PRAGUE – Introduction to Registries and Registrars
Sunday, June 24, 2012 – 00:00 to 00:00
ICANN - Prague, Czech Republic

Filiz Yilmaz: Alright, we will continue with Registries and Registrars and our first speaker is Steve who will talk about registrar basics – is that correct, Steve?

Steve Gobin: Yes, it's going to be concentrated on registrars and then going on we'll talk more about the registry side.

Filiz Yilmaz: Thank you.

[background conversation]

Steve Gobin: We will start in a minute.

[background conversation]

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

Steve Gobin: So when someone wants to register a domain name, I'm going to focus here on the gTLD domain names – so the ones with extensions like .com, ,net, .info. Different parties are involved so at the top of the pyramid you have the registry which is the organization that runs the TLD, the "TLD" being the top-level domain – what you have to the right of the dot. My colleague Karla will make a more specific presentation about the registries, how they work and so on but in any case, for all gTLDs and it's also the case for a good number of country code top-level domains, when you want to register a domain name you don't directly submit a request to the registry. There will be another entity in between which is the registrar.

So why a registrar? Why is it not possible in most of the cases to go directly to the registry? And even if it's possible why is it a [fuller] value to register a domain name via a registrar? First of all because there is a choice between a lot of registrars. There's a competition between them which means there is a registrar that suits the need of every type of consumer and with cheaper prices, of course. Another reason is that when you register a domain name, most of the time you don't just want a domain name.

The problem is, if you register a domain name directly with a registry, if it was possible to do so in all cases you would just get a domain name with nothing else. But most of the time you also want to redirect the domain name to an existing website or you want a webhosting package or a mail hosting package with the domain name, and that's why you're going to choose a registrar because a lot of them are providing that kind of service which you can purchase with your domain name so that your

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domain name is ready to use. So you don't just make a registration of a domain name but you buy a whole package for using it.

You will get the personalized support in your language and time zone. It wouldn't be the case if you had to register your domain name directly with the registry operator, you would have to take into account the time zone of that registry, the language they support – which would be the local language and maybe one or two other ones. But now if you use a registrar, you can choose a registrar close to your location that suits your needs, that will provide you with support in your language, in your time zone. And another advantage of course is that if you want to register a bunch of domain names with different top-level domains after the dot most of the registries, they are just registries for one TLD, sometimes a bit more. But if you want for example to register a domain name within twenty different TLDs, if you choose a registrar that is accredited for all these different TLDs then you will be able to register all your domain names at the same place which is an advantage for you.

There are still other benefits in doing the registration via a registrar. So basically who can be a registrar? If we consider the generic top-level domains, every entity that wants to be a registrar for generic top-level domains needs to become first of all ICANN-accredited. I'm not going to explain here the process of becoming ICANN-accredited, it's not the purpose of this presentation but if you have any question about that topic just come and find me. I'm here until Friday morning. So the company needs to be ICANN-accredited first, then once it has become accredited it has to enter into a registry/registrar agreement with the registry whose TLD the registrar is interested in.

Then what about country code top-level domains? You don't need to be ICANN-accredited to become a registrar for a ccTLD. The ICANN accreditation only covers gTLDs so you will need to contact the relevant registry operator. And a consistent number of registry operators for ccTLDs have adopted a system where you also need to go through a registrar. And for ccTLDs, each operator determines the rules and procedures it applies for accrediting registrars.

So a contractual relationship – let's come back to the first figure. So you have the registry, the registrar, the registrant. As you can see there is an agreement between the registry and the registrar which is the registry/registrar agreement; and when you register a domain name you will enter into a registration agreement with the registrar. Then as far as gTLDs are concerned, and that's where ICANN comes into the game – each gTLD registry operator has entered into a registry agreement with ICANN and this is also the case for each ICANN-accredited registrar. They have entered into a Registrar Accreditation Agreement with rights and obligations, most of them being for actually protecting the registrants.

Then in this Registrar Accreditation Agreement, according to them the registrars are also required to comply with consensus policies which are also described on the ICANN website – one of them, for example, being the Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy, which is very important because that's the one that's taken into account when you want to transfer your gTLD domain name from a registrar to another one. So let's come back to that figure.

