VILLA
.TOY	.VIDEOS
.TRADES	.WEBSITES
.TRAVELS	.WEDDINGS
.TUNE	.WIKIS
.VACATION	.WINNER
.UNIVERSITIES	.YACHT
.VIDEOS	.ZONES

ICANN has created a useful tool for the coming round. You'll need to open an account at ICANN.org to use it. It's called the Label Validation Tool and can be used to check if a string you have in mind will not be allowed.

To use the tool, go to:

<https://lgrtool.icann.org/b/>

Create an account and add the string(s) you have in mind. It will tell you if the string is already taken or not available due to some reason that I may have missed here.

LGR Tools

Switch modeTasksHelpLabel forms

Label Validation Tool

Validate label(s) against

lgr-5-common-26may22-en

View LGR as XML | HTML

Upload a list of labels

mammamia

Label can be in U-Label or A-Label form or a list of code points.

☐ Check for collision with existing TLDs

☐ Include mixed script variants

Validate

mammamia

VALID

U-label	A-label	Disposition	Code point sequence
mammamia	mammamia	valid	U+006D (m) U+0061 (a) U+006D (m) U+006D (m) U+0061 (a) U+006D (m) U+0069 (i) U+0061 (a)

Download results in CSV

Show / hide log

English (en)

Go

ICANN’s Label Validation Tool

So, Who Can Apply for a New TLD?

Eligibility Criteria

One of the questions I get asked more than anything else when I talk about new gTLDs is: "Can just anybody apply for one?" The short answer? Technically, yes. But like most things in life, it's not quite that simple. Just because the door is open doesn't mean you're going to walk right through it without proving you belong there.

Back in 2012, when ICANN launched its first big round of new gTLDs, the Applicant Guidebook laid out precisely what you needed to bring to the table if you wanted to operate your own top-level domain. And while that guidebook has aged a bit, the core principles haven't changed much. If anything, they're likely to get a bit tighter in the next round. So, let's walk through what it takes.

You Don't Have to Be Google, But You Can't Be a Ghost Either

First things first: you do not need to be a billion-dollar tech giant to apply for a new gTLD. The process is open to any established organization. That includes companies, non-profits, city governments, universities, even partnerships or community groups, as long as you're real. And by "real," I mean you need to exist on paper: legally formed, registered, and able to sign contracts.

ICANN doesn't want to hand over control of a top-level domain to someone whose "business" is just a Gmail address and a dream. You need to be a legitimate entity, in good standing, with something to lose. If you're applying as an individual, you'll still need to set up a business structure that meets those criteria.

Can You Keep the Lights On?

Running a registry is not cheap, and ICANN knows that. One of the most critical pieces of the puzzle is showing that you've got the financial chops to pull it off, not just today, but for at least the next three years. That means laying out a clear financial plan that covers your operations, staffing, technology, marketing, and customer support. And it can't just be fluff. You'll need numbers, not just napkin math.

If you plan to bring in investors or outsource the tech to someone who knows what they're doing (and a lot of folks do), that's fine. But ICANN wants to see that those partnerships are genuine, and that you're not planning to vanish the minute things get hard.

The Tech Side: You May Need a Partner

Now, you don't personally have to build a registry platform from scratch (thankfully). But someone on your team, or in your vendor relationships, needs to know how to keep a gTLD up and running 24/7 without dropping the ball. You're applying to run part of the Internet's core infrastructure. ICANN's not going to trust that you'll "figure it out later."

You'll need to show that your setup includes DNS resolution, DNSSEC security, data escrow (in case of emergencies), WHOIS services, abuse prevention tools, the works. You can outsource most of this to a backend registry provider, and many applicants did in the 2012 round. There will be many companies like us

running back ends. But even if you're outsourcing, you are still on the hook. ICANN holds you responsible.

No Skeletons in the Closet

There's a background check. There are several. ICANN will vet the entity applying, as well as your directors, officers, owners (typically anyone with more than 15%), and anyone involved in technical operations. They're looking for serious red flags: fraud, cybercrime, DNS abuse, and that sort of thing. It's not a witch hunt, but if you or your partners have a track record of shady dealings, your application could be dead on arrival.

And no, this isn't just about ticking boxes. This part of the process is really about trust. ICANN must be able to say, "Yes, we believe these folks will manage this slice of the Internet responsibly."

If You're Going After a Geographic or Community TLD, You'll Need Permission

This is where things get a little more nuanced. If you're applying for a TLD that represents a place, like .london, .nyc, or .africa, you'll need official sign-off from the relevant government or public authority. That's non-negotiable. You can't just decide that you'd like to run .paris because you spent a summer there in college.

Similarly, if your TLD is intended for a specific community, say .catholic, .bank, or .gay, you'll need to prove three things: that the community exists, that you represent it (or have its support), and that you have a way to make sure only legitimate members of that community can register names.

And here's a little twist from the 2012 round: if multiple people apply for the exact string, and one of them is a community-based applicant, they might get priority, if they can pass what's

called the Community Priority Evaluation. It's not easy, but it's an option.

You Can Apply for More Than One

Yes, you can apply for more than one gTLD. Google, Amazon, and several others applied for dozens back in 2012. But keep in mind, each application is treated separately. ICANN will look at how your applications are related and whether there's any potential for conflict of interest or gamesmanship.

You've Got to Commit

If you get approved, it's not just a handshake and a high-five. You'll need to sign a Registry Agreement with ICANN. That's a serious contract that outlines everything from your performance requirements to your data protection policies to your responsibilities in the event of a technical failure.

Before you even go live, you'll have to pass a round of pre-delegation testing. ICANN wants to make sure that everything you promised in your application actually works in the real world. No shortcuts here.

And after you're up and running, you're still accountable. Regular audits, compliance reviews, and performance checks are part of the deal.

So, who qualifies to apply for a new gTLD? In theory, almost anyone. In practice, only those who are prepared, legally, financially, technically, and ethically. Running a gTLD is kind of like running a small public utility. ICANN takes it seriously, and so should you.

Application Types for New gTLDs

What Happened, What's Coming, and What's Changing

The 2012 round of new gTLDs was, in many ways, a bold experiment. It cracked open the top-level domain system to allow more than just the traditional .com, .net, .org, and a few others to exist. Suddenly, the Internet could host everything from .ninja to .london to .bmw. It was exciting, chaotic, and, for a lot of folks, confusing.

Now, with the following application round slated for 2026, it's time to revisit what types of gTLDs are out there, how they've been treated, and how things are shaping up differently this time around. ICANN and the broader Internet governance community have had more than a decade to chew on what worked, what didn't, and how to fine-tune the process. Some things have stayed the same; others have changed.

The basic categories of gTLDs include generics, community-based, geographic, IDNs, and brand-specific. Here we look at what each type meant in 2012, what's changing this time around, and how the rules are shaping up for the next batch of applicants. The types are not too different from 2012.

Generic gTLDs: The Default Route

Back in 2012, most applications fell into this catch-all category. If your TLD wasn't explicitly community-based, brand-related, or geographic, it was considered "standard" or "generic." Think, .shop, .blog, or .tech, terms that anyone could register a name under, assuming the registry's policies allowed it.

Applicants for generic strings had broad flexibility. You could choose to make your TLD open to everyone, or impose restrictions, say, only letting licensed professionals register under .law, as long as you spelled out your intentions and met the technical and financial requirements, you were good to go.

The one twist that created some controversy in 2012 was the idea of “closed generics.” These were generic words (like .book or .music) applied for by companies who didn’t want to open them to the public. Instead, they wanted exclusive control, like Amazon owning .book and not letting anyone else register under it. That raised a lot of eyebrows. The idea that a single company could own a common term and keep everyone else out didn’t sit well with governments, civil society, and even some competitors.

Eventually, ICANN stepped in and said, “Nope, not unless you can show a clear public interest.” That put closed generics in a kind of limbo, and it doesn’t look like they’ll be easily approved this time around.

For 2026, the default category remains: if you’re not community-based, brand-specific, or targeting a geographic name, you’re a generic applicant. But ICANN has made one thing very clear: closed generics look to be off the table until there’s a solid policy framework in place. That won’t be ready in time for the 2026 round. So, brand applicants hoping to control a dictionary word for exclusive use will likely need to rethink their strategy.

In a nutshell, generic gTLDs remain wide open.

Community-Based gTLDs: For the People, by the People

Community-based TLDs are the spiritual successor to the old “sponsored TLDs” like .museum and .travel. These are gTLDs designed to serve a specific, clearly defined group of people, a

profession, a culture, a language community, or any other organized collective.

The tradeoff is simple. If you can prove you truly represent that community, and if you're willing to operate the registry in a way that serves them, you get a shot at special treatment. Most notably, if someone else applies for the same string as you and you're in direct competition, your application could get priority through something called Community Priority Evaluation (CPE).

But here's the rub: CPE in 2012 turned out to be tougher than expected. Only a handful of community applications made it through. A lot of legitimate-sounding communities lost in the scoring process, often because they couldn't quite meet the high bar for things like "delineation" or "nexus" with the string. The rules didn't always account for less formally organized communities, and that led to some public pushback.

So, what's different in 2026?

For one, the concept of community TLDs is still alive and well, but the rules are getting clearer. ICANN is tweaking the definitions and scoring system to be more inclusive. Language-based communities, cultural groups, and others without traditional memberships are now more likely to be recognized.

They're also updating outdated elements, like the odd requirement that a community must have existed before 2007 (that was a leftover from when the original policies were written). Evaluators will now have more tools, examples, and definitions to work with. That should make the process more transparent and, hopefully, fairer.

There's also talk of an appeal mechanism. In 2012, if you lost a CPE, that was pretty much the end of the road. This time around, if the process goes off the rails, applicants may have a limited path

to challenge it. That's a big deal for community groups who can't afford to lose out in an opaque review.

Overall, the community track in 2026 is evolving, not reinvented, but improved. If you've got a legitimate group behind you and a TLD that represents them, you still have a path forward. And that path should be a little smoother this time.

Geographic gTLDs: Names That Come with Strings Attached

Geographic TLDs are precisely what they sound like, TLDs that represent place names. That includes countries, capital cities, regions, and sometimes even continents. In 2012, ICANN put together a detailed list of what counted as a "geographic name" and what kind of approvals were required.

Here's the basic logic:

If you wanted to apply for a country or territory name (like .france or .brazil), forget it. Those were off-limits. If you wanted a capital city, like .london or .tokyo, you needed a letter of support from the national government.

For other cities, like .berlin or .quebec, you needed support only if you were intending to use the name in a way that referenced the city. If you claimed it wasn't about the place (even if it looked like it), you might not need a letter, though you were still taking a risk.

This whole setup led to some complicated situations. The most famous one was probably .amazon. Technically, "Amazon" wasn't on the list of protected geographic names, so the company applied. But several South American governments objected, since it's also the name of a vast geographic and cultural region. That issue dragged on for years before finally being resolved.

For the next round, ICANN isn't trying to reinvent the wheel. The rules around geographic names are mostly staying the same. If you're applying for a string that clearly represents a place, and especially if it's on one of ICANN's lists, you'll need a letter of support or non-objection. That applies to countries, capitals, regions, and well-known cities.

What's changing, though, is the guidance around city names. There was a lot of debate about whether all city names should require approval, regardless of intended use. In the end, the consensus leaned toward predictability over perfection. The rule stays: if your application ties the string to the city, you'll need a letter. If you don't, you won't, but you'll need to be transparent about your intended use.

ICANN's also putting more emphasis on communicating early with relevant governments. The idea is to prevent surprises and objections down the line. If you think a city might care about your application, it's smart to talk to them first, even if you're not technically required to.

Geographic TLDs carry political weight. That hasn't changed, and the best approach is still collaboration and clarity.

Brand TLDs: From Afterthought to First-Class Citizen

In 2012, there wasn't really a "brand" category per se. Companies that applied for their own name as a TLD, like .google or .bmw, just applied as generic TLDs and explained their plans. There were no specific rules for them until after the applications came in.

Eventually, ICANN introduced a contract provision called Specification 13, which laid out what it meant to run a single-registrant TLD based on your brand. This was a big step; it officially

recognized what a lot of applicants were doing anyway and gave them a framework that made sense.

A brand TLD is different from a public registry. It's not about selling names to others; it's about having a secure, branded space for your own organization. The company or its affiliates make all registrations. There's no public access, and that makes specific registry rules (like Sunrise periods for trademark holders) pointless.

For 2026, this setup is being brought into the application process from day one. If you're applying for your brand as a TLD, you'll check that box and follow a streamlined path designed just for you.

- The criteria are simple and essentially the same as Spec 13:
- The string must match your trademark.
- Only you (or your affiliates) can register names.
- You can't use a generic word unless it's part of your registered brand.
- You need to prove that your trademark is real and current.
- There's also talk of easing or waiving some of the typical registry requirements for brands, like financial guarantees to protect registrants (since there won't be any outside registrants to protect).

The most significant benefit here is clarity. Back in 2012, brands had to figure this out on the fly. Now, the process is predictable and purpose-built. Companies can apply with confidence,

knowing what they're signing up for and what they'll get in return.

If anything, we can expect to see even more .brand applications this time around. Many companies sat out in 2012 because it was new, untested, or poorly understood. Now they've had a chance to observe the success of early adopters, and the roadmap is already laid out.

All of this reflects a decade's worth of lessons. The industry has matured and so has the process. The 2026 round won't be perfect, but for applicants who know which category they fall into and how the process works, it should be a whole lot more predictable.

New Approaches for 2026

ICANN is implementing a more structured policy for the 2026 round.

The key points are:

- Singular and plural versions of the same word in the same language will be considered confusingly similar. If both are applied for in the same round, they will be placed in a contention set, meaning only one can be delegated.
- Applications for a singular or plural version of an existing gTLD will not be permitted. ICANN believes this will prevent new applicants from creating strings that are too like those already in the root zone.

- A formal notification process will be in place. Within 30 days following String Confirmation Day, any party can notify ICANN if they believe two applied-for strings are singular/plural versions of the same word. This notification must include evidence from a dictionary published after 1970, specifying the language and providing relevant definitions. I suspect that we'll see some existing registries filing objections.
- ICANN will review these notifications and make determinations accordingly. Suppose ICANN agrees that the strings are singular/plural versions of the same word. In that case, the applications will be placed in contention or, if one is already delegated, the new application will be disqualified.

This approach aims to reduce end-user confusion and ensure a more predictable and fair application process.

Implications for Applicants

For prospective applicants, this policy shift has several important implications:

- Avoid applying for singular or plural versions of existing gTLDs. If you're considering a string that is a singular or plural form of an existing TLD, it's likely to be rejected.

