

DNS DIALOGUE

An Online Roundtable discussion on DNS by ISOC India Delhi and ISOC India Mumbai

Date: 17 August 2019

Time: 11am -1pm

Distinguished Panelists

Professor Rodney D. Ryder, Partner with Scriboard; a full-service law firm, and Adjunct Professor to the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, National Law School of India University, Bangalore, NALSAR, Hyderabad.

Mr Manmeet Pal Singh, CEO, Reappoint Internet and Vice-President, ISOC Delhi Chapter

Mr. Vinay Murarka: Partner, V2Technosys

The mission of ISOC India Mumbai is to make the Internet relevant for everyone by creating more awareness on Internet-related issues amongst various stakeholder communities. In its pursuit of this mission, ISOC India Mumbai in collaboration with ISOC India Delhi organized an online roundtable discussion on Domain Name System (DNS) on August, 17th 2019.

The panel discussion followed the structure whereby each speaker first shared his thoughts on the subject of DNS wherein they interspersed their talk with some anecdotes and stories from their professional experiences. The individual speaker talk was then followed by a discussion amongst the panelist that aimed to address some of the deeper issues and concerns in the domain of DNS. The floor was then thrown open to the audience to directly engage with the panelists.

The webinar began with the moderator of the discussion, Mr. Prateek Pathak, emphasizing on the need to introduce the DNS ecosystem to a greater proportion of technology professionals, academics, Internet enthusiast and interested individuals as they might still not be familiar with finer nuances of the DNS. Therefore, it becomes important to deepen their understanding of such pertinent issues.

Manmeet opened the discussion by addressing the questions on “Why DNS is needed and how DNS works?” Manmeet explained that DNS, in simpler terms, can be defined as the naming of the computers, services, and other resources connected to the Internet. DNS comprises of a lot of service like SOA (Start of Authority), I.P. Addresses, SMTP mail exchangers, Name servers, amongst others. In short, DNS can be viewed as a database where entries are collected and grouped as domain names. They provide the ease of accessing

information on the Internet. They are also typically easier to memorize compared to IP addresses and are essential to access a website.

The discussion was taken forward by the second panelist, Mr. Vinay Murarka. Vinay talked about the different stakeholders who are engaged in the DNS ecosystem and how they participate in this process. He began by tracing the history of DNS from 1985, when the first DNS was registered in the name of Symbolics by the US department, to setting up of ICANN in 1998 that was given the rights to govern Domain registration system, to the now established structure with DNS registries and Registrars. This structure is largely followed for gTLDs. For ccTLDs. like .in in India, the established mechanism flows through the government, NIXI (National Internet Exchange of India) and finally public.

The dialogue was then joined by the third panelist, Professor Rodney Ryder. Addressing some of the major issues concerning the DNS ecosystem, he highlighted two major focus areas in the DNS ecosystem- Security and Intellectual property. Talking more about IPR, he emphasized on the importance of being familiar with both substantive, as well as, procedural part of the law. The apparatus, that is available and essential, to enforce the law. One such important apparatus was UDRP, which has now been made available locally. It is also increasingly being adopted by ccTLDs for dispute resolution mechanism.

The panelists then shared incidents and anecdotes from their professional experiences wherein they encountered different questions, issues and challenges on DNS. Sharing from his vast experience, Manmeet lamented that most of the general public did not understand the difference between a domain name and a website. He explained that while a domain name is the address of the site, the website is the content on that domain name. In a nutshell, a domain name is needed to access the website and it was something that most of the people were and still are unaware of.

Professor Rodney, through an interesting, practical example of M.S. Dhoni.com, highlighted how a basic understanding of intellectual property and trademarks, rules and law has allowed some of the leaders from non-law background to utilize opportunities available in their fields.

Adding in, Vinay, who has had a long experience of working with Small and Medium Term enterprises (SMEs), explained how DNS could be used, along with websites and email addresses, by small and medium-sized medium enterprises and small businesses to improve their visibility and businesses.

Dr. Govind, former President of ISOC India Delhi and former CEO of National Internet Exchange of India, a veteran in the domain of Internet Governance, through the interesting case of .ram, brought forth the cultural implications of certain Domain Names (DN). He somberly reflected how it is essential to consider the religious, social or cultural sensitivities while selecting a DN.

The next phase of the discussion encouraged panelists to ask questions from each other. Responding to request by Manmeet to share important pointers for new entrants, domainers and SMEs on DNS, Vinay laid emphasis on the importance of always putting accurate data on

domain WHOIS, which is like an online home address that can be verified by registries. For corporates or SMEs, Vinay specified a structure that DN or email addresses should follow. The DN or email should have a brand name as the domain name and admin link should be redirected to 3-4 people in the corporations. Care should also be taken by developers/designers to not put their names in DN or creating websites with Domain WHOIS in their names as it may later have some grave legal ramifications. It is always advisable to put the client's name.

Responding to Manmeet's request to further elaborate on M.S Dhoni.com case, Rodney underlined the role of ethics, transparency, accountability and compliance. The cricketer M.S. Dhoni's interest in acquiring knowledge in law and compliance, with his firm belief in honesty, ethics and transparency, allowed him to deal with the controversy and case with much dexterity. Therefore, Rodney highlighted the importance of honest and ethical practices that all domainers and young professionals should aspire for.

Leading the discussion on unethical practices, Prateek brought forth the issue of Domain Name Squatting. Cyber Squatting or Domain Squatting, as Manmeet explained, is an unethical practice whereby the domainer maliciously uses brand names, copyrighted terms, trademarks and hard work of an established household brand name for his own benefit. For e.g. a domainer registering a domain name with the name of a household brand like Coke, Apple, Samsung etc. qualifies as a case of domain squatting. Further, Vinay warned corporates and businesses against using names which are a combination of an upcoming high profile brand name or some government scheme names for creating their own name. In addition, Rodney underlined the significance of the knowledge and understanding of rules, intellectual property law, the strength of trademarks, knowledge of generic words, non-infringement on other's trademark, before jumping into the DN bandwagon.

All the panelist also shared various important website names and online resources that people interested in increasing their knowledge on this subject can refer to like WIPO online resources, registry.in by NIXI, personal blogs by DN experts like vny.in, dnjournal.com, namepros.com, circleid.com, forum.domain.org among others.

The session was then followed by a Question and Answer round with the audience. Maureen Hilyard, an APRALO representative for ALAC, raised the question on the kind of recourses that are available to organizations if their social media accounts get affected. In response to this question, Rodney informed that the best way forward in such instances is to seek legal recourse under the terms and policies of each these platforms. Mr. Sarfraz Saleem, a domainer and IT personnel from TCS, asked the reasons and criteria for selecting reserved names. Dr Govind responded to the question by informing about the need for having reserved two-character DNS especially the ccTLDs which are in two characters like .in, .us.au. Such names are usually reserved for countries and are kept separate from other two-character DNSs.

The session concluded with some of the panelists and participants sharing their experience of working in the domain industry, registries, ICANN, APRALO and how their knowledge about DNS was enhanced by engaging with these specialized agencies.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Prateek, who extended his warm gratitude to all the panelists, participants from other ISOC chapters, ICANN and APRALO and fellow ISOC India Mumbai and ISOC India Delhi volunteers, for participating in the webinar and contributing to the policy discussion on DNS.

Please find the Livestream link of the webinar [here](#).