

# *An Unsympathetic Introduction to Internet Domaining*

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# Who the heck am I?



- First Chair of NARALO, 2007
- ALAC vice-chair 2009-2014
- Co-chair ATLAS 1 (before it was called ATLAS)
- I own a few domains
- Governance and ICANN is a sideline
  - It's cost me plenty and earned me nearly nothing

# Why am I doing this?

- I don't pretend to be expert or unbiased
- I want ALAC to fulfill its bylaw mandate
- Domainers have voice elsewhere in ICANN
- For the rest of the world, it's just us
- Because Eduardo asked me to

"Under COVID pressure, info providers choose QR codes over domain names"

NARALO email list, August 30

# The Core Problem

- Domains are commodity, not identity
- They're never owned, just rented
  - You lose it if you don't pay the annual fee
  - Your competitor can bid for it
- Trademarks: reducing consumer confusion
  - Use them or lose them
- Domains: maximizing revenue
  - Do what you want so long as ICANN collects

# At the End of the Rainbow

- Business.com \$345M (but that was the whole business)
- LasVegas.com \$90M (for an unused domain)
- Voice.com \$30M
- Sex.com \$13M (2010)
  - Traffic: 2.6M hits/month (Pornhub: 114M/month)

# The Implementation

- Thriving resale market: domainers
  - “Portfolios” of domains
  - Now registries are competing: “premium domains”
- Defensive domains
- Rent-seeking
  - Negative value-add
- The ticket-scalping analogy
  - How is “I got in the queue before you” a form of innovation?

# *My Personal Experience*

- Most logical names are taken by squatters
- Price quotes were laughable
- Many squatted domains will stay unsold
- Most new registrants are not fazed
- [The-hyphen-is-your-friend.com](http://The-hyphen-is-your-friend.com)

# Consequences

- Lost opportunity, never to return
- ICANN's loss is Google's gain (and Facebook's)
- Entrenched opposition to change
- ICANN's massive conflict of interest
  - The regulator is financially dependent on what it regulates
- Moving on from “memorable” domains



# So What Next?

- Harm reduction/mitigation
- Double (or more) ICANN cost-per-domain
- Need research on end-user needs/impact
- Educate registrants
  - ccTLDs and new gTLDs
  - Hyphens, prepositions, etc
- Don't pay the ransom; spend on SEO

# Questions, Answers and Rebuttals

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