- Be cautious when selecting alternate strings. ICANN allows applicants to designate alternate strings in case their primary choice is in contention. However, if your alternate is a singular or plural version of another applied-for string, it may also be subject to contention or rejection.
- Prepare for potential contention. If you apply for a string that has both singular and plural forms, be ready to enter a contention set and possibly an auction process to secure your desired TLD.

Understand that intent doesn't override similarity. Even if you intend to use a plural string for a different purpose than its singular counterpart, ICANN's policy focuses on linguistic similarity, not usage intent.

ICANN's Rationale Behind the Singular/Plural Policy

The main goal of this policy is to protect consumers and maintain the integrity of the DNS. Allowing both singular and plural versions of the same word to coexist can lead to confusion, phishing risks, and brand dilution. By treating these variations as confusingly similar, ICANN aims to create a more user-friendly and secure namespace.

Additionally, this policy helps prevent gaming of the system. In the past, some applicants may have applied for plural versions of anticipated popular singular strings (or vice versa)

to leverage existing traffic or brand recognition. The new rules close this loophole.

Final Thoughts

The 2026 round of new gTLD applications brings with it a more thoughtful approach to string similarity, particularly concerning singular and plural forms. Applicants need to be diligent in researching existing TLDs and carefully consider their string choices to align with the new policies.

By understanding and adhering to the guidelines, applicants can navigate the application process more effectively and contribute to a more coherent and user-friendly domain name system.

PART 3

**LESSONS
FROM THE PAST.
CAVEATS AND
INSIGHTS**

Caveat 1

Consider Your Strings Carefully

We consider the careful choice of your intended string to be the most critical aspect in the success of your new gTLD venture. There is no single formula for success, but you'll need to consider something that is generic enough for anyone to want at the end of their domain name, or you'll want to consider a specific niche that is popular enough to support your registry. In the last round, there were hundreds of specific industry applications like .car, or .insurance. But there were also some very generic ones like .xyz. Xyz is considered to be the most successful string of all the new gTLDs applied for in 2012. It helps that it is run by one of the best online marketers in the world, but nonetheless, a generic term like .xyz can work. It's been proven.

This caveat cannot be overemphasized. In my view, the new guidebook is skewed to favor existing TLD operators. After all, many of them were part of how the policy was formed (as volunteers). Even though the official reason for no singulars and plurals allowed is to prevent confusion, I see it as a massive giveaway to the existing players because it will reduce their competition. So, for generic TLDs, although the top strings may be taken, opportunities still exist. The key is to find strings that will appeal to a wide but niche audience. Without being specific, I believe that other popular languages still contain some strong keywords that weren't applied for last time. I also think there are opportunities in shorter generic strings that can be adapted by generic users.

Look for words or strings that others may not be thinking about and keep them to yourself until you are ready to apply.

Caveat 2

Confidentiality

This is important, especially in the 2026 round of applications. There are two ways to think about your publicity strategy: one is to put your stake in the sand and announce what you are doing. A few applicants did that last time. In essence, their position was to stake their claim and let the world know that they were willing to pay any price to get that TLD.

It's my view that this isn't the way to go unless you are so big and so well-funded, that money doesn't matter. Maybe you'll scare away your competitors.

But in most cases, we don't want to waste money. By announcing your intended strings early, you invite competition. I am advising applicants to keep their ideas to themselves and to consider coming up with a string that no one else is applying for. This will keep your cost down to the ICANN application fee, legal, consulting, and technical services.

The .web TLD ended up going for over \$100 million dollars in the last round, in an ICANN auction, and it also ended up in litigation that is still ongoing. No .web TLD exists for now because of the contention. It was, of course, one of the more popular endings. It was bound to have competition.

On the other hand, there was .buzz. The applicant envisioned a TLD that would capitalize on popularism, or "buzz." He was fortunate to have been the only applicant, and although it's not the largest registry, it is considered one of the more successful single registries that applied in 2012. He also got a little lucky – the legalized cannabis craze happened after his application was

approved. Things like that occur in the domain business all the time – unintended uses for words and phrases.

The bottom line – Don't talk to anyone about your string ideas and sign a Mutual NDA before you discuss them with your RSP or anyone who will be helping you. I can't emphasize this caveat enough. Keep your string ideas between a small, trusted group of employees, partners, and advisors.

Caveat 3

Think About Your Plans from The Start

The .jobs situation was one of those cases that should make anyone applying for a new gTLD in 2026 pay attention. It's an example of what can happen if you want to change your mind about your business plan. Employ Media originally got .jobs with the idea that it would be for "corporate employers only," so domains like ATT.jobs or Microsoft.jobs made sense. But then they started expanding into "generic job-related names" like newyork.jobs, or engineer.jobs, and that's when the trouble started. ICANN stepped in and said, "That's not what we agreed to," and a legal battle began. It didn't go to trial. I understand that they settled, and eventually, Employ Media had to pull back on their plans. But it was a setback.

This is a lesson in "contract compliance" and "business model flexibility". If you tell ICANN that your gTLD is going to be for one purpose and then try to pivot later, they might not let you, or worse, your competitors might be the ones to stop you. It appears that the HR industry group that initially backed .JOBS turned on Employ Media when they started selling generic names.

That's a warning to anyone applying for a restricted use gTLD in 2026: even if ICANN lets you slide, industry groups or competitors might not. If your gTLD serves a specific industry, you need to be sure those key players won't fight you later. You also need to be realistic about your revenue model. If you lock yourself into a niche market, you need to be confident that you can

make enough money without expanding, because changing the rules later isn't always easy.

The biggest takeaway from all of this is that ICANN does enforce contracts, and when they do, you don't want to be on the wrong side of it. If you're applying in 2026, you need to be thinking about your long-term flexibility now. What happens if your original idea doesn't work? Can you adjust, or are you stuck? If you think you might want to open registration later, sell generic names, or do something creative with licensing, you need to bake that into your application up front. Trying to change courses later could land you in a legal mess, or worse, harm your ability to succeed.

You should also expect that ICANN might not be your only problem. Sometimes, your biggest challenge will come from competitors or industry groups who don't like what you're doing. That means you need to think strategically about who might object, and how you either get them on board or stay under their radar. Also, don't assume you can take ICANN to court and win. If you get into a dispute, working within ICANN's processes is usually a better approach than fighting it head-on.

If you're serious about applying, now is the time to get your business model, policies, and strategy locked down. Are you running a closed or open registry? Are you selling domains at high volume, or is this a premium, low-volume play? If your model is based on restrictions, are you sure there's enough demand to sustain it? If you think you might need to adjust your pricing, name allocation, or eligibility rules after launch, figure out how to make that possible now, not after ICANN locks you in. There are ways to make changes, but they typically take a long time.

And then there's compliance. ICANN loves paperwork (at least in a digital sense), and they're getting stricter about reporting, abuse monitoring, and rule enforcement. If you're planning

to apply, be prepared to deal with ICANN compliance from day one. That means having a plan for monitoring bad actors, making sure your registration policies hold up, and keeping track of things like trademark claims and domain disputes. It's just part of running a TLD now.

Applying for a gTLD is a long-term commitment. The biggest mistakes happen when people rush into it without thinking about how things will work for three, five, or ten years down the road. If you don't want to be stuck in a business model that doesn't work? Or worse, in a fight with ICANN or industry groups, you need to get ahead of those issues before you even submit your application. There's a lot to consider, and the best time to work through the challenges is before they become problems.

Caveat 4

AI and ChatGPT

What about the rise of ChatGPT? This may have an impact on the price and value of .com domains. ChatGPT is the coolest thing since peanut butter and jelly. But I also have concerns about it. It's certainly making it easier for people to find good domain names, and so, it will cause domain names to grow. The one problem I have with ChatGPT is, I feel like we're all becoming part of the Borg. I mean, almost anything I do nowadays. I run it through Grammarly or ChatGPT to make it better, and I hate that, because I want to write my own way. But the truth is that it fixes my writing a lot of times. So, I'm wondering if we're going to have some homogenization of all our writing. I worry about that for students. What's going to happen with these students in college today? How do you regulate that? But that's another issue.

I do think it will cause there to be more domains registered and fewer domains available. There are a few companies that are using AI to help people think of cool, intuitive names, unique names. And although you already know how I feel about AI replacing domain names, it is something worth keeping on your radar. I'm not trying to talk anyone out of doing this, but all good business plans have a SWOT analysis and these caveats are my contribution to yours.

Caveat 5

Crypto or Web 3 Identifiers

One of our goals in this book was to point out the potential risks. Although Web 3 Identifiers (or domains) don't have automatic access to the world like Web 1 or 2 domain names do, it is always possible that the companies that make browsers will change how they behave to accommodate the new Web 3 identifiers.

Right now, the only way they work is if end users download browser plugins or extensions. But! What if the browser companies come around to their way of thinking and build Web 3 identifiers into their functionality? It's not out of the realm of possibility. If you're doing an honest analysis, this is a risk worth considering.

Regarding this, many industry insiders suspect that we'll see a lot of Web 3 operators applying for strings in the Web 2 world (ICANN). They are beginning to see the value of a measure of regulation.

Caveat 6

Refunds are a Problem

Considering that ICANN is only refunding 65% of the application fee, you need to think much harder and be very prepared ahead of time. What if you apply and, after their big reveal day, find out that you are in contention with ten other applicants? You're faced with being part of a big auction. Your string is going to cost a lot more than \$227,000.

You can always stand up your alternative string. That was ICANN's way of giving you a second chance. But what if that string doesn't work out for some reason either? You face a loss of close to \$80,000 (35% of your application fee) simply to find that out. It doesn't seem fair to me, but I guess this is ICANN's way of saying, don't apply unless you are super serious.

If you are planning to apply for a generic Top Level Domain, try to come up with strings that you think no one else has considered and keep your ideas confidential. In this process, changing your mind is expensive.

Caveat 7

There are Gatekeepers

New entrants in the domain space should know that you are a wholesale business for the most part. You will need to work with the Registrars. They are busy, and they are going to get busier during the 2026 releases, not to mention the ongoing work of marketing new gTLDs. Registrars matter, and you need to:

- Have a budget to work with them. Many ask for Marketing Development Funds (MDF).
- Spend time getting to know them, or consider hiring a marketing firm that is familiar with the industry.
- Consider applying for more than one or two TLDs. If you have many TLDs, it will be more compelling for registrars to work with you.
- Registrars are not required to sell every domain name that exists. They are making business and product decisions every day. You need to stand out.
- You cannot assume that they will automatically offer your domain names.

Interview with Andrey Insarov, Founder of it.com

Andrey is the founder of it.com Domains. I met him three years ago after I left the domain name business. A mutual friend, and one of Andrey's Advisors, Munir Badr, who runs Aeserver.com, called me and asked for a small favor. They had agreed to a sponsorship of NamesCon in Austin, Texas, and because of some personal issues, could no longer attend. They had a speaking spot! Out of friendship with Munir (and, yes, they paid me), I agreed to represent them there. That was the beginning of my current job as Chief Strategy Office of it.com Domains.

Anyway, back to Andrey, He also founded Intis Telecom, which is an international short messaging service software provider that is used by telecoms all over the world. He has built that company into a powerhouse and, more recently, turned his attention to domains.

We are very like-minded and share a vision for a new domain business and Registry Service Provider that will make a profound impact in the industry. Here is his compelling interview.

Joe: Let's start with your background before domain names. What were you doing?

Andrey: Before domains, I was in telecom, running an A2P (application-to-person) messaging service. We contracted with mobile operators and message aggregators so our clients, banks, shops, and two-factor-authentication providers could send SMS through an API or the SMPP protocol (the telecom cousin of EPP in domains).

Joe: Where did you learn enough to start that business?

Andrey: It began 20 years ago. I owned a small IT services company that installed and maintained computers, networks, and servers. One client, a dental clinic, asked about bulk SMS. I researched white-label platforms, found one that let me brand the service under my own domain, and launched it. The dentist was happy and told his colleagues; soon, other clinics asked for the same thing. That's how the messaging business grew.

Joe: So, how did domains enter the picture?

Andrey: By luck. I live in the U.K. and wanted a second, unrelated business for stability. My first idea was an IT outsourcing firm. While brainstorming, I noticed the domain `it.co.uk` was for sale for about £ 100k, so I bought it and built a simple landing page, but then set the project aside.

Joe: And the next step?

Andrey: A domain investor named Igor emailed me after seeing the sale on Ron Jackson's blog. He asked if I wanted other "IT" domains like `it.ae` and `it.kz`. The idea appealed to me, so I bought them. A few months later, Igor asked, "Would you like to buy `it.com`?" The initial price was around \$6 million, far beyond my budget and purpose, so I declined.

Joe: But that wasn't the end of it?

Andrey: Right. He came back with two improvements: a lower price, about \$3.5 million, and a three-year payment plan. Spread over 36 months, the cost felt

manageable, and I knew a two-letter, meaningful .com had lasting value. We closed the deal in 2020 – 21 with help from Escrow.com, Stevan Lieberman, and others. By 2022, the domain was entirely in my ownership.

Joe: Did you know how you'd use it?

Andrey: Not at all. My first thought was to rebrand my messaging firm, "Intis Telecom" on it.com, but that felt like overkill. Then I remembered the early 2000s, when subdomain services like .uk.com were common. I decided to offer third-level names (e.g., brand.it.com) instead of treating it as a normal domain.

Joe: So, intuition pushed you toward a sub-domain registry model?

Andrey: Exactly. I didn't know much about the domain industry and saw it.com as a digital asset, similar to SaaS. We built a landing page, announced the idea at a Kyiv SEO conference, and planned a full launch for Web Summit in Lisbon later that year.

Joe: COVID got in the way?

Andrey: Yes. I caught a severe case and couldn't present, so Igor suggested a friend, Munir Badr, to step in. Munir liked the concept and introduced it at the event as a "coming soon" service. The official launch happened at Web Summit 2021: users could register something.it.com, set DNS, or redirect traffic.

Joe: How did the domain community react?

Andrey: Munir said, "Let's show this to domain people." Our first industry event was CloudFest; we had a booth

and met supportive people, though some quietly wondered if we were crazy for reviving a 20-year-old model. CloudFest brought our first registrar partner, DomGate, and Igor introduced me to Ron Jackson, whose positive feedback boosted my confidence.

Joe: And after that?

Andrey: At the Affiliate Web Summit in Dubai, I met Christian Voss from Sedo; he liked the idea and listed our premiums. Then I met Helmut, who invited us to sponsor the first London Domain Summit, where Helmut introduced me to Ben and Alessandro. Alessandro knows the Italian domain market and came on board. Munir later suggested bringing you (me/Joe Alagna) on board, and the team, Natalia, Roland, Tess, Alessandro, & you, took shape.

