

The tower of names: ICANN gTLDs aim for the summit

 By [Naseem Javed](#)

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What's all this curious noise in global media about the booming ICANN gTLD dot names? Why have 1120 separate bodies from various parts of the world applied for 2000 such names at an average cost of a million dollars for each name?

Donuts outsmarted all by investing US\$100 million and applying for 307 names, TLDH went for 92, while Google went for 50. Directi of India went for 30 names. What does 'dot canon' or 'dot deloitte', 'dot sucks', 'dot nyc' or 'dot lol' have in common? Who are the new winners, losers and spectators of the naming games?

The entire final list of applied names was released yesterday, 13 June 2012, by [ICANN](#) and to bring a higher level understanding on global naming issues and gTLD name evaluation, a series of senior level educational events have been released on www.azna.com.

As anticipated by the emergence of new worlds, slowly the global business names and domain names combined have reached a critical mass, creating endless indexes and name hierarchies; creating millions of dysfunctional names for each superstar name brand, massive name duplication, chaos and confusion for every name branded goods and services surrounded by perpetual legal and trademark battles.

If you gathered all the names currently being used in business all over the world they would stack up like a mythical 'tower of names' in some fantasy land - high and mighty, glittering and arching above the clouds, piercing the sky. There are some 500 million business names in the world, ranging from very big to very small, super-active to barely active operations; these huge business name registrations of sorts drive the pulse of the global economy.

Tectonic global shifts of image

To explain all this in extremely simple terms, the internet is a collection of websites, only accessible by domain names. Today there are 220 million domain names - a number expected to reach 1 billion by 2020, creating a cyber 'tower of names' and causing tectonic global shifts of image, name identity and brand powers. The same domain names, when they transcend the daily business reality, are managed under conventional business nomenclature rules and trademark laws, designed to ensure visibility under various layers of protection.

These two different types of naming procedures are causing clashes with trademarking and name branding methodologies when positioned against speedy internet-based global digital cyber branding platforms.

For example, if in the last century, only one global company had been allowed to sell millions of tyres daily, but had no say

on how they fitted the various vehicles, and if the long-term goal was to create transportation for a mobile society, public safety and long-term viability would have become crucial, especially if all the tyres produced were square. Let's relate this to domain names.

Would square-peg domain names that are designed to skate across global cyber branding platforms fit round-holed trademark procedures for the global roads, sidewalks and highways? The internet created "global cyber brand naming" rules for cyber name identities, now forcing the 'use of name' issues to become controversial with the current sluggish trademarking based 'brand name identity management'. The pros and cons of two very different types of name approval systems, timelines and processing, somehow punch holes in the old trademark procedures and also in the methods of image branding communication.

Organised name hierarchies emerge

When sluggish trademark procedures start to collide with hyper-speed global cyber branding upgrades, organised name hierarchies emerge to serve the marketplace better. Equally, old global branding models are challenged as disfunctionalities around the 'tower of names' become serious problems.

For example, if you stacked up all the business names of the world that are currently in use, they would stack up like an imaginary tower of names piercing the sky. Now suddenly, monstrous cracks in the 'tower of names' start to appear as intricacies of the 'higher the name visibility' the 'higher the real estate' prices become opposing issues.

The ICANN gTLD controversies are not just about the cyber 'domain name expansions'. In reality, they are about the hidden challenges to trademarking limitations of 'global name management systems' and the collapse of traditional name-branding methodologies. Hence, there is such a fierce opposition from the advertising, branding and trademark practitioners from all over the world.

To use waste as an example, mathematically it can be proven that there are 100 top diluted business names being used by 100 million businesses around the world. These users are convinced that they have trademark protection and keep spending small fortunes to stay content in their brand name success. In reality the majority don't. Mathematically it can also be proven that there are at least 5 million businesses around the world that would directly benefit by the ownership of an exclusive 'name identity' as a gTLD and enjoy a higher level of business marketing interaction.

Fast, economical maneuver

With the right application and name behind it, a gTLD can be the fastest and most economical maneuver to acquire a distinct global identity. Global advertising and branding services perceive this as a threat.

Trademarks have served the society very well over the last few centuries and today they still play the most critical role in defining and protecting the rightful owners of marks. However, the procedural sluggishness fails to match the requirements of cyber speed. Somehow if the 'name' filing complexities and country-by-country conflicts with legal variance could be automated to create graphical, easy to decipher charts, the losing battles or winning streaks would save billions in wasted and endless chases.

On the other hand, the domain name registration system from the inception had no regard for trademark rule of law, as a first-come-first-serve basis was indirectly created to allow Intellectual property theft in broad daylight.

Decades later, it created a booming defensive registration industry and also the URDP uniform domain name conflict resolution policy applications, where lawyers decide the future of conflicting domain names for several thousands of dollars. Currently, there are some 2000-4000 such conflicting cases being processed each year.

Are the two systems feeding each other? Where are the better and streamlined procedures to eliminate waste caused by easy and simple access to initiate conflict?

Is global silence really that golden? Such granular nomenclature issues were never discussed in depth at any forum of ICANN or by any other relevant organisation where the centrality of agenda challenged the current trademarking and global name branding procedures and focused on the future of the global naming complexities in juxtaposition to global domain name expansion. Instead, some mythical fear mongering has been created by global branding agencies and law firms where half knowledge amongst the top global cadres was used to its greatest advantage. The granular debate for now is simply lost in the fog of war. ICANN has taken the bull by the horns. The opposition to gTLD is huge and the spectators are slowly warming up for the fight.

The beneficiaries:

Small medium enterprise of the world dreaming of playing in the global space. Great and solid names holders with carefree and non-hostile attitude to focus on unlimited multidirectional growth.

The enemies:

Owners of badly structured names. Old trademark procedures designed to consume time, cost and energy and slowly strangle new and emerging brand names. The old advertising and branding mentality, which thrives on bottomless budgets, needed in order to keep the bad names alive.

The adjustments:

Educate and re-educate. Evaluate every single name in use in the organisation and acquire deeper understanding of all the surrounding issues of marketing, advertising and branding and conduct a line-by-line audit and recover the largest waste of budgets and reinvest into new age internet under long-term naming strategies. Upon discovery of your own losing battle where your name identity was never meant to gain an upper hand, be prepared to face harsh reality. Introduce new thinking and re-train your teams.

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