Then you may have the situation, I haven't talked about them yet, but not only ICANN-accredited registrars are offering domain name registration services. There are also entities that are not ICANN-accredited, and for some reasons they cannot be or don't want to be ICANN-accredited registrars so they enter into reseller agreements with an existing registrar. So in this case you can see the registrant has an agreement with the reseller and the reseller with the registrar, but even in that situation there is still a registration agreement between the registrant and the registrar, which is important because that sets rights and obligations to both parties and that protects the registrants.

What about ccTLDs? The rules may vary between the ccTLDs so I'm not going to give any example here. If you want more information about what applies to a specific ccTLD you should contact the relevant operator, and I have put the link here. This presentation will be on the ICANN Prague Meeting website so you can always check it later.

Choosing a registrar: we have a website, www.internic.net where you have a list of all ICANN-accredited registrars. Once again, that concerns the gTLDs. Here, as you can see, some of them have a 2009 RAA logo – that's because there are now two versions of the Registrar Accreditation Agreement. Most of the registrars have already entered the new version which has new provisions which add some additional protections to the registrant.

If there is a problem when can ICANN help? ICANN can address violations of a registry agreement by a registry, violations of an RAA by a registrar or violations of a consensus policy by a registry or registrar. So everything (inaudible) in these agreements. But there are other issues

ICANN cannot address: ownership issues – there is a policy to settle that, or you have to go to court; contractual issues between registries and registrars or resellers, and ccTLD issues – as I said, the ICANN accreditation only concerns the gTLDs; then issues regarding all that has to do with the use of domain names, websites, content, spam and so on – this is not under the competence of ICANN.

If you want to get more information there is the INTERNIC website where you have the list of registrars. You have the "Registrars" section of the ICANN website and you can also send an email to registrar@icann.org if you have additional questions. Thank you. Yes? You have the mic.

Filiz Yilmaz: We have to have the microphones for the questions so those remote participants can also follow, that's why.

Female: Excuse me. Who got the ability to go before the ICANN for the complaints I mean, when a registrant – does he have the right to go before the ICANN?

Steve Gobin: Yes. If the registrants think that for example a registrar has breached any provision of the Registrar Accreditation Agreement or any consensus policy the registrant can contact ICANN and submit a complaint about the concerned registrar.

Female:	Okay, thank you.

Filiz Yilmaz:	Right, first here and then I will follow.

Male:	(Inaudible), I'm CEO of [.vin], the [Gambia] company that applied for a .vin new gTLD. Hopefully we get this new gTLD somewhere in the future. Then we have to find registrars. As far as I understand, we have to accept any ICANN-accredited registrar that has an agreement with ICANN to be able to register domains under the new gTLD. So any ICANN-accredited register can sell .vin or a new gTLD domains?

Steve Gobin:	Yes, every ICANN-accredited registrar will have the possibility to add any new gTLDs that will be created in the future to its own accreditation.

Male:	So we have to accept any accredited registrar? Can we accept non-accredited registrars?

Steve Gobin:	You will not be able to provide the services via companies that are not ICANN-accredited. Now, under the current system there are sponsored top-level domains and unsponsored ones. Unsponsored ones have to accept any request to enter into registry/registrar agreements. For a sponsored registry operator they have the right to choose to enter with

this or this registrar rather than another one, but I don't know in detail what it will be for the future new gTLD operator.

Male: So in short a new gTLD can be, or you can register a domain under a new gTLD via an ICANN-accredited registrar only would be the clear given thing.

Steve Gobin: Yes, that's correct.

[background conversation]

Male: Hello, my name is [Vilel] from the Telecom Regulatory in Oman. My question to you is regarding the ccTLDs. We know that this is the common practice or basically the best model to have registrar, registry and registrant. In the case of ccTLDs, in case that there is no qualified registrar, can the registry be a registrar as well or not?

Steve Gobin: Yes, there exists some ccTLDs where the registrant can directly go to the registry operator to apply for the registration of a domain name. There are different models – in some of them you have to go to the registry, there's no other choice; some of them exclusively use a registrar system the same as gTLDs; and some even have both systems in parallel.

Male: But it would be accepted through ICANN regulations.

Steve Gobin: It's not ICANN that determines how a ccTLD must work. That's the
                            ccTLD that decides that itself in compliance with the local legislation and
                            most of the time in conjunction with the local government.

Male: Thank you.

Gary Campbell: Gary Campbell from Jamaica. ccTLDs are done by different independent
                            bodies.

Steve Gobin: Yes.

Gary Campbell: For gTLDs, is it solely done by ICANN? Is there any other body that is
                            involved or is it something that is done specifically by ICANN?