Joe: Let's talk day-to-day operations. How involved are you?

Andrey: My focus is technical and financial. I asked our developers for software that could register subdomains, manage DNS, and speak EPP so we could connect to WHMCS. The first version took six months. Now I handle developer coordination and funding while the rest of the team drives sales and marketing.

Joe: If you were starting over, what would you change?

Andrey: For a long time, I would have said, "I'd never do it again; it was ten or twenty times harder than I expected." Recently, I changed my mind for two reasons: I've made good friends in a kinder ecosystem than telecom, and we're seeing real success, over 40,000 sales so far.

Joe: Growth has accelerated this year. Why?

Andrey: Several game-changers: GoDaddy, small sales but considerable credibility, followed by Openprovider, Dynadot, and finally Namecheap. Our top five registrars now are Namecheap, Dynadot, GoDaddy, CentralNic (for RRPproxy), and Openprovider. With them, we're on track to hit 100,000 registrations this autumn.

Joe: What advice would you give a new TLD applicant?

Andrey: First, have sufficient capital; everything, from ICANN fees to marketing, costs serious money. Second, start with a strong idea and a natural audience; that lowers promotional costs, though you'll still spend plenty. And be ready for years of sustained effort.

Joe: Final thoughts?

Andrey: I'm glad I jumped in. I've gained friends, learned a new industry, and built something that could be my primary business for years to come.

Joe: Excellent. Thanks, Andrey.

Andrey: Thank you, Joe.

Interview with Lars Jensen, Founder of ShortDot

Lars Jensen has a different story, which he reveals in this interview. The reason we were interested in interviewing Lars is that he didn't actually apply for new gTLDs in 2012, but he did invest in or buy several existing registries, starting with .ICU (I see you). He built it from nothing to over 500,000 domains under management in just a few years. So, although his story is different than the others, it is relevant to running successful registries.

Joe: Thanks, Lars. Your perspective is unique because you invested in TLDs only after they were already delegated. Some of them didn't even have any domains yet, but you've grown them to nearly three million registrations. Before we dive in, could you give a brief rundown of your background prior to domain names?

Lars: I'm Danish. After school, I went into insurance, focusing on sales, marketing, and management. I helped build Denmark's first insurance franchise concept and ran two franchises of my own. In 1999, a venture-capital contact asked me to join a startup called Speednames, the first European platform to let you register dozens of ccTLDs from one interface. I was in my early twenties and opened its Central European operation. That's how I got into domains.

Joe: So, Speednames is how you got interested in domain names?

Lars: Exactly.

Joe: When did you first realize you could own and operate a TLD yourself?

Lars: Around the time I joined Speednames. We helped launch .name in August 2001. I was at my first ICANN meeting in Stockholm for the launch party, and that's when it clicked that you could run your own extension.

Joe: That was years before the large-scale 2012 round. Fast-forward to today: Which TLDs do you operate, and how did you choose them?

Lars: We run six: .icu (launched 2018), .cyou (2019), .bond, .sbs, .cf, and .Qpon. Our research showed that short, memorable, generic strings perform best, that's why our company is called *ShortDot*. Domains exist because we can't remember long numbers, but if the domain itself is too long, no one remembers it either. So, our mantra is "short and easy to remember" with no negative connotations in any language.

Joe: Did you ever think of building your own registry platform?

Lars: We considered it, but we're a sales-and-marketing outfit, not an infrastructure builder. Plenty of strong back-end providers exist, and healthy competition keeps them sharp, so partnerships make more sense for us.

Joe: What criteria did you use in picking your registry services provider?

Lars: First, connectivity: they must already be integrated with many registrars. Second, commercial terms: pricing and their willingness to invest in us. Third, relationships: we already knew, and had successfully worked with, the team we chose.

Joe: Question six is optional because it might be confidential: how much did you invest?

Lars: That's confidential; we have private shareholders.

Joe: Fair enough. What's your favorite story from this whole adventure?

Lars: Launching .icu. After 18 months of prep, we went live at a precise moment. I watched registrations pour in, names from all over the world, second by second. It felt like launching a yacht and seeing it sail. Nothing in business compares.

Joe: Great story. What disappointed you?

Lars: The pushback. Even with an incredible string, many people say, "That'll never work; stick to the classics." It stings, but you have to believe in yourself and keep pushing, six, 12, 24 months... even years of massive action and branding.

Joe: Has your ROI met expectations?

Lars: Yes. We feel blessed, and the whole team has been on board since day one.

Joe: How do you like the day-to-day of running a TLD?

Lars: I love it. It's a 24 / 7 live business. Even after seven years, I still wake up eager to see what

was registered overnight and where. But success isn't automatic; you can't do this part-time.

Joe: What would you do differently if you started today?

Lars: From day one, I'd talk to people who launched before us. You'll still make mistakes, but you'll minimize them.

Joe: Any other advice for new TLD applicants?

Lars: Talk to registrars early. Don't let them kill your idea, but listen to feedback. Some love new extensions; others don't. Market research and data matter.

Joe: Bonus question: Would you do it again?

Lars: Absolutely, every day.

Joe: Fantastic. Thanks, Lars.

Interview with Nisha Parkash, Administrator of .sky

I met Nisha Parkash at ICANN's Contracted Parties Summit in Paris in 2024. Nisha is the Head of Domain Management for the Sky Group in London and in charge of the brand TLD, .sky. Here is our interview.

Joe: Nisha, let's start with a bit of an introduction. Tell me—what did you do before you got into the domain name industry?

Nisha: I did a variety of things. First and foremost—this was about 20 years ago—I actually dropped out of school. I didn't really have a direction at the time. I went into sales for about 10 years, which included retail and property sales. At one point, I even trained dogs for the police force! Eventually, I discovered that my real strength was in relationship management. I took a role monitoring the press for the government, which was incredibly interesting—I loved that job—but I didn't see a future in it.

Then I got into relationship management in the domain space through a corporate registrar. My role there was all about managing client relationships. At that point, I just had to learn the business. It was a sink-or-swim situation, and I swam—I learned it.

Joe: Today, you're in charge of .sky, which is its own top-level domain, its own zone. When did you first become aware that your company could actually own a top-level domain?

Nisha: It was during the last application round. I was just leaving MarkMonitor and joining Sky. By the time I joined, .sky had already been delegated. I had known about the application rounds because I was working in the thick of it at a corporate registrar. But I never imagined I'd end up managing a TLD. I thought I'd always be behind the scenes, helping clients.

Ironically, even though I was managing domain portfolios for 30 different customers, none of them had applied for a dot-brand. Then I transitioned into Sky as a junior analyst—and the rest unfolded from there.

Joe: Did you ever consider applying for a generic TLD, or were you always focused on a brand TLD?

Nisha: Well, given that “sky” is technically a generic word, it was a bit of an unusual case. We were applying for a word that everyone has a stake in—whether you're living or dead, we're all under the sky. So we went for it, with the conviction that we would use it as a closed brand. There was a chance it could have been contested—we were aware of that—but we proceeded with a strong sense of purpose.

Joe: When it came to registry service providers, did you ever think about building your own, or did you go with an external partner?

Nisha: We went with an external partner. We didn't have a registry of our own and weren't interested in managing one internally.

Joe: That makes sense. You may not be able to answer this next one—it's a bit personal—but I always ask applicants: how much did your company invest in securing your top-level domain?

Nisha: I believe it's public knowledge. ICANN required that you show the ability to commit to a million-dollar investment over 10 years. There's the initial application fee—around \$185,000—and then you have to demonstrate financial capacity for annual fees of \$25,000 over a 10-year period, plus additional operational costs. So yes, it's around a million. I think it's important that anyone considering this understands that it's not just a \$250K one-time thing. If you get approved, you're committing to a long-term financial responsibility.

Joe: Can you share your favorite story or moment from your experience?

Nisha: One that stands out was when we decided to migrate off of corporate.sky.com to skygroup.sky. That was a huge deal because sky.com had been heavily SEO-optimized for 25 or 30 years. Our corporate site was moving from a subdomain to the dot-brand.

This wasn't just corporate.sky.com—it was corporate.sky.com/with/layers/of/directories. Legal obligations meant we had to preserve all those archived pages. The migration was complex and took about 18 months.

But it was also a lot of fun because I worked with some brilliant developers inside the business.

That project really opened my eyes to the project management side of domain operations. I wasn't a formal project manager at the time, but this added a PM flavor to my role. And when the switch finally happened—going public with skygroup.sky—that was huge. It was no longer just behind-the-scenes. That's what I think is most exciting about running a brand TLD: the long-term, strategic projects like that.

Joe: Were there any disappointments or challenges in the process?

Nisha: Not disappointments, per se—more like challenges. Owning your own dot-brand definitely elevated my career. But the reality is, even though you have your own top-level domain, you can't just walk away from ccTLDs and .com. You still have to manage all of that.

Some people see that as a downside: "What's the point of having a dot-brand if I still need to secure other extensions?" But I see it as part of a smart, holistic domain lifecycle. You're creating a secure, managed space for your brand, while also protecting it across the broader internet. You still have to paint the walls even after you buy the house, right? It's part of the job. But it also gives you room to be innovative.

Joe: This is a bit off-script, but I'm curious. Does Sky still advertise sky.com or sky.co.uk, or is everything focused on .sky now?

Nisha: We still advertise .com—because it’s the legacy product. That’s where the customer trust lives, so it’s still very much in use. But .sky is where the innovation happens. That’s the direction of the new stuff. It’s the infrastructure, the APIs, the future. We haven’t completely transitioned, and I don’t think we necessarily have to. But .sky is definitely part of the future strategy.

Joe: How long has Sky been in business, and did the TLD meet your expectations in terms of ROI?

Nisha: With a closed brand, ROI doesn’t always come in direct monetary value. It’s not about making money off of domain registrations. The ROI is really about security—your infrastructure is far more secure when you control the namespace.

Joe: Would you say that security is even more important today than it was a decade ago?

Nisha: Absolutely. When you own a dot-brand, DNS abuse is minimal. You don’t have third parties registering names in your zone. There’s no risk of someone slipping something into the zone file you didn’t authorize. You’re not handing out domains to the public—it’s controlled, internal, and that’s powerful.

Joe: How do you feel about the day-to-day work of running a TLD?

Nisha: It’s empowering. I love talking about it. When I tell people we own .sky, they often say, “Oh, you mean sky.com?” And I get to explain. It changes the narrative. Developers in our company will ask

for a .com name, and I'll say, "Well, you can have .sky instead," and they'll say, "What's that?"

There's a learning curve, even internally. But I get to offer them something new. That's what's exciting—I know I can register what I need, when I need it, within our namespace.

Joe: If you were going to apply today, what would you do differently?

Nisha: Honestly, not much. But if I had to give advice, it would be: start early. Begin those feasibility studies now. And also, be honest about whether this is the right move for your business. It might not be. But don't assume you're not a fit just because your brand name is a made-up word.

Take Microsoft—they could've said, "No one else can apply for .microsoft, so why bother?" But they did apply, and now they have this secure, unique asset. Don't think of it as an expense—think of it as securing a piece of the internet that only you can own.

In the past, dot-brands were often about aesthetics. Now it's about security. Cyber issues have grown tremendously in the last 10 years, and they're only going to get worse. So you have to ask yourself: how much are your current security headaches costing you?

Joe: Final question—what advice would you give to a new brand TLD applicant?

Nisha: Honestly, just go for it—but go in with your eyes open. It's not cheap, but think about the cost in the context of long-term risk. A million pounds over 10 years might save you from a million-pound cyberattack.

Also, ask yourself—are you customer-facing, or are you more tech-heavy behind the scenes? If your infrastructure and APIs are a core part of your business, then a dot-brand is a perfect fit. You get control. Full control.

From my experience, if you want to grow into a true domain strategist—someone who isn't just managing a portfolio but running a registry—that's a huge step forward.

Joe: Okay, I know I said that was the last question, but I always like to leave room for final thoughts. If you could do it all over again, would you?

Nisha: If I stayed at Sky, I think we've done what we set out to do. But if I had the chance to help another company, I'd definitely go in with that hat on—encouraging them to understand the true benefits.

Joe: So you see a lot of value in this, especially for corporate brands?

Nisha: Absolutely. And you become part of such a strong community too. Through the Brand Registry Group, we're all connected. We're members, we share insights, and we support each other. It's a bit of a cult—in the best way. That kind of network gives you the confidence and the tools to present real value to your leadership team.

Joe: Last question—I promise this time! Can you tell me a little about the Brand Registry Group?

Nisha: I'd describe it as a value-added community. It's made up of dot-brand owners, applicants, legal advisors—anyone seriously considering or managing

a dot-brand. As a member, you get exclusive access to people who've been doing this for over a decade.

Corporate environments can be quite conservative. You can't always talk publicly about what you're doing. But within BRG, you hear things you wouldn't hear elsewhere. For example, I know what .microsoft, .sky, .apple are doing—because we share insights internally.

At first, companies might think, "We don't need to join, it's just another expense." But the value is enormous. I've had people come up to me at meetings and say, "I didn't know you could do that with a dot-brand."

So yes—absolutely—check it out, join, and see what you can learn. You won't find this kind of insight anywhere else.

Joe: Nisha, I really appreciate you taking the time. It's always a pleasure to speak with you. Thanks again for sharing your insights.

Nisha: Thank you, Joe.

Twelve Questions, Twelve Years After 2012

The following interviews were conducted over the first six months of 2025. Each of these people has at least twelve years of experience running a new gTLD. But more important, they have either applied for new TLDs in the 2012 round or purchased a new TLD registry. Each of their experiences was different. In the case of Dan Schindler, the company he cofounded applied for hundreds of new gTLDs. In the other cases, they applied for either just a few or as many as ten. In all cases, they have run or were involved in running those gTLDs for many years. They've experienced it all, and you can learn many things from reading these interviews.

Note on Formatting: I'm sorry for the inconsistency in formatting these interviews. Some of them were done in person and transcribed, some over the phone, and one was done via a Q&A emailed and answered to me.

Interview with Aaron and Adolfo Grego, Founders of Punto 2012

Aaron and Adolfo Grego, cousins, and principals of the Mexican corporation, Punto 2012, were our clients while I worked for CentralNic in the 2012 round of new gTLDs. They applied for three strings, .rest, .bar, and .cafe. I interviewed them at a recent Internet Commerce Association event and asked them about their experiences and what advice they would have for new applicants in the 2026 round.

