

Washington Internet Daily

The news source for Internet policy



A service of WARREN COMMUNICATIONS NEWS

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2015

VOL. 16, NO. 53

Table of Contents

Top News

New .Sucks gTLD Registry CEO Disputes Claims of 'Extortionate' Prices	1
Reforms Sought in Hearing on Data Security, Breach Notification Act Draft	3
CSRIC Approves Cybersecurity Risk Management Report on Adapting NIST Framework for Communications Sector Use	5
Wheeler Faces Off With Senate Commerce Over Net Neutrality	7
White House Official Says FCC Should Hold Incentive Auction, as Planned, Next Year	9
FCC Win on Releasing VPCI Could Push Back Merger Review Resolution	11

Capitol Hill	12
--------------------	----

Agencies	14
----------------	----

International	16
---------------------	----

Intellectual Property	16
-----------------------------	----

Industry Notes	16
----------------------	----

Internet People	17
-----------------------	----

'Other Tectonic Forces'

New .Sucks gTLD Registry CEO Disputes Claims of 'Extortionate' Prices

The imminent launch of new generic top-level domain “.sucks” is either an example of innovative, freewheeling entrepreneurship or a shocking attempt to grab money from brand owners, said domain name system (DNS) community players in interviews. John Berard, CEO of the .sucks Vox Populi Registry, said criticism of the domain name prices is unwarranted, and that he has no idea if the gTLD will succeed.

Sunrise registrations for trademark owners in .sucks begin March 30, the Vox Populi Registry website said. Domain names will be available for public beginning June 1, it said. The new gTLD is being marketed in a [video](#) that uses consumer advocate Ralph Nader and footage of Martin Luther King Jr. to “help consumers find their voices and allow companies to find the value in criticism,” the registry website [said](#). Annual

prices range from \$9.95 for consumer advocate subsidized domains to \$2,499 for “sunrise premium” names registered in ICANN’s Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH), with standard domains set at \$249, the registry said.

It’s “plain and simple extortion of the legal variety,” said Ron Sheridan, founder of TopicHubs.com, who identifies himself as a dot.com entrepreneur. There is nothing illegal about the pricing, he said. There are other cases where prices for new extensions are excessive, but “the key differentiator” is that the other gTLDs are selling something that brands want, such as .club or .vegas, he said. “Even they price in a way that extracts money from existing brands that likely only look to buy the domains of their brands as a defensive move.”

It’s “too early to know” if companies will be interested in registering .sucks domains, Berard said. He said he has no sense of whether the gTLD will be successful but is convinced that it offers an opportunity to foster conversation. Berard voiced surprise at some of the criticism over the registry’s prices, saying they’re not out of line with the value of the name space for businesses and consumers and will encourage them to use, not park, their domains.

The registry decided to contact Nader because he asked ICANN around 2000 to create a .sucks domain for consumers, employees and unions but not companies, Berard said. Fifteen years later, businesses have grown savvy about the value of conversing with consumers, he said. The video attempts to “provide some balance” to the commercial side of the new gTLDs, he said. The registry hopes to “create new space on the Internet” where people can say what they want to say and be heard, said Berard.

The .sucks case “is one of the best examples” of how the “gTLD expansion has turned into one giant extortion scheme for the enrichment of ‘domainers’ and the rest of the domain-industrial complex—and to the detriment of the Net at large,” said technology activist Lauren Weinstein. He’s seen nothing from the vast majority of new gTLDs but spam and phishing attempts, he said in a listserv message. All the new gTLDs, and most of the older ones after the original big three “have been largely consumed by garbage,” he told us. “The extortive ‘quick, register your company before someone else beats you to it!’ pitch is often absolutely explicit from the registrars” and is routine, he said. One doesn’t often hear ordinary Internet users saying what they need to make their lives easier is more domains, spam and forged phishing attempts, he said.

But former elected ICANN director Karl Auerbach objected to the word extortion. “What a lot of people don’t seem to like is speculation,” he emailed. No one is being forced to buy myname.sucks, he said. It’s a “self-correcting thing—if speculators perceive that nobody will buy what they are investing in, then they will take their investment elsewhere,” said Auerbach, now InterWorking Labs chief technical officer.

Auerbach also pointed to “other tectonic forces at work” on the Internet that are bigger than any squabbles over gTLDs such as .sucks and that may “obviate flotsam of the past such as ICANN” or the DNS. There are political forces pressing for regional or cultural views of the Net, he said. People are ever more worried about security and protection from the “hostile outside,” said Auerbach. IPv6 is failing, and the rise of name spaces loaded on top of the Internet, such as Facebook and Google, is making domain names “quaint relics,” he said. The needs of distributed and migratory cloud computing and storage aren’t being met by the DNS, and overlay technologies such as OpenFlow and virtual-offices-in-a-box allow anyone to easily create private Internets, he said. — *Dugie Standeford*