

Website address 'revolution' back in motion

May 22 2012, by Glenn Chapman



Akram Atallah, chief operating officer of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), speaks in 2011. The Internet domain name "revolution" was back in action on Tuesday with the agency in charge of website addresses once again taking applications for online neighborhoods breaking the ".com" mold.

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The [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) (ICANN) had put the process on hold after discovering a flaw that let some aspiring applicants peek at unauthorized information at the registration website.

"During the last few weeks, we have fixed the [technical glitch](#) that caused us to take the system offline," ICANN chief operating officer

Akram Atallah said in a message at the agency's website.

The window for applying will remain open until the end of May 30 based on GMT time.

Those interested in running new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) online were assured the problem was fixed and that they could securely apply.

"We recognize and regret the inconvenience caused by this glitch," Atallah said.

In January, ICANN began taking applications from those interested in operating Internet domains that replace endings such as .com or .org with nearly any acceptable words, including company, organization or city names.

Outgoing ICANN president Rod Beckstrom has championed the change as a "new [domain name system](#) revolution."

The new system will allow Internet names such as .Apple or .IMF or .Paris.

ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, requires the new names.

Registration costs \$185,000 with a \$25,000 annual fee after that.

ICANN insists that safeguards are in place to protect names of established companies and groups.

The software flaw exposed user names and/or file names of 72 applicants, with the information potentially glimpsed by about 30

parties, according to ICANN. Those files could not be opened by other applicants.

"It was a subtle bug that only happened under certain circumstances," Beckstrom told AFP. "Essentially, when a file was deleted and then they crashed out of the system."

Applicants whose files were exposed, along with those who had opportunities to peek at information, have been notified.

"The only users in the system are major businesses with financial backing ready to have background checks done," Beckstrom said.

"We don't have any reason to believe anyone has abused information they had access too, but we want to take every precaution we can."

Only two applicants have taken ICANN up on an offer for complete refunds, with the total amount adding up to \$10,000. ICANN has taken in more than \$352 million so far in application fees, according to Beckstrom.

The number of applicants was already frozen by the time the process was taken offline about 40 days ago due to the software glitch.

Beckstrom declined to discuss details of what gTLD names were being requested. ICANN hoped to have a "reveal day" prior to its meeting scheduled to take place in Prague on June 24.

There are more than 2,000 applications in ICANN's system.

"It is going to be very interesting on reveal day," Beckstrom said.

Revelation of gTLD name requests will mark the start of a period during

which anyone in the world will be able to have formal objections weighed by ICANN.

The objection period will include resolving conflicts that arise from domain names similar enough to be confusing and those requested by multiple applicants.

Unchallenged gTLD names could get through the approval process in as few as nine months, while those facing opposition could be bogged down for a year or two, according to Beckstrom.

There are currently 22 gTLDs including .com. It is not hard to imagine that at least half of the new names being sought will eventually become online venues for websites.

"We will move from .com or .biz to company names, brand names, city names...that is going to give the whole domain name space a different look and feel," Beckstrom said.

"And we will, for the first time, have gTLDs in non-Latin script," he continued. "I think it is a revolution."

The [ICANN](#) board has already committed to another round of gTLD name applications and there is pressure from some parties to do it soon, according to Beckstrom.

"This is meant to be part of an ongoing series of rounds," he said.

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