Steve Gobin: There is a registry operator for each gTLD as well. Some existing gTLDs
                            were already existing before ICANN and with their registry operator.
                            Some of them have been created after ICANN was created, and that was
                            in the time – 2000 to 2003 – there were two rounds where ICANN

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allowed the creation of a limited number of gTLDs. Some entities applied for the creation of several gTLDs, some of them were accepted; and the applicants that could demonstrate they could operate as a registry operator became registry operators for one of the gTLDs they applied for.

Filiz Yilmaz: Thank you, Steve.

Steve Gobin: You're welcome.

Victor Ndonnang: My name is Victor Ndonnang. I'm an ICANN Fellow from Cameroon. I'm deeply interested by the domain name industry. There are around 2000 ICANN-accredited registrars but there are only five if I'm correct in Africa for more than a billion persons. So I don't know if ICANN can set up a process, like a JAS support agreement… The JAS support agreement that has been set, put in place during the New gTLD application process to support developing countries to get involved in the process. So mainly how can ICANN help a company from the developing world to become an ICANN-accredited registrar because the business environment is not the same? I go through the ICANN-accredited registrar document, the RAA, but it's not really simple for a company from the developing world to fulfill all insurance, all the financial requirements. Thank you.

Steve Gobin:

I'm going to answer in two parts. I mean if you have considered accrediting your company and have seen some obstacles on your way, maybe you should talk to me directly, I'm going to say face-to-face and then we can see if there's really enough circle, if there is a way to solve the problem. Because each applicant can have their specific problems so it's very difficult to give a general answer there.

What I can say in a general answer: so there is a policy which is called the Statement of Accreditation Policy that sets the criteria that any entity who wants to apply for accreditation must fill in. ICANN as such, I mean the ICANN staff as any other policy may not just decide to change the content of that policy. That would have to be started by the GNSO and to follow a policy development process, and in that situation, if they initiate a change to that policy – let's imagine that an applicant needs less liquid capital or that an applicant needs less insurance coverage – then such a process, if it goes to the end would allow a change of that policy. But as long as it doesn't happen, as a member of the ICANN staff I have to stick to these policies as well. But come to me later and we will see which problem you exactly had that made it that you haven't applied yet for accreditation.

Filiz Yilmaz:

Just one thing that may help the whole overall conversation here is within the new gTLD scheme of things there's also support for developing countries, and we will touch on that slightly in the upcoming presentation.

Male: (Inaudible). You mentioned in a previous answer something about a sponsored new gTLD and unsponsored. Can you give some examples? That's one question. The second question is can registries be registrars and can registries be exclusive registrars with no other point of…

Steve Gobin: So first part of the answer: that only concerns the currently existing gTLDs. You have the unsponsored gTLDs like .info for example, where as I said earlier any ICANN-accredited registrar can add this gTLD to their accreditation. Another part of gTLD registries are sponsored registries because they run a sponsored gTLD. Why sponsored? Because there is a specific charter with conditions for registering domain names in that kind of gTLD, and these registries have a higher freedom to choose which registrar they accept to work with. An example of such a gTLD is .museum. Now, as far as new gTLDs are concerned there is no such distinction of sponsored and unsponsored gTLDs in the Applicant Guidebook. Other kinds of distinctions are made like community-based, geographic TLDs so I don't know in detail what freedom, what level of freedom the future new gTLDs will have in accepting this or this registrar.

So your second question, in the contract of the currently existing registries: a registry cannot own more than 15% of an accredited registrar, and the registry cannot act as a registrar. These provisions are what makes the vertical integration. In the Applicant Guidebook for new gTLDs this vertical integration has been removed. It means basically that a registry will be able to own a registrar or the other way around. Now, I'm not sure that the same legal entity will be able to be

at the same time registry and registrar; and in any case, if it's possible and that entity that is a registry also wants to be a registrar it would have to follow the ICANN accreditation process to become a registrar.

[background conversation]

Steve Gobin: I don't think so.

Filiz Yilmaz: Well, let's move on because the next one will be Karla talking about registries. Maybe some of the questions will be answered through the presentation and you can take more questions at the end. Just maybe, thanks Steve.

Steve Gobin: There will also be some sessions specifically about new gTLDs, so if you have specific questions about the content of the Applicant Guidebook I think this is the place where you should ask them.

[End of Transcript]