1. How did you become interested in domain names, and what was your first involvement

Aaron: I used to build websites for restaurants, and I had a directory for restaurants, and I used to look for a domain, and most of these domains were taken in the .com extension, so we would end up adding the word "restaurant", and it became common. So, if the restaurant were called the Beast, it would become TheBeastRestaurant.com. So, I got curious if it would be possible to get my own Top-Level Domain. I remembered hearing about .xxx launching, and it made me think that maybe I could get a string or a new ending that interested me. I ran into CentralNic and Ben Crawford, and he told us, "Yeah, you can get your own domain, and ICANN just published the guidebook, where you can essentially get a dot (.) whatever you want. So, I wanted to get a .rest for

restaurants and through working with you and Ben, we began the application process. That is the origin story.

2. When did you first become aware of the possibility that you could actually own your own Top-Level domain?

Aaron: It was around 2010 or 2011, a little bit before ICANN published the guidebook. It was right from the start because we were already in touch with CentralNic. We were struggling then because we couldn't get the right .com, so we had to add a keyword for SEO purposes to the word "restaurant." It was a longer domain name, but it led me to researching, "How could we get our zone?" We had a website design business called Sitios, which stands for websites in Spanish, and we also had a restaurant guide called ¿Dónde quieres comer?, which means, where do you want to eat? By the way, when I got that domain when we started the business, we had to try so many options to come up with that domain because we wanted a .com domain. We tried several options like "I'm hungry.com (in Spanish) and several more combinations in Spanish. We went through tons of options, finding that most things were taken. So, my first experience was that you couldn't just get your business name online in the .com extension because they weren't available. So, I concluded that it would make sense for there to be more extensions and alternatives.

3. So, what Top-Level Domain(s) did you apply for?

Aaron: We wanted to do .rest for "restaurant." That was the original purpose. We also figured out that

we had enough funding to do two, so we decided to do a second one, .bar. We thought that was a natural brother to the .rest extension. Then, we still had some funding, and our next choice was .cafe. We chose that as one that was still food and beverage related.

Adolfo: It was important to Aaron to find a string that was short, memorable, universal, and one that could be used as the .com or .net for restaurants. We thought that would make more sense for both English and Spanish. .Rest also worked for other languages if we used just those four letters.

Aaron: We also chose .rest because, being in Mexico and speaking Spanish, we knew a lot of things were going to be English-centric. In either event, because the Internet is all over the world, we felt that the abbreviation, .rest would be more global. It would make sense in every language, or at least as global as we were able to, because of the difficulty of translating into every language. That's why we chose .rest instead of .restaurant. .Restaurant is a bit too long and only English. Of course, another party did apply for .restaurant.

As a side note, we ended up selling the .cafe TLD in a private auction, which generated immediate revenue. We still operate the other two. We consider .bar the most successful of the three that we applied for.

4. Did you plan to operate your registry on your own or to use a Registry Service Provider?

Aaron: Without CentralNic, it would have been really difficult for us. Of course, CentralNic was more

than a registry provider; they were a partner to us. We came from outside the industry, and we didn't know how to make this happen. We didn't have the technical capabilities or knowledge, so you guys provided that. We couldn't have even been able to fill out the ICANN Application without them.

5. Who did you end up choosing as your RSP, and what made you choose them?

Aaron: As we said, our choice was you! At the time, we didn't really talk to anyone else. We didn't really even know anyone else. We trusted you, Ben, Raedene, Gavin, and Amy, your whole team, from the beginning. The difference for us was the team. You had a great team, and we felt that it was very personable, and we got to know you all very well. Your proposal was complete, and that was important to us. It wasn't just a provider; you did the consulting work and pointed us in the right direction. You also helped us to achieve distribution with the registrars, etc. The proposal was so complete that we didn't even need to look anywhere else or go anywhere else.

Adolfo: No one was advertising back then either. Information was minimal, and CentralNic was the only RSP we spoke to. Even now, it's not that easy. I know more people are doing this today, but you don't see advertising for it. It's a very specialized thing to do. At that time, there was very little information on it.

Aaron: RSPs today will be certified in 2026, so there will be more choices than there were in 2012. There will be 6, 7, or 10 companies, and ICANN

will evaluate and certify the back-end providers before you even begin. They'll be preapproved.

6. How much did you invest in your entire project?

Aaron: I'm not sure we can disclose that... What I can say is that we had investors commit to a larger investment that was never fully necessary. We had the cash to pay ICANN for the applications and our service providers. We had that stability factor, but we never needed access to the entire amount that was available to us. The deal was structured in a way that we could access capital if needed. We needed the option to access more capital for the auction, but we didn't end up having to use that option.

The thing that happened back then was private auctions. The losing applicants split the winning bid, which was a unique incentive to participate in the auction even if you didn't win. We ended up selling .cafe in one of those auctions, but the way it was structured, the losers shared the proceeds of the amount bid. So, part of that money came to us and we didn't have to access our investor's capital. We lost the domain, but we got part of the money from the private auction.

That's the big mystery in this next round. ICANN may not allow private auctions. There was also this crazy idea they tried (but abandoned) last time called "Digital Archery", a controversial ICANN proposal to resolve contention sets using a timed submission system, which never really worked. Nobody knew that private auctions were going to happen. It was sort of a side solution that no one understood would happen, but it really made sense. One

of the other applicants came up with the idea, and it was great. They hired an auction expert and we participated in it for .cafe. It ended up being won by Identity Digital.

7. What is your favorite story about your entire experience

Adolfo: I would say it was our experience with .bar. It ended up being a very personal experience. So, first, we were going against a company called Rightside back then. We had to get a letter of non-objection from the Montenegrin city of Bar. Aaron's honeymoon was around that time, and he traveled to Montenegro. I don't recall how we found out, but we found out that there was a school in the city of Bar called the Mexico School.

Aaron: It was by chance, but it turned out to be perfect. I found it on my honeymoon in Bar. We just began speaking to the people there and learned of this school. We were at a sushi restaurant there one night, and we were told that there was a school called the Mexico school. People there were a bit fascinated by Mexicans, too, because it is a small municipality, only about fifty thousand people live there, and it's not an actual tourist destination. The Mexico school is significant in that city. So, it has that connection with Mexico. Later, when we managed to agree with them, they held a reception for us at the school. We went there with our team. Part of our agreement with them was to give an annual donation to the Mexico School, and we did that for the first ten years. ICANN gave us a ten-year contract as well. Everything we did aligned with that. This relationship with the school in the city of Bar made our application more personal, and we had

an advantage. The municipality decided to choose us. It was a complex process, but we worked it out. We think they liked the personal aspect of it as well. We weren't a large commercial registry applying for twenty-plus strings or a big portfolio. It was just these three strings, two of which were uncontested, and the one that went to auction. The .bar TLD had to go through the process for municipalities and was very unique to the string itself.

8. Share anything that disappointed you during or after the process?

Aaron: It was mostly the lack of effort and investment from ICANN to make this popular and common knowledge that domains exist. So, we went through the challenge to make it known that new gTLDs exist, that it is real, that it is legitimate, that there are alternative endings. I would say that getting into the distribution network of registrars was also a complex process and that it still is. Getting all those relationships and getting to the right people and being able to compete with much bigger companies was difficult. So, in my opinion, without being too critical of ICANN, I feel that they left out that and didn't participate in that. And I feel that, as the organizers of this thing, they should be responsible to some degree for raising awareness. Also, it would be nice if they would level the playing field, which it looks like they are trying to do now, because big corporations in the U.S. and Europe have always been involved in ICANN with lots of strings. I feel they were aware of round one of the application process. Even though ICANN is a multilingual, multi-stakeholder, and multi-country organization, it didn't feel

like there was a balanced focus and effort on different regions. So, we've been fortunate enough in having ties to America, speaking English, which made it easier for us. But as far as Mexican companies, there was no one else that even applied; they weren't relatively aware that this existed. It was the same for all of South America, and I'm guessing Africa and other places around the world might have had a similar kind of experience. So, basically, lack of awareness, that would be my biggest disappointment. It made it much more challenging for us to be a business and to reach people. It was two jobs, first understanding what new gTLDs were, and then going into our focus and what our value proposition was.

Adolfo: Yes, it was very difficult to lead that conversation as a smaller registry. You could lead that conversation when you have 300 strings, but when you have one or two, it is very difficult because the task is to educate end users first about new TLDs and then about my particular TLD.

Aaron: And also, another issue, not disappointing but important, is that as a registry, we don't really get to know our registrants. We are going through the registrars. The registrars have a lot of their own interests at hand, above our particular interests. So, that adds some difficulty as well. We're not reaching our end users; we're reaching a distribution channel that is reaching our end customers. So, it's also been a challenge to navigate that and understand what we can do and what we can't do as to compliance, and understanding that strategy as to how we can communicate with a third party, being that they are a third party and mostly don't have a direct relationship with us.

9. Was your return on investment as good as you expected?

Aaron: No, I mean it was somewhat impossible to have an accurate projection. We were going into the unknown. This had never been done before. We didn't know the competition, and we were very optimistic with our financial projections, so really, the answer was no.

Adolfo: It wasn't easy to understand the dimension and what this all entailed, given that there were going to be as many as a thousand new TLDs coming into the market. We all thought that there was value in adding new strings, but when you multiply that by a thousand, that number becomes very relevant, and there's not enough money that can be spent to make it known.

Aaron: Our business could have been night and day regarding ROI, depending on contention and auctions, because that essentially meant that you could have a long-term asset rather than a short-term exit.

Adolfo: Still, in our case, if you look at what has happened over ten years and the investment made, the ROI has not been as good as we expected.

Aaron: That was fortunate for us because we got two out of three strings, and in the case of the third one we didn't get, we managed to get the proceeds of a private auction. We lost the auction, but we got the proceeds. If that was our only business, .cafe would have been a super business investment because the private auction process made it a great ROI. The others have been long-term ongoing businesses.

10. How do you feel about the day-to-day business of operating a TLD?

Aaron: I love it. It's still challenging. It's been hard for us, again, being in Mexico City, nobody knows anything about domains, ICANN, or DNS. It's a very micro kind of ecosystem. So, it's been us trying to raise awareness, to train people, to educate a little bit. Finding the right partners, again, we've gone through different partners. We have had a strong relationship with CentralNic, which has grown and changed and become a different kind of company. We have also changed and grown, and looked for other partners and suppliers. I like it. It's been a great ride. We've met a bunch of great people, learned many new things that you would never know if you were not involved in it. Being right at the root of what the Internet is in the DNS, Seeing this from all perspectives, including the commercial, legal, and technical aspects, has been and still is an incredible experience. We have to make money from it, but it's more than that, I like it and I enjoy it. It goes right in line with me and my goals.

11. If you were going to do anything differently, what would you do differently today?

Aaron: Quite a lot. I would have been much more hands-on with our marketing and distribution efforts if we knew then what we know today. I think we took for granted that we would be on the registrar network and that registrars would promote us. We had no idea of what the reality of working with registrars involved. You have to partner with them; you have to pay for services. You have to negotiate with them, and it's hard to get the right shelf

space because we are only one in a thousand or only one in five hundred. So, you have to stand aside, be unique, and have a great value proposition wasn't enough, you need to promote a lot. I think we were pretty accurate with our pricing strategy and market factors, but we were lucky. It was kind of a shot in the dark. We had to guess what that should be. Today, there is much more data, and it is possible to be much more strategic in setting that up. It worked for us but it was more like we were lucky then that we had a great play on how to do that.

When we started, the wholesale pricing for .rest was \$25 and .bar was \$50. The logic behind that was that .bar was a smaller niche and there weren't so many establishments or businesses that related to .bar (which has turned out a bit the opposite by the way). At that time, we were focused on bars, not on all the alternate use cases that bars had and continue to have, and we focused on opening that up more. And I would say that we knew a reference point was \$35. So, we said rest will go a little bit lower and .bar will go a little bit higher and then when we launched, that was it. We did a Sunrise* and we did a Landrush*. Then, when tiered pricing and premium tiers became a novelty, we definitely thought that was a great way to put our premiums out on the market. But that was also a different stage. Now we have re-valued our premiums, and we have more data to go by, and we can do that more successfully. Then there is the whole aftermarket side of things, and we are just getting started at that. We are reaching a phase where that is becoming a significant opportunity within the business. We've learned that over time. We haven't changed a lot of things,

but there has been a natural evolution in understanding that and making it another aspect of what we do.

A big part of our strategy is doing discounts for the first year and making it a lot more attractive to buy our names and then to start using them, so they are more enticed to renew. I feel that this has been an important part of what we do, whether we want to or not, because that is what our competition is doing. We know that when someone is searching at a registrar and sees a lot of domains available at very cheap prices, we need to compete and make our names as accessible as possible.

12. What advice would you give to a new TLD applicant given your experience?

Aaron: Do your research, contemplate multiple scenarios, have flexibility, because we still don't know how contention will be resolved. I think it's tough to apply now because you can't be confident, since there may only be one way to resolve contention. There might be multiple ways to fight contention sets, maybe to have multiple or alternate strings. And to do a real projection on how your business model will be successful. There are so many ways to think of this since every single business model and string is unique. There are different value propositions, so pricing should be unique. Distribution strategy also depends on how accessible or unique the string is. But my biggest suggestion would be to find out everything you can before you apply. In our case, we've been fortunate to be successful and to keep on going. But I would say that not everyone has had that opportunity. And you do need to have the right amount of funding to have an impact. So,

if you are well funded, it will be an easier road. And this time, because you are going up against industry titans who have portfolios and scale. Their scale makes it harder for smaller registries like ours. But if you have the correct value proposition, focus on the right audience, and you have a complementary business model, that makes it easier. Talk to people. People within the industry are very open in sharing their experiences. It's not an aggressively competitive industry like others are. So, tap into that and get to know different perspectives. We've been here for ten years and we still learn new things every day. We meet new people, and that helps so much. Don't isolate yourself and try to do everything yourself. Tap into the ecosystem, and that will give you great benefits.

Adolfo: Also, I would say to be very careful with cost management. ICANN can take longer than you expect in its processes. So, if you have significant ongoing expenses and you think it will take one year for something they are doing to happen, it is possible that it can take as many as three years. So, don't assume and account for the announced time frames. Watch your overhead. Consider that something that you think would take one year, the possibility that it could take two or three years. It's easy to start overspending on campaigns and awareness communications that will not produce results. So, be extra careful on what you decide to spend your cash to keep the business afloat until it begins to generate revenue.

Aaron: Regarding our website business, we have operated the new gTLD as a separate business. We keep our registry staff lean, so I've had to re-strategize my time. So, there hasn't been any direct benefit or impact in that sense on

my web design business. I did have a restaurant guide that I thought would connect with the registry, but my technology became obsolete. So, that business has been sacrificed a little bit, but we hope to find a way to reconnect the two businesses again. The web has changed so much. When I started my online restaurant guide, Facebook didn't exist, and Google didn't have Google Maps information. Things have evolved, and now that we are seeing AI, things are going to evolve even more in a different direction that we can't even accurately predict. And now we have Web 3 out there, and there are alternative DNSs out there. No one has a crystal ball, so it is crucial to be able to pivot and be flexible, not to put all your eggs in one basket.

