
ICANN86 Seville | PF – GNSO: RySG BRG Membership Meeting
Monday, June 08, 2026 – 11:45 to 13:15 CEST

NIKKI SCHULER

Hello and welcome to the Brand Registry Group Membership Meeting. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

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CREWS GORE

Thank you, Nikki. Good morning, everybody, and welcome to our Brand Registry Group membership meeting here at ICANN86 in Seville. I'm Crews Gore, chair of the Brand Registry Group. I want to thank everyone for joining in person and remotely. ICANN meetings are always important moments for this community, but this one feels definitely more significant. And we're now, you know, open in the application window and conversations are happening

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this week that will directly shape the environment in which .brand registries operate, advocate and grow.

I want to begin by thanking all of our BRG members for their continued participation and support. The strength of the BRG has always been from our members, their experience, leadership, credibility, and how they participate within our organization. So, I want to thank them so much. I also want to recognize and welcome our new board members. We're very pleased to welcome Marie Richmond from Uber to the BRG board and grateful to all those board members who have stepped forward to serve us during such an important time for the organization.

Hot topics for this week, definitely DNS abuse. As the DNS abuse policy has evolved, it's important for policymakers to recognize that brands are fundamentally different from open registries. So, our controlled, authenticated environments make .brands part of the solution, not the problem. Another hot topic this week is AI and trust. As AI is increasing the scale of phishing and fraud, it's also making trusted digital identity more valuable. So, .brands can serve as a verified brand-controlled space that helps establish trust online.

Of course, for us, a big thing is the new gTLD round with the applications now open. This is a major opportunity to educate prospective applicants about the strategic value of .brands as a long-term digital infrastructure, not just domain names. So, as we participate this week at ICANN, I want to encourage everyone to

participate actively, especially in this session. Ask questions, learn about .brands, feel free to talk and have open community forums to talk about anything that comes up to your mind.

So, the policy environment is evolving. AI is changing the nature of trust online. DNS abuse remains a global priority and .brands have a compelling role to play in the future of a safer, more trusted Internet. So once again, thank you for being here for our Brand Register Group meeting. I'm now going to pass it over to Kroopa Shah.

KROOPA SHAH

Testing, testing. Okay, perfect. All right. Good morning, everyone. My name is Kroopa and I run the registry services business at Identity Digital. Identity Digital is a registry operator for over 275 TLDs. These are TLDs that we own and operate, and then we provide technical or registry infrastructure for over 200 others.

I'm here today to interview some of our brand TLD experts on securing their brand's digital real estate. They've done that in the 2012 round and they may have some thoughts on the next round which as Crews mentioned is ongoing and ends on August the 12th. So, before we get started, I'd like to introduce our panelists.

We have -- Oh, I did something that I shouldn't have. Okay. So, we have Crews Gore who is a Senior Director for Domain Names and Brand Protection at FOX. We have Matthew Crossman, Senior Corporate Counsel at Amazon. And we have Stuart Fuller, SVP for

Commercial at Markmonitor. Thank you all for joining me today on this panel. But before we get started with the panel, let's just take a look and see what traffic looks like in new gTLDs and brand TLDs in general. So, next slide, please.

So, new gTLD DNS traffic has increased over 200% in the past five years. Now, this does include brand TLD DNS traffic and this data or this graph was collated from publicly available data in the monthly registry operator reports. These are reports that all TLDs or all registries have to submit to ICANN so this graph was collated from the data in that report. But if you pull brand TLDs out of this, you know, out of the all new gTLDs, what does that look like? So, next slide, please.

And you'll see the top graph there represents DNS traffic in brand TLDs. The bottom graph represents domains under management in brand TLDs. And so, you'll see that, you know, for the most part, DNS traffic in brand TLDs has sort of stabilized over the past five years. There is a spike there just before 2022 and I think that's more a reporting anomaly than anything else because it did kind of stabilize after that.

But if you look at domains under management, the domains under management have increased 33% since 2022. You'll see that all brand TLDs, the domains under management is just over 24,000 domains and the number by itself seems small when you compare to other gTLDs. But in the case of brand TLDs, it's not about how many domains. The brand TLDs are not used for commercial

purposes. So, it's not about how many domains are registered. It's more so how are these domains used? Are these domains used? Who is using them and what are the specific use cases for brand TLDs? So, let's take a look at a couple examples on who is using brands and how are they using it. So, next slide, please.

So, brands are using domains in their TLDs for a variety of different purposes. So, you'll see on the left side, that's a screenshot for a yogurt company that's using their TLD to market their yogurt products, right