



ICANN's Grand Waste of Your Time

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The recent decision by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to allow any entity to register a generic top-level domain names (gTLD) has already wasted the time of people and businesses all over the world and no end is in sight.

Successful companies, whether established or startups, relay new messages to their stakeholders by presenting a solution to a problem and/or by presenting a motivational springboard story that ushers listeners into, say, the beautiful world of expanded gTLDs.

Instead, ICANN announced a solution that is looking for a problem. This resulted in discussion and speculation. Is expansion supposed to solve trademark issues, brandability tangles, the conundrum of how many gTLDs will be successful? Or has ICANN decided to take an unexpected leap into the for-profit arena? All this wasted time and energy would have been better channeled into finding the best solution, or at least an acceptable solution, to the mysterious problem that ICANN is trying to address.

This announcement gives us a clear idea as to how ICANN works, and to many it is a sad case of déjà vu. But why waste stakeholders' precious time? There are a few plausible explanations: communication ignorance, a desire to distract stakeholders from more serious problems that ICANN is pushing under the rug, or a simple yen for dictatorship. Rulings from on high have their place when certain coordination problems need to be tackled, but it is not clear how such problems would arise in deciding on gTLD expansion. ■