We haven't decided if we'll apply again in 2026. Knowing what we know now, we're glad we did it, but the next round is still uncertain. We're looking closely—it'll affect both our existing TLDs and any new applications.

Joe: Thank you, guys!

***Sunrise,** Landrush, and General Availability are the terms used to describe the three phases that most new gTLDs must go through. Sunrise is usually a period of one to three months with exclusive access for trademark holders. Landrush is a shorter period where you allow domain investors to access the most desirable domains for a higher fee. Then, the third common period is the ongoing and normal status of General Availability (GA).

Interview with Daniel Schindler, One of the Founders of Donuts

Dan Schindler is a serial entrepreneur who, today might describe himself as a family man and a golfer. He's incredibly talented in both categories, and owing to his business acumen, can spend time on both of them. I met Dan in 2005, when he interviewed me to continue my position at CentralNic. He was the second CEO of that company and brought it from relative obscurity into quite a cash cow.

In 2010, along with Paul Stahura, Jonathon Nevett, and Richard Tindal, he cofounded the Donuts Registry, which eventually rebranded to Identity Digital, the second largest domain registry in the world.

1. How did you become interested in domain names, and what was your first involvement?

Dan: I bought my first domains in 1994. I have always been a technology fan, but if we are being honest, none of us early adopters knew why we were buying domain names. Actually, initially, I think they were free. A few years later, I heard an interview between UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and US President, Bill Clinton, where they talked about this Internet thing and that it would be more commonplace on the desktop than the telephone. This got me thinking, and I started my first web company in 1996.

2. When did you first become aware of the possibility that you could own and operate your own Top-Level domain?

Dan: I remember when the industry created ICANN as its regulator around 1999/2000, and its initial mandate was to provide consumer choice and competition to the dot-com. So, I knew then that opportunities to own my own TLD were an option.

3. What TLDs did you apply for, and how did you choose your strings?

Dan: With my partners at Donuts Inc., I applied for 307 new TLDs in the 2012 application window. One hundred fifty-seven were uncontested, and 150 were applied for by other applicants. Today, Donuts, now Identity Digital, owns and operates 250 TLDs. Our TLDs were a mixture of generic and specific TLDs, for example, dot Today and dot Pizza, respectively.

4. Did you plan to operate the registry on your own or use a Registry Services Provider?

Dan: We considered both options; initially, outsourcing and latterly, in-house.

5. Who did you choose as your RSP, and what made you choose them?

Dan: Rightside for a multitude of reasons.

6. How much did you invest in the entire project?

Dan: This answer is confidential.

7. Please share your favorite story about your experience.

Dan: Having operated in many different verticals, I can say unequivocally that working in the DNS has been my greatest joy, not just because of the financial success but also because of the people with whom I've worked, especially colleagues and customers.

8. Please share anything that disappointed you in the process (or after the process).

Dan: The time it took! It took at least 12 years from the mandate to the opening of the application window, and then another 2 years before registrations were allowed. It was not efficient.

9. Was your ROI as good as expected?

Dan: Absolutely! A fantastic business model of selling fresh air that your customer invents with small fulfillment costs and annual renewals. There is likely no higher-margin industry than being a TLD Registry.

10. How do you feel about the actual day-to-day business of operating a TLD?

Dan: An absolute pleasure.

11. What would you do differently today?

Dan: Absolutely nothing! I believe we applied for every name that should have been applied for and were extremely accurate in our forecasting.

12. What advice would you give to a new TLD applicant, given your experience?

Dan: Leave it to the experts? Knowledge is power.

13. Finally, what are your final thoughts about the experience? Do you think you'll do it again?

Dan: The experience was about the journey as well as the destination. Navigating the process was a roller-coaster, and I am unlikely to do it again, but never say never. I certainly don't believe there are many options this time around that would make viable new TLDs, especially given the increase in costs.

Interview with Ray King, Founder of Top-Level Design

Ray King is a serial entrepreneur, having founded and exited several innovative and successful ventures. He also contributes to the ICANN community by running ICANNWiki.org, a wiki full of information related to the people and companies in the domain name industry. I worked with Ray when he made his applications in 2012 and, truthfully, didn't have to do much. He knows the domain industry. His story is compelling.

Joe: One of my first questions is, how did you become interested in domain names? Also, I'd like to get your background before domain names, if you don't mind. A little bit about Ray King before ICANN and domain name world.

Ray: Sure. From college to 2000, between the 1985 to 2000 range, I ran a more traditional software development company. We wrote financial management software for architectural engineering firms. I did that in New York. We were, at the beginning, shipping software on floppy disks. It was kind of when the PC first became available. I actually started while I was still in college. I had written some software for my dad, who was an architect running a small firm at the time. Then we decided, hey, maybe I can sell this to some of his colleagues. Right? We

eventually sold it to something like 2,500 firms. Yeah, we ended up with over 100 people by the year 2000.

Joe: Oh, so you had a pretty busy, good business then.

Ray: Yeah, it was good. And then I sold that to a company called DelTek in 2000, and somewhere towards the end of that process, I was messing around and wanted to get a domain name for personal use. At that time, Wayne's World was popular. Right? So, I was trying to get "RaysWorld.com". It sounded fun and cool, so I went to look up who owned it. Obviously, I tried to register it, and it wasn't available. So, I called this guy to see if he would sell it, I would've paid like \$1,000 or so, that was kind of what I had in mind. He was a super nice guy and said, "I've got a couple of domain names, I'm not using this one, I'm just going to let it expire, and you can pick it up as a buyer." So, I said, "Great".

Well, the day it expired, I went to try and register it, and it wasn't available. I said Okay, probably tomorrow, So, I tried to register the next day, and tried to register it the next day, and of course, I didn't understand how this whole thing worked. So, finally, I called Network Solutions and they said, "We can't tell you when it's going to come available, you just have to keep checking." So, I ended up writing a little script to check, because I wanted to make sure I get there first for that name once it becomes available. The only way I could think of to do that was to compare the WHOIS record from the last time I checked. Right? Because if there's any change in the WHOIS record, the program would email me and tell me about the change.

Joe: Oh, my gosh. That was the beginning of your next business, it sounds like.

Ray: Yeah.

Joe: What was it called? Snap Names.

Ray: Snap Names.

Joe: Yeah, that's a great story.

Ray: So, it was checked daily. So, then I thought, "If it's checked daily, why not check every hour?" Eventually, I got RaysWorld.com. And then at some point, I was selling that first company called Semaphore, and I decided to move to Oregon because of the Pacific Northwest. Because I'd sold Semaphore, I was free to go somewhere where I wanted to start something new. So, I moved out here, and I had a friend from high school who had the idea to start Snapnames. That's how we got into domains.

Joe: Well, that's excellent. Okay, thank you. So, next question is, "When did you first become aware of the possibility that you could own and operate your own top-level domain?"

Ray: Well, I guess around the 2012 round, they'd been talking about it for years before that, but it became real right before 2012. At the time, I was doing this other company in the wiki space, and I wasn't focused on what was happening in the top-level domain space, but I was still running ICANNWiki.com. So, ICANNWiki was the crossover. I was coming to the ICANN meetings.

So, at the Costa Rica ICANN meeting, it was pretty close to the end of the deadline, and that's when Tim Switzer,

who was in the industry, came by the ICANNWiki booth and started talking to me about it, and I felt like I was maybe missing an opportunity. We thought we were way, way late, and after a good hearty laugh, we decided that it was still possible. He really helped us out in understanding the process. He was working on dot green and was very steeped in the whole process. He saved me a lot of time, figuring it out. Yeah, we kind of rushed, and Andrew was with me, running things at the time of the process, and when we finally got the .wiki application complete, we decided we could apply for more.

Joe: If I recall, you did ten.

Ray: We did ten. Yeah, and I worked with my brother-in-law also, because he got really interested in it. He and his wife, actually, were like, hey, should we apply for .wiki or should we apply for .blog? Or something else? And then we had a lot of ideas in a very short amount of time. We tried to decide how many we should apply for and

Joe: Right. Yeah. So, that was probably around, you said Costa Rica. I know I was at that meeting, and it was close to the deadline. Ok, next question... What TLDs did you apply for, and how did you choose your strings? That's the other question.

Ray: Yeah, that's a good question. So, we applied for some that were in the creative space, and I really liked Dot Art. I liked dot photography, even though it's 11 letters, then dot style. I remember dot design. Dot ink (with a k). At that time, I was thinking more along the lines of brush work and illustration. It was the same with dot design. So, those were five of the ten. They were in the creative space.

Joe: Right.

Ray: Then dot wiki and dot blog were both platforms, generally open-source ones. I like open source a lot, so we did those two. And then we did .gay because my other brother-in-law was gay, and that was his contribution. He felt passionate about that.

Joe: Ok, that's eight of them.

Ray: Yes. And then we did dot LLC, which I regretted afterwards because I felt like that one had no soul. It was just corporate. Yeah. When you have .design, you can talk to design. There's a lot you can do with that. Photography. You find people who love photography. .llc. How do you get anything out of that...?

Joe: Well, I'm betting you thought that there's a lot of .llcs. in the world, so maybe you that it would be a commercial play?

Ray: Right, that's what we thought. It seemed like just three letters, it made sense, and .group was similar.

Joe: Oh, so you did the dot group too?
That's the last one, that's the 10th.

Ray: Yeah, so LLC and group were kind of in that mindset, there were so many companies that didn't have the name group, and we had done the zone file analysis where we took all the com names, and we tried to say what are the most popular words, if it's like something, word, .com, because those are the most obvious to translate into new TLDs.

Joe: Good analysis method, I think.

Ray: Which is not even a perfect science, but a lot of words are part of other words, so art was very hard to look at, because the string "art" can be a part of something else. Yeah, a lot of things, yeah. It's like cart, mart, et cetera.

Joe: Okay, so did you plan to operate the registry on your own in those days, or were you going to use a registry service provider?

Ray: I don't think we had the technical capability. We couldn't do the backend ourselves, so that was.

Joe: Yeah, I think I knew the answer to that, obviously, but I wanted to pose the question. And I also know the answer to this, but I'll ask it. Who did you choose as your Registry Service Provider, and what made you choose them?

Ray: I chose this company called CentralNic, and it's because I had a great conversation with a guy named Joe Alagna. But also, it was, at the time, there were Verisign and Neustar, these larger services, and there were smaller entities, people that would work with us. These were companies that agreed to help us figure things out. And I needed someone who, like porridge, would be not too hot and not too cold. I needed someone whom I thought I was going to be able to work with, but also stable. And the application window was closing in April of that year. We only had a month. They extended it once, though, because there was a problem with the TAS application entry system. Anyway, we were super late, but everyone worked hard and we got our application in on time.

Joe: Yeah, we worked very hard in those three months. Everybody. Okay, so this one is a little more personal. How much did you invest in your entire project?

Ray: Well, the application fee was \$185,000. So, I think you can round that up because you have some additional consulting fees and stuff. I guess it was a little bit more than two- million. And then the big question afterwards is, how do you account for private auctions? We ended up selling... six TLDs, and we bought .design. Dot Wiki and dot Inc were uncontested, and dot Gay, we fought for six more years, and eventually won it in a private auction that was held later. It had to go through the ICANN process because out of the four applicants, there was one community applicant.

Joe: Right, okay. Navigating that was more complex.

Ray: That had a play out, and it was a very long, very painful process.

Joe: Okay, share your favorite story about your experience. What comes to mind?

Ray: Mine? There are so many. Well, filling out the applications, and Andrew would be the better one to answer this question, because he was typing away like crazy, and working through TAS (TLD Application System). We were probably within an hour or two before the window was closing, and all of a sudden, there was a problem uploading attachments. It was like, "Oh, my God", it was such a crazy moment. And when the notice came out that they're extending it because there were problems uploading attachments. ICANN's wording was exactly

what Andrew was doing at the time. So, he was thinking, "Wow, that's exactly what happened!" Like, did I break it?"

Joe: Oh, yeah. Or maybe it was because the system was probably overwhelmed. Others were going through it too. But I'm sure you were relieved to see that short extension they gave.

Ray: I don't remember how long it was, but it was enough time for us to finish.

Joe: All right, is there anything that disappointed you in the process or after the process?

Ray: Disappointing? Nothing really comes to mind. I enjoyed it. I mean, it was exhilarating to go through the whole thing. Well, there was this thing they called digital archery*. That was insane, and some other hoops that we had to go through, but when I look back on it just like an adventure.

***Digital** Archery was a failed idea developed to help determine what strings would be released first. The idea was abandoned.

Joe: Okay, was your ROI as good as you expected?

Ray: Yes! It was okay. I think we did well, and I've always attributed that to the energy we put into dot design and dot Gay, which kind of led to all these things. Dot Wiki and dot Ink were strong as well.

Joe: You guys had passion for those ideas, which were really your baby, like something you cared about.

Ray: Yeah, and I don't know if that's the right business model. Suppose you take a look back at the winners

and losers. Obviously, Donuts created a ton of value for themselves, and their approach was very different. The intrinsic value of the strings, and there are lots of other examples where people put a lot of energy and couldn't get a string to do what they expected it to do. Dot green is a great example, and I think it was a good idea, but they didn't get it to where they wanted.

Anyway, I liked the camaraderie we all had as we applied, and I talked to Colin from dot Club, Jody from dot CEO, and Daniel from dot XYZ. We were all in the same kind of club of people who had gotten their TLD. It's great, because you're essentially competing with each other, but not really—you had different strings. Some of us had the dot design. Someone else had dot law, and you're both selling domains, but you're not selling to the same audience, so you can really share and learn from each other.

There are some situations where the people who had dot .law might not want to share so much with the people who are running dot Esquire or dot legal, or dot lawyers. Still, for the most part, we're in the same business doing the same thing, and non-competitive, which I'd been craving a lot of camaraderie among applicants and other TLD owners of new TLDs.

Joe: Okay. So, how do you feel about the actual day-to-day business of operating a TLD?

Ray: For us, it was going to trade shows, working with organizations that might have access to a lot of whatever that TLD target audience was. So, design was like a multiple TLD. Right. Graphic designers. web designers. So many. Lighting designers, floral designers,

and interior designers are a huge category. Right? So, it was, I felt, like it was many niches, which was great. Dot Ink was interesting too because we found out pretty quickly that it seemed like the best market for dot ink was the tattoo industry. That's where it gravitated to.

Joe: Boom.

Ray: I originally thought of it as being for artists and illustration. Then you find out that the tattoo artists are artists, but the canvas is the skin instead.

