

*An unsympathetic introduction
to Internet domaining*

Evan Leibovitch

NARALO meeting, November 2020

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

Why am I doing this?

- I don't pretend to be expert or unbiased
- Want At-Large to fulfil its role
- How to represent the billions?
- 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
 - Your competitor can bid for it
- Trademarks: reducing consumer confusion
- ICANN: maximizing domain revenue

At the End of the Rainbow

- Business.com \$345M
- 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”
- Usable domains locked away
- Defensive domains
 - Negative value-add from registrants
- 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
- Squatted domains will stay unsold (UDRP)
- Most new registrants are not fazed
- The-hyphen-is-your-friend.com

Consequences

- Lost opportunity, never to return
- ICANN's loss is Google's gain
- Embedded opposition to change
- ICANN's massive conflict of interest
- Does anyone care anymore?

So What Next?

- Harm reduction/mitigation
- Double (or more) ICANN cost-per-domain
- Spend that revenue on research
- Educate registrants
 - ccTLDs and new gTLDs
 - Hyphens

Questions, Answers and Rebuttals

evan@telly.org
@evanleibovitch / @el56