Joe: Okay, number 11, we're coming down to the final stretch. What would you do differently today?

Ray: Are you asking about 2012 or the 2026 round?

Joe: I'll let you choose. Okay.

Ray: Well, the obvious answer for 2012 would be to apply for more TLDs.

Joe: Apply for more TLDs?

Ray: I think everyone would probably say that for the 2012 round, and for 2026, it's not quite as obvious. It's a different environment now that you've had a slew of TLDs brought in already, brought to life. So, how to choose your strings would be a different equation today than it was back then, and the rules have changed as well, obviously.

Joe: And then the next question is, what advice would you give to a new TLD applicant, given your experience.

Ray: There are different kinds of applicants, so if it were a person who had a passion around a specific topic, it would be a different conversation than if it were

someone who wanted to build a portfolio of TLDs. One might be more of a mathematical question, and one might be more of a... I would say prior to these, there were people who had a lot of passion. Some succeeded and some failed so I would say try to understand what succeeded in the past so you don't spend a lot of time and effort, and not ending up with a success.

Joe: Okay.

Ray: And also, I think if you're going to do it, I think it's harder to do a single TLD. You don't have the scale, and obviously you want to pick a good provider. If you're coming from outside the industry, you want to navigate all the registrars, the shelf space. Right? That's a tricky question, especially now for the likes of GoDaddy, the largest registrars are charging to get shelf space. If you're a single TLD, that kind of thing is harder.

Joe: Ok, Then I guess finally, it's really 13 questions, what are your final thoughts about the experience and do you think you'll do it again.

Ray: I thought the experience was great. I think I'm probably where a lot of people are, I don't know for sure. So, we've got a year. If you look at the last time, we made a decision in a month. Right, just before it happened. The application was closing, not even when it opened.

Joe: Ok, so, you haven't decided. That's fair enough. Well, I would like to thank you again, I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to hear your thoughts. So, thank you very much.

Interview with Jay Westerdal, Founder of Top-Level Spectrum

I met Jay Westerdal at one of the first Targeted Traffic Conferences around 2004. He is an amazing entrepreneur. He understands so much about domains and the online world that it is hard to contain it. When I met him, he was programming an entire database of domains online by himself. I couldn't believe what he was doing. His work from those days eventually became the basis for Domain Tools, one of the most successful brand protection companies in the world. We talked for a long time and covered many topics.

His interview was very honest and contained anecdotes that demonstrated the ups and downs as well as the joy of being involved in this industry.

Joe: Okay. I have 12 questions I'd like to ask you, 12 years after 2012. So, let's begin. Please start with an introduction of your background. I'm curious about what you did before domain names.

Jay: I was briefly a software engineer. I worked on a domain registration system. I believe at the time; we were nine percent of the world's domain names. We weren't a registrar because it was before 1999. We were a gold premier partner of Network Solutions. The registry had a system called Domain Valet, and it was essentially a free place to register a domain name. Then

you would get an invoice in the mail like 90 days later and essentially own the domain name for a couple months for free and so a lot of people would pay the invoice to own the name but it was basically, you fill in the name you want and then we tell you if it's available, then you fill in all your credentials. Then, Network Solutions would send you, by mail, an invoice. You would then basically follow a link that they sent, type in the name, and register it. I think it cost \$50 per registration or something like that, and so our company wasn't that apt to become a registrar because we had a way better deal than being a registrar. There were only less than thirteen of them back in 1990, and eventually, that particular company lost focus. There were several roll-ups, like five roll-ups in two years. If I recall correctly, it eventually became Web.com.

Joe: Oh, really? Okay.

Jay: Originally, Web.com was just this guy who owned a small hosting company. As it got rolled up, they were like, "Oh, we kind of want just the name, and we'll take the hosting company, too." So, I was literally a software engineer working on it in the beginning.

Joe: Okay. So, when did you first become aware of the possibility that you could own and operate your own top-level domain?

Jay: I think in 2002, ICANN said we're going to allow these sponsored TLDs. They had a kind of tiered criteria. It wasn't straightforward. You had to apply and go through a dog and pony show. So, I went to the previous CEO who ran the company, and said, "Hey, listen, we should apply for some cool names, like .family and .travel, maybe some

others." I think we showed up at an ICANN meeting, I forget what year, it was probably 2002 or 2003.

Joe: So, that was way before the big round of 2012.

Jay: Oh, yeah, this was an earlier, smaller round where .xxx and .info got approved. These were some of the precursors to the 2012 round.

Joe: I didn't realize that you were around that early in the game.

Jay: Yeah, I was doing software engineering primarily back in the 80s.

Joe: So, you started pretty early. Okay, the third question is, in the 2012 round, what TLDs did you apply for, and how did you choose the strings?

Jay: Well, it was an interesting process, and I guess the theory kept on changing at the time. You didn't know how they were going to play out, but on some of them, I wanted no conflict or contention. So, I chose .feedback and .sucks because I felt that no one else was going to apply for those. Then I also considered some big ones like .hotel and .golf. I thought I'd probably get some conflicts on those. I did a little bit of a weighted strategy. I thought a little conflict would be fine. I felt that I might have to work out conflict with the auction system.

Joe: Of course, you had no idea that there was going to be a private auction at that point, or maybe you did? I don't know.

Jay: Well, the handwriting was on the wall, and in the manual, it did kind of allow for it. Another applicant

was really active in bringing in an economist. There are not that many economists who are professors like that, so this guy had a lot of credibility and, in fact, he may have gone on to win a Nobel Prize or something. He talked about the strategy and in a lot of ways, sliced the onion, so to speak. I remember thinking, I didn't like the percentages to the auctioneer. I disagreed with it, but everything else seemed okay.

Joe: So, you participated in private auctions?

Jay: Yeah, obviously, as time went on, we had to because that was one of the only ways of resolving contention, where everyone would agree. Otherwise, it's like you've got five guys in a knife fight. I mean, who do you stab first? Then that guy stands back and waits for the knife fight, and there's no way of resolving it, because everyone's considering what the last guy argued, or what the other guy offered.

Joe: It would have been so difficult any other way. Okay, next question: Did you plan to build your own registry operation or use a registry service?

Jay: Well, you know the answer to that. I did look at a couple of back-end companies, and I actually talked to Ben and you when you were working for CentralNic. I decided to go with you guys because you had a pretty good back-end that was already in existence for third-level domain names, and there's really not a difference between third-level and second-level. So, it made a lot of sense with economics that I was able to negotiate more easily. I brought CentralNic a lot of business because I knew many people in the industry. I told people they

should consider them as the back-end. I think I brought them others like Ray King and a couple of others as well.

Joe: I still remember our lunch in Costa Rica, and when you told me the string. You said, it's dot sucks, and I was like, "Who's going to buy that?" Anyway, I didn't show you my thoughts. I was more like, "Okay, we'll help you."

Jay: Yeah, and I wish I had won that auction. Who knew? Losing wasn't bad either, but winning would have been great. I mean, Rob Hall and Frank Schilling won that, and they really cleaned up.

Joe: Okay. So, how much did you invest in your entire project, if I can ask?

Jay: I think each name was about \$200,000 of hard costs. And then you have the soft costs like travel and lodging and food, and stuff. I didn't use that much lawyer time, per se. I kind of followed the guidebook and did everything on my own. I thought it was pretty straightforward to follow the guidebook. But there's a lot of reading, and then if I had questions, actually, ICANN is full of a lot of lawyers who are paid to be here. And you can pretty much just ask them. So, they were very helpful. You know, there are lawyers sitting on these committees and so many people, and the best thing you can do is go to a cocktail party at ICANN and do a soft debate about the pros and cons of the program with someone who knows what's going on and really expand your knowledge.

Joe: Right. So, how many did you apply for again?

Jay: I think in total, it was 11 or 12.

Joe: I didn't remember it myself. Okay. So, I want to ask you, since we're on question seven, please share your favorite story, anything interesting that stands out about your experience.

Jay: Oh, man. Well, about top-level domain names or about ICANN?

Joe: I'd say top-level domain names, so we'll be closer to the topic. If something stands out, it can be ICANN, though.

Jay: I'll tell you a good one. I was with Gavin (Brown) in Argentina, and we were playing poker like we usually did. We were in a meeting at the ICANN meetings and playing some poker. So, I think I actually brought the chips for that meeting because I still have the sticker on the poker chip set from the meeting. And Vint Cerf sat down with us. No kidding. And so, he was playing pretty good. Of course, he's in a three-piece suit all the time. And, he says, "OK, guys, I have a board meeting tomorrow. I've got to go." Then he says, "I'm all in." He basically pushes all his chips in and says, "All right, have a good night, guys." So, I thought, "Oh, man, I've got to call this guy. He's giving us his money."

Joe: Yeah.

Jay: So, I think he got about two or three callers, and he flips over his hands. He's like, "Aces, boys!"

Joe: Oh, he wasn't bluffing?

Jay: No, he was not bluffing.

Joe: So, he took some money.

Jay: Yeah, and it was pretty cool to play against the "father of the Internet", sitting down and playing poker with you.

Joe: Yeah, that's actually really cool. Okay, and share with me anything that disappointed you during the process or after.

Jay: Oh, man, I have several disappointments about the process. One, I think it went exceptionally slow. And I knew this because I had been in the ICANN community for twelve years up until that point, and I saw everything else go super slow. I knew that everything would move slowly, and I think people expected that when they signed up in 2012, they'd have their name by 2013. And it just was such a long period before people were actually getting their first names. In fact, it was in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Joe: Yeah, it was a long, slow slog.

Jay: And, you know, Verisign, who is an entrenched player, I think one of the people in the industry said they calculated out that Verisign was making at least a million to three million dollars a day, that it delayed, so it was in their best interest to keep selling dot coms and not allow anyone else in, so if they're involved in the process, they can play both sides of the situation, be involved in the formation of the policy, and they don't have to help move it fast. So, I think a lot of people were frustrated by that.

I remember one time, I was coming to the top of an elevator. And I saw a leading applicant talking with an ICANN senior staff member, and he was extremely angry, almost livid. Explaining, "I'm losing so much money. My investors are losing so much money. There's going to be so

many lawsuits if this program doesn't get off the ground." He was so angry at the delays. I remember thinking, yeah, kudos. I'm on the same boat. This is a slow boat.

And then after all of that, one of the things I'm really disappointed about in ICANN is that they don't allow innovative new things to happen. It's all very standardized and slow and methodical. But there should be some really clear policies around innovative things that allow some fast tracking because we all saw Web 3, as they call it, in name spacing and other things like that. Frankly, they've had to operate and exist without ICANN because ICANN is so slow. Hopefully, ICANN can catch up with them, and they can be integrated. It'd be a faster process for those guys. But the biggest thing I think ICANN can do, even in the future right now, is what I would call white-space domain names.

There are obviously premium domain names, such as two-character, three-character, four-character, and five-character. There are premium generic names like NewYork.com and whatever—big geography, corporate names, dictionary names, two-word compound names, three-word compound names, things that make sense to humans. But what I would consider a white-space name would be like, "ID" and then 10 numbers—just gobbledy gook that only really makes sense if you are in the space of, say QR codes. I mean, I can create a QR Code for nothing. It's free. It's a standard RFC, and you follow it, print out the dots in the correct locations, and scanners can follow it, and it becomes a URL. It becomes a number, or it becomes whatever you want it to be. And white space TLDs, if they were approved, should cost one cent in fees or even half a cent in fees. That would allow me to print unique domain

names, and I could give them to FedEx, UPS, or whoever. And they could put these things on their packages or their things, and they could be reusable or sort of like machine usable by using the ICANN naming system that's designed for the whole world to use, but not carrying these huge, expensive 40-cent fees to print for a year. It doesn't make sense. Domain names in general are only good for humans. They're not suitable for machines right now.

Joe: Yeah. That's a super interesting idea, yeah. But it would have to be cost-efficient.

Jay: Well, it already is. We print these things for practically free.

Joe: No, I'm saying from the perspective of ICANN. If they're charging you 40 cents, that's not really cost-efficient for that type of code. Would that be right or no?

Jay: Yeah. It's not cost-efficient for anyone to buy a 40-cent domain name, even at the wholesale, wholesale level, because ICANN charges this crazy fee. So, if you want to allow innovative uses, how about all the phone numbers in the world are domain names? Not just email addresses, but actual domain names.

Joe: Right.

Jay: That would be a great idea. That would be a great use of domain names, and that would be kind of the purpose that ICANN should be. Right now, if I were a telephone company, I'd have to hand out these numbers, and each country has its own numbering system, but they're literally numbers. What is ICANN supposed

to do? They're basically trying to print domain names to get rid of IP addresses, which are just numbers.

Joe: Yeah.

Jay: And now we've got IPv6, which are even more complicated numbers. Domain names are by far the best way to identify things. They're uniform identifiers.

Joe: And they have to be unique.

Jay: Why not allow these inexpensive, free domain names to coexist with the, let's just call them 40-cent domain names that are very human-readable? These whitespace names would be more ubiquitous.

Joe: So, your point is that, as far as a disappointment, you'd like to see ICANN be more innovative.

Jay: I think they should definitely be more innovative. I mean, they are not entrepreneurs, and you see this with governments and organizations and things of a big scale—they don't really take innovation seriously, and unfortunately, entrepreneurs do, so there's no way for those people to interface with them.

Joe: All right, so what was your ROI?

Jay: Not as good as I expected. My return on investment... I think I broke evenish. I don't think I've made a lot of money. I think there's a lot of gatekeeping in the industry. I mean, GoDaddy's now charging money to be on their platform, and so there are a lot of hurdles. It's like owning a famous brand, let's say Coca-Cola or whatever. It's all about distribution. If you walk into a convenience store, you want to buy a soda pop, you go to the back, and there's Coca-Cola,

there's Pepsi, and all of these companies are making deals for shelf space. And so Pepsi's not setting up its own stand and selling Pepsis by the roadside. They're approaching stores and saying, "Carry us." And sometimes the stores go, yeah, we'll carry you, you pay us, and we'll sell your products. And so registrars are becoming gatekeepers, and it's now becoming the exact same model that food is.

Joe: Thanks for explaining that. Now, how do you feel about the actual day-to-day business of operating a TLD?

Jay: It's wonderful if you have a service provider that does the majority of the lifting. It's pretty much automated. There's not much to really do on a day-to-day basis, other than if you're running a TLD, you've got to be talking to registrars. The best way to do that is at ICANN meetings because everybody around the world shows up at the same spot three times a year. It's a good time to meet with registrars and strategize, why they should be using your TLD in their search results versus the other 50 companies and the thousand domain names that they could be choosing.

Joe: What would you do differently today?

Jay: Do you mean if I had a time machine, or if I could do it differently today?

Joe: I'll let you decide.

Jay: Well, I think if I had to do it over again right now, I wouldn't do a top-level domain name anymore. I think it's a bad return on investment right now. If I could do it over again, I would do what Donuts did: apply for 300 of

these things and become a billionaire. I think that's a great strategy. The rules have been slowly rewritten over time.

Joe: It's a little tougher now?

Jay: It's much tougher now. I think that making money on domain names is very hard to do. There is a cheap product. It's \$10 a year, basically, whereas hosting a website, you can charge \$10 a month.

Joe: Right, okay. And then, last question. What advice would you give to a new TLD applicant, given your experience, if they want to apply now?

Jay: Find really good registrars that want to work with you, and be prepared to give them deals that you didn't think that you were ever going to have to give away. It's a lot harder to sell a domain name when the registrars have so many options.

Joe: Registrars don't have to work with you.

Jay: They're not required to work with you. They're under no obligations. They can carry you if they want to or not. You can't force them to. I would love it if ICANN said, "If there's a new TLD that follows all the rules and does everything and integrates properly, you need to carry them." I would love for ICANN to make that a universally adaptable thing, kind of like the phone system. I can call any phone number in the world, and I know that I'll get to the end phone number. But if the registrars were in control, they'd be like, well, we're not going to turn on that country because we have to pay our engineers to work into their telecom system.

Joe: Yeah, that's kind of how it is, I think. Last question. Do you think you'll do it again?

Jay: I'm still on the fence. I need to see the final rulebook. I think it's not the same game as it used to be. I do believe in the long-term value of top-level domain names. I think they have intrinsic value. But I think that the business is tough now with distribution.

Joe: That makes sense. I appreciate you taking the time with me, Jay.

Jay: Thank you.

Resources & Further Reading

The following resources helped inform the writing of this book and provided background on ICANN processes, the domain name industry, and the broader internet ecosystem. While not every source was cited directly, each contributed valuable insights to the overall understanding of the topic.

The Last gTLD Applicant Guidebook. A Detailed Table of Contents

It seems that in every large, distributed organization, simple things get overlooked or left out for one reason or another. I don't know if ICANN did this intentionally, but in the 2012 New gTLD Application Guidebook, there was no Table of Contents. Earlier editions had one, but the last version, which was approved in June 2012 and is on ICANN's website as of this writing, doesn't. So, I've taken the liberty of creating one for my own use and am happy to share it here. Remember, this is not the newest guidebook. That will be on ICANN's website in May 2025.

Module 1: Introduction To The New TLD Process

- 1.1 Application Lifecycle And Timelines
 - 1.1.1 Application Submission Dates
 - 1.1.2 Application Processing Stages
 - 1.1.2.1 Application Submission Period
 - 1.1.2.2 Administrative Completeness Check
 - 1.1.2.3 Comment Period
 - 1.1.2.4 GAC Early Warning
 - 1.1.2.5 Initial Evaluation
 - 1.1.2.7 Receipt of GAC Advice on New gTLDs
 - 1.1.2.8 Extended Evaluation
 - 1.1.2.9 Dispute Resolution

- 1.1.2.10 String Contention
- 1.1.2.11 Transition To Delegation
- 1.1.3 Lifecycle Timelines
- 1.1.4 Posting Periods
- 1.1.5 Sample Application Scenarios
- 1.1.6 Subsequent Application Rounds
- 1.2 Information For All Applicants
 - 1.2.1 Eligibility
 - 1.2.2 Required Documents
 - 1.2.3 Community-Based Designation
 - 1.2.3.1 Definitions
 - 1.2.3.2 Implications Of Application Designation
 - 1.2.3.3 Changes To Application Designation
 - 1.2.4 Notice Concerning Technical Acceptance Issues With New gTLDs
 - 1.2.5 Notice Concerning TLD Delegations
 - 1.2.6 Terms And Conditions
 - 1.2.7 Notice Of Changes To Information
 - 1.2.8 Voluntary Designation For High Security Zones
 - 1.2.9 Security And Stability
 - 1.2.10 Resources For Applicant Assistance
 - 1.2.11 Updates To The Applicant Guidebook
- 1.3 Information For Internationalized Domain Name Applicants
 - 1.3.1 IDN Specific Requirements
 - 1.3.2 IDN Tables
 - 1.3.3 IDN Variant TLDs
- 1.4 Submitting An Application
 - 1.4.1 Accessing The TLD Application System
 - 1.4.1.1 User Registration
 - 1.4.1.2 Application Form
 - 1.4.2 Customer Service During The Application Process

- 1.4.3 Backup Application Process
- 1.5 Fees And Payments
 - 1.5.1 gTLD Evaluation Fee (And Refunds)
 - 1.5.2 Fees Required In Some Cases
 - 1.5.3 Payment Methods
 - 1.5.4 Requesting A Remittance Form
- 1.6 Questions About This Applicant Guidebook

CHART 1: After P. 1.45

New gTLD Program—Evaluation Process

Module 2: Evaluation Procedures

- 2.1 Background Screening
 - 2.1.1 General Business Diligence And Criminal History
 - 2.1.2 History Of Cybersquatting
- 2.2 Initial Evaluation
 - 2.2.1 String Reviews
 - 2.2.1.1 String Similarity Review
 - 2.2.1.1.1 Reviews Performed
 - 2.2.1.1.2 Review Methodology
 - 2.2.1.1.3 Outcomes Of The String Similarity Review
 - 2.2.1.2 Reserved Names
 - 2.2.1.3 DNS Stability Review
 - 2.2.1.3.1 DNS Stability: String Review Procedure
 - 2.2.1.3.2 String Requirements
 - 2.2.1.4 Geographic Names Review
 - 2.2.1.4.1 Treatment Of Country Or Territory Names
 - 2.2.1.4.2 Geographic Names Requiring Government Support
 - 2.2.1.4.3 Documentation Requirements
 - 2.2.1.4.4 Review Procedure For Geographic Names
 - 2.2.2 Applicant Reviews
- 2.3.3 Registry Services Review

- 2.2.3.1 Definitions
- 2.2.3.2 Customary Services
- 2.2.3.3 TLD Zone Contents
- 2.2.3.4 Methodology
- 2.2.4 Applicant's Withdrawal Of An Application
- 2.3 Extended Evaluation
 - 2.3.1. Geographic Names Extended Evaluation
 - 2.3.2 Technical/Operational Or Financial Extended Evaluation
 - 2.3.3 Registry Services Extended Evaluation
- 2.4 Parties Involved In Evaluation
 - 2.4.1 Panels And Rules
 - 2.4.2 Panel Selection Process
 - 2.4.3 Code Of Conduct Guide For Panelists
 - 2.4.3.1 Conflict Of Interest Guidelines For Panelists
 - 2.4.3.2 Code of Conduct Violations
 - 2.4.4 Communication Channels

CHART 2: After P. 2.33
New gTLD Program—Initial Evaluation
and Extended Evaluation

TABLE: Annex: Separable Country Names List

- Attachment to Module 2: Sample Letter Of Government Support
- Attachment to Module 2: Evaluation Questions And Criteria
 - I. Principles of the Technical and Financial New gTLD Evaluation Criteria
 - II. Aspects of the questions asked in the Application and Evaluation Criteria
 - III. Scoring

Applicant Information—Application Questions

- 1.) Full Legal Name
- 2.) Address
- 3.) Phone Number
- 4.) Fax Number
- 5.) Website
- 6.) Primary Contact
- 7.) Secondary Contact
- 8.) Proof of Legal Establishment
- 9.) If public, exchange symbol
- 10.) Business ID / Tax/VAT Number
- 11.) Applicant Background
- 12.) Evaluation Fee
- 13.) Applied for gTLD String
- 14.) If IDN provides A Label Beginning With "Xn
- 15.) If IDN, upload IDN tables for the proposed registry
- 16.) Describe efforts to ensure no known problems or mitigations of new gTLD
- 17.) Optional: Provide Representation Of Label According To Int Phonetic Alphabet
- 18.) Mission / Purpose / Rules
- 19.) Community-Based Designation: Is This A Community-Based TLD?
- 20.) Provide name and description of community with relationships/endorsements
- 21.) Geographic Names: Is The Application A Geographic Name?
- 22.) Protection of Geographic Names—Describe Protective Measures for Geo
- 23.) Registry Services: Registry Services To Be provided
- 24.) Demonstration of Technical & Operational Capability (External)

- 25.) Extensible Provisioning Protocol:
Provide Description
- 26.) WHOIS: Describe System
- 27.) Registration Lifecycle: Describe Plans
- 28.) Abuse prevention and mitigation: Describe Plans
- 29.) Rights Protection Mechanisms: Related
To Intellectual Property, Etc.
- 30.) Security Policy: Related To Registry
Demonstration Of Tech & Ops Systems
- 31.) Technical Overview or Proposed Registry
- 32.) Architecture documentation:
Network / OS / Software
- 33.) Database Capabilities
- 34.) Geographic Diversity of name
servers and operation centers
- 35.) DNS Service: Describe Configurations
- 36.) IPV6: Reachability: Describe Services / Plans
- 37.) Data Backup Policies and Procedures
- 38.) Data Escrow Procedures
- 39.) Registry Continuity Plans
- 40.) Registry Transition: Service Migration Plan
- 41.) Failover Testing: Provide a Plan
- 42.) Monitoring and Fault Escalation Process
- 43.) DNSSEC Plan
- 44.) Optional: IDN Plans
- 45.) Demonstration of Financial Capability:
Financial Statement Sources of Funds,
Financial Projections
- 46.) Costs and Capital Expenditures
- 47.) Funding & Revenue Provisions
- 48.) Contingency Planning

- 50.) Cost Estimates For Funding Critical Registry Functions, Letters Of Credit (LOC)

Instructions: TLD Applicant—Financial Projections

TLD Applicant—Financial Projections: Sample

Template 1—Financial Projections: Most Likely

Template 2—Financial Projections: Worst Case

Module 3: Objection Procedures

- I GAC Objections
- II. Dispute Resolution Process
 - 3.1 GAC Advice On New TLDs
 - 3.2.1 Grounds For Objection
 - 3.2.2 Standing To Object
 - 3.2.2.1 String Confusion Objection
 - 3.2.2.2 Legal Rights Objection
 - 3.2.2.3 Limited Public Interest Objection
 - 3.2.2.4 Community Objection
 - 3.2.3 Dispute Resolution Service Provider
 - 3.2.4 Options In The Event Of Objection
 - 3.2.5 Independent Objector
- 3.3 Filing Procedures
 - 3.3.1 Objections Filing Procedures
 - 3.3.2 Objection Filing Fees
 - 3.3.3 Response Filing Procedures
 - 3.3.4 Response Filing Fees
- 3.4 Objection Processing Overview
 - 3.4.1 Administrative Review
 - 3.4.2 Consolidation Of Objections
 - 3.4.3 Mediation
 - 3.4.4 Selection Of Expert Panels
 - 3.4.5 Adjudication

- 3.4.6 Expert Determination
- 3.4.7 Dispute Resolution Costs
- 3.5 Dispute Resolution Principles (Standards)
 - 3.5.1 String Confusion Objections
 - 3.5.2 Legal Rights Objection
 - 3.5.3 Limited Public Interest Objection
 - 3.5.4 Community Objection

CHART 3: New gTLD Program —GAC Advice on New gTLDs

CHART 4: New gTLD Program— Objection and Dispute Resolution

Attachment to Module 3 New gTLD
Dispute Resolution Procedure
Procedure Articles
ICDR Attachments International Centre for
Dispute Resolution (ICDR) Fees And Costs
Schedule For String Confusion Objections
ICDR Supplementary Procedures for
String Confusion Objections
WIPO Attachments—World Intellectual
Property Organization (WIPO) Schedule of
Fees and Costs: New GTLD Pre-Delegation
Legal Rights Objection Procedure
WIPO Rules for New gTLD Dispute Resolution

Module 4: String Contention Procedures

- 4.1 String Contention
 - 4.1.1 Identification Of Contention Sets
 - 4.1.2 Impact of String Confusion DRP on Contention Sets

- 4.1.3 Self-Resolution Of String Contention
- 4.1.4 Possible Contention Resolution Outcomes
- 4.2 Community Priority Evaluation
 - 4.2.1 Eligibility For Community Priority Evaluation
 - 4.2.2 Community Priority Evaluation Procedure
 - 4.2.3 Community Priority Evaluation Criteria
 - Criterion 1: Community Establishment
 - Criterion 2: Nexus Between Proposed Strings And Community
 - Criterion 3: Registration Policies
 - Criterion 4: Community Endorsement
- 4.3 Auction: Mechanism Of Last Resort
 - 4.3.1 Auction Procedures
 - 4.3.1.1 Currency
 - 4.3.1.2 Fees
 - 4.3.2 Winning Bid Payments
 - 4.3.3 Post-Default Procedures
- 4.4 Contention Resolution And Contract Execution

CHART 5: New gTLD Program —String Contention

Module 5: Transition To Delegation

- 5.1 Registry Agreement
- 5.2 Pre-Delegation Testing
 - 5.2.1 Testing Procedures
 - 5.2.2 Test Elements: DNS Infrastructure
 - 5.2.3 Test Elements: Registry Systems
- 5.3 Delegation Process
- 5.4 Ongoing Operations
 - 5.4.1 What Is Expected Of A Registry Operator
 - 5.4.2 What Is Expected Of ICANN

CHART 6: New gTLD Program —Transition to Delegation (estimates)

New gTLD Agreement

Registry Agreement Draft: Articles and Covenants

Specification 1: Consensus Policies and
Temporary Policies Specification

Specification 2: Data Escrow Requirements
Technical and Legal Requirements

Specification 3: Format and Content for
Registry Operator Monthly Reporting

Specification 4: Specifications for
Registration Data Publication Services

Specification 5: Schedule of Reserved Names
at the Second Level in gTLD Registries

Specification 6: Registry Interoperability
and Continuity Specifications

Specification 7: Minimum Requirements
for Rights Protection Mechanisms

Specification 8: Continued Operations Instrument

Specification 9: Registry Operator Code of Conduct

Specification 10: Registry Performance Specifications

Trademark Clearinghouse

URS—Uniform Rapid Suspension System (URS)

Trademark PDDRP—Trademark Post Delegation

DRP (Trademark PDDRP)

RRDRP Registry Restrictions DRP (RRDRP)

Module 6: Top-Level Domain Application Terms And Conditions

Figures

Figure 1-1: Once submitted to ICANN, applications will pass through multiple stages of processing.

Figure 1-2: All applications in a contention set must complete all previous evaluation and dispute resolution stages before string contention resolution can begin.

Figure 1-3: A straightforward application could have an approximate 9-month lifecycle.

Figure 1-4: A complex application could have an approximate 20-month lifecycle.

Figure 4-1.: This diagram represents one contention set, featuring both directly and indirectly contending strings.

Figure 4-2: Resolution of string contention cannot begin until all applicants within a contention set have completed all applicable previous stages.

Figure 4-3: Sequence of events during an ascending-clock auction.

Figure 4-4: Example of an auction for five mutually contending applications.

Charts

CHART 1: Evaluation Process

CHART 2: Initial Evaluation and Extended Evaluation

CHART 3: GAC Advice on New gTLDs

CHART 4: Objection and Dispute Resolution

CHART 5: String Contention

CHART 6: Transition to Delegation (estimates)

Notes: Everything in the new guidebook was subject to change. I created and printed this table independently during ICANN's last round as an aid. There were so many times that I needed specific details on the spot, and this helped me tremendously back then.

I already know what many of you are thinking: "Why didn't he just use the search feature in the PDF?" I'll answer that here by saying I like to read newspapers too. This helped me.

ICANN Resources

ICANN List of Use Cases

<https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/resources/usecases>

ICANN Engagement Calendar

<https://www.icann.org/en/engagement-calendar>

ICANN New gTLD Program Website

<https://newgtldprogram.icann.org>

Implementation Review Team Website

<https://community.icann.org/display/SPIR/>

[Subsequent+Procedures+Implementation+Review+Team](#)

ICANN Board Activities & Resolutions

<https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-14-11-2024-en>

ICANN Board Resolution

Implementation of Subsequent Procedures (March 2023)

<https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2023-03-16-en>

ICANN Subsequent Procedures Implementation Planning

<https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/NGSPP/overview>

ICANN Auction Results Archive

<https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/auctions>

ICANN New gTLD Applicant Guidebook (2012)

<https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf>

ICANN Subsequent Procedures PDP Final Report (2021)

<https://gns0.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf>

ICANN GNSO Council Resolutions

SubPro Final Outputs (2021)

<https://gns0.icann.org/en/council/resolutions/2021#20210218-3>

ICANN Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

<https://www.icann.org/en/icann-acronyms-and-terms>

ICANN Wiki & Presentations

General Background

<https://gns0.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf>

ICANN Board of Directors

Image and Profiles

<https://www.icann.org/en/board/directors>

Application & Policy Insights:

Application Types in 2026

ICANN Community Page

[https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.](https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=315490346&preview=/315490346/387907709/EXT_Topic%204_TLD%20Types.pdf)

[action?pageId=315490346&preview=/315490346/387907709/
EXT_Topic%204_TLD%20Types.pdf](https://community.icann.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=315490346&preview=/315490346/387907709/EXT_Topic%204_TLD%20Types.pdf)

GAC Early Warnings in 2012

<https://gac.icann.org/activity/gac-early-warnings>

Crowell & Moring LLP

“New gTLDs: Answers to Key Questions” (2012)

[https://www.crowell.com/a/web/](https://www.crowell.com/a/web/pXY8fSknhRQQoWmgmypLBV/4Ttiwt/Crowell-Moring-New-gTLDs-Answers-to-Key-Questions.pdf)

[pXY8fSknhRQQoWmgmypLBV/4Ttiwt/Crowell-Moring-
New-gTLDs-Answers-to-Key-Questions.pdf](https://www.crowell.com/a/web/pXY8fSknhRQQoWmgmypLBV/4Ttiwt/Crowell-Moring-New-gTLDs-Answers-to-Key-Questions.pdf)

Society for Computers & Law

“Domain Names: Community Service” (2014)

<https://www.scl.org/2977-domain-names-community-service>

Domain Incite

“ICANN Bans Closed Generics for the Foreseeable” (2024)

<https://domainincite.com/tag/closed-generics>

ICANN Subsequent Procedures PDP

Topic 34: String Similarity Evaluations

<https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/subpro-final-report-topic-34-30jan21-en.pdf>

Work Track 5

Geographic Names Policy

<https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf>

Business & Market Insights: MarkMonitor

“What is a dotBrand gTLD?

Benefits, Timeline, and Next Steps” (2025)

<https://www.markmonitor.com/blog/what-is-a-dotbrand-gtld-benefits-timeline-and-next-steps>

Private Auctions in 2012

Cramton Applicant Auction Workshop

<http://www.cramton.umd.edu/aa/applicant-auction-workshop.pdf>

Craig McCaw & Wireless Spectrum Story

Wireless History Foundation

<https://wirelesshistoryfoundation.org/craig-mccaw/>

RightOfTheDot

Auction News

<https://rightofthedot.com/news/>

Domain Name Wire

Industry Coverage

<https://domainnamewire.com/>

TheDomains.com

Industry Coverage

<https://www.thedomains.com/>

The Register

Tech News

<https://www.theregister.com/>

Internet Stats & History:

Number of Internet Users Worldwide (Statista)

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273018/>

[number-of-internet-users-worldwide/](#)

How Many Active Websites? (Digital Silk)

<https://www.digitalsilk.com/digital-trends/>

[how-many-websites-are-there/](#)

History of Domain Names

<https://historyofdomainnames.com/>

[biz-info-museum-the-history-of-domain-names/](#)

Map of the Internet 2021 (Halcyon Maps)

<https://www.halcyonmaps.com/maps#/map-of-the-internet-2021/>

Miscellaneous:

Mentors & Pro Bono Service App (ICANN Program)

[https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/
icann-seeks-mentors-and-pro-bono-service-providers-
to-assist-asp-candidates-21-10-2024-en](https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-seeks-mentors-and-pro-bono-service-providers-to-assist-asp-candidates-21-10-2024-en)

Join the IRT

ICANN Application Form

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftZbaKdGr-
CULrNjp-sJ94G4uwZWqXcRzBYxS-Jll1MGrbcw/
viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftZbaKdGr-CULrNjp-sJ94G4uwZWqXcRzBYxS-Jll1MGrbcw/viewform)

CIA World Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>

Yahoo Finance: GM Stock Snapshot

<http://finance.yahoo.com/q/ks?s=gm>

ICANN Meeting Locations:

ICANN meetings have been held in cities worldwide, including Abu Dhabi, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Beijing, Berlin, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Cancun, Cape Town, Copenhagen, Dubai, Dublin, Durban, Helsinki, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Kobe, Kuala Lumpur, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Marrakech, Melbourne, Mexico City, Montreal, Nairobi, New Delhi, Panama City, Paris, Prague, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, San Francisco, Santiago, São Paulo, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm, Sydney, Taipei, Toronto, Vancouver, Washington, D.C., Wellington, Yokohama, and many more.

Glossary

As you further your study of ICANN and the new gTLD process, you'll run across many of these acronyms. There are a lot more than these but here's a small list of handy ones.

AC: Advisory Committee

AGB: Applicant Guidebook

ALR: Auction of Last Resort

ASP: Applicant Support Program

BRDA: Bulk Registration Data Access

CCWG: Cross-Community Working Group (Accountability)

CCWG: Cross-Community Working Group
Enhancing ICANN Accountability

CPE: Community Priority Evaluation

CZDS: Centralized Zone Download Service

E&IT: Engineering & Information Technology

FTE: Full Time Equivalent (workforce hours)

GAC: Government Advisory Committee

GAP: gTLD Application Processing

GGP: GNSO Guidance Process

GNSO: Generic Names Supporting Org

GSE: Global Stakeholder Engagement Team

IRT: Implementation Review Team

NSP: Naming Service Portal

OCTO: Office of the Chief Technology Officer
PDT: Pre-Delegation Testing
RA: Base Registry Agreement
RFI: Request for Information
RRI: Registration Reporting Interface
RSP: Registry Services Provider
RST: Registry Service Testing
SLAM: Service Level Agreement Monitoring (Post contracting)
SO: Supporting Org
SUBPRO: Subsequent Procedures (for new gTLDs)
TAMS: TLD Application Management System
TMCH: Trademark Clearinghouse
TMDB: Trademark Database
UA: Universal Acceptance
WS1: Work Stream 1 (Policy Implementation)
WS2: Work Stream 2
ZFA: Zone File Access

About the Authors

ABOUT JOE

Joe is the Chief Strategy Officer for it.com Domains LTD and a former Board Member of the Domain Name Association. Previously, he was the Director of Business Development at Afilias, one of the world's largest private domain name registries. Prior to that, he was the V.P. of Channel Development for 101domain, specializing in international domain names (ccTLDs), global brand development, and the new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs). He was GM, North American markets for London-based CentralNic from 2001 until 2013. CentralNic went public on the London Stock Exchange (AIM) in 2013.

Joe has spoken at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names & Numbers (ICANN), the Direct Marketing Association, CloudFest, Targeted Traffic, and several NamesCon events. He has also taught online marketing for the SBA and several Small Business Development Centers in Southern California. Joe is an avid domain name enthusiast with first-hand experience in several realms of the industry, including registries, registrars, domainers, and resellers.

Aside from work, Joe enjoys bicycling, reading, and spending time with his family.

ABOUT ANDREY

Andrey Insarov is a dynamic force in global telecommunications and digital innovation. As the Founder and CEO of Intis Telecom and it.com Domains, he has transformed ambitious ideas into

groundbreaking enterprises that connect people and businesses across over 100 countries.

With a double Master's degree in Telecommunications Engineering and Education, Andrey launched his career with an entrepreneurial spirit that has defined his path ever since. From his early venture into dental software to the creation of Intis Telecom in 2008, he demonstrated an uncanny ability to pivot and scale at the right moments. What began as a small hosting service soon evolved into a global messaging powerhouse, thanks to his foresight in capitalizing on the booming SMS market. Intis Telecom's robust messaging services now serve a vast array of SMEs and large-scale enterprises worldwide.

Andrey's greatest masterstroke, however, came with the strategic acquisition of the it.com domain for \$3.8 million in 2022, one of the most significant domain sales of the year. Rather than hoarding this powerful brand asset, he launched a visionary new domain registry business, offering innovative third-level domains.

Through it.com Domains, Andrey has combined technical expertise with business acumen to pioneer new territory in the domain industry. He leads a loyal and experienced team, many of whom have been with him for over a decade, building a corporate culture rooted in trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships.

Despite his demanding schedule, Andrey remains grounded by his love of amateur radio and his family, passions that reflect his core values of communication, curiosity, and connection. As global markets evolve and challenges arise, Andrey continues to navigate change with clarity and conviction, proving that the fusion of integrity, innovation, and international vision is a formula for enduring success.

My New gTLD Story and the Genesis for this Book

I feel fortunate that I was part of the first round of new gTLDs in 2012. I wasn't an applicant, but I was part of the "jeans and shovels" lot. We were a nascent registry and helped several entrepreneurs realize their dream of owning and operating their own new gTLD.

No one really knew how it would work out. At \$185K per application, it presented a huge risk. I never "sold" anyone on applying, but people knew that I was part of a legitimate registry, so we made our services available.

I'd like to tell you the stories of my interactions with four of them, not deep details, but an overview so you can see how it went for them.

I hope to help you make good decisions about this. I listed a few caveats earlier in the book to help you if you decide to get involved in the next round.

So, let's start with a few stories. The first one is about Ray King. I don't remember where I met Ray, but we traveled in the same circles for many years and trusted each other. Ray was involved in several successful domain-related startups. He knew that I worked for a registry and approached me to help him apply for ten new gTLDs, including .art, .blog, .design, .gay, .group, .ink, .wiki, .llc, .photography, and .style.

He was very easy to work with because he had been in the industry. The strings he disclosed to me were confidential at that

time, but we began to work with him, and he got his applications in within the window of opportunity (which only ran for three or four months). We didn't know it at the time, but several of his applications turned out to be in contention with others.

If you had an idea for a string, you didn't want to tell anyone because it could invite others to apply for the same idea. Ray knew this, and he was successful in acquiring several new gTLDs out of the ones he applied for. He also sold a few of them. Eventually, he got to run .gay, .ink, .wiki, and a few others.

The fantastic thing is that, because of the idea of private auctions, he was able to cash out of the applications he didn't win at a profit. I can't disclose the numbers. I can only say that it was significantly more than his application fees. In 2023, he exited the registry business by selling it to GoDaddy Registry. I don't know the number, but I'm sure he's pleased with the result.

Another great success was Jay Westerdal. He approached me in 2011 in Costa Rica and told me he wanted to apply for .sucks. Although I did my best not to show it, I thought he was crazy. Jay is an industry insider and did much of the application work himself as well. We did all the work related to the registry requirements. He ended up applying for over 10 new gTLDs, including .auto, .chat, .forum, .golf, .contact, .feedback, .pid, .hotel, .mail, .realty, .school, & .sucks. He sold many of them in private auctions for a profit and operated .feedback for several years.

One of my favorite stories is about the Merchant Law Group in Canada. I also visited them just before the application window opened in 2012. They wanted to apply for .law. During our conversation, I told them about a friend, Paul Stahura. Paul had been involved in domains for many years and told me that he was going to apply for several new TLDs. I figured the number was five or ten. We know now that he meant over three-hundred applications, not ten. Paul was not only the founder of Identity Digital

(FKA Donuts), he also understood the importance of holding his cards close to his chest until the right time.

The reason I mentioned this to the Merchant Law Firm was that the applicant guidebook indicated several kinds of possible objections that could occur from governments, non-profits, or technical interests. Applying for a new gTLD was no guarantee of winning. So, my suggestion to them was, “Apply for two or three similar ones like Paul is doing. For example, try .attorney and .lawyer too. This way, if you are not granted your first choice, you won’t be out completely. Once I suggested that, I lost control of the meeting. They consulted with each other privately and presented me with a list of eight tlds they wanted to apply for. I was elated! They applied for .law, .blog, .home, .love, .art, .club, .news, and .app.

The applications were all successfully submitted, and they eventually sold them all except for .love, which they still own. I assume they earned enough from the auction for .law that it overcame their desire to run it.

Others, including Daniel Negari, a genius marketer, applied using our service for .xyz, .now, and .college. We all know about his success with .xyz. His company has turned into a real powerhouse within the industry.

With all that success in 2012, I was intrigued. I learned a lot by working with these fantastic people, and I decided that I wanted to write this book. I registered the domain name; HowToGetYourOwnTLD.com, in 2013! But writing books is not easy. I kept the domain but never completed the book...

That was until I met Andrey Insarov, who, as stated in the Acknowledgments, helped me write and produce it. He gave me the freedom to get it done in time for this next round, and I’m forever thankful to him.

So, together with an outstanding team, we stand ready to help you with any aspect of your new gTLD application in 2026. Whether you manage trademarks or brands for your company or are interested in joining this wonderful industry, please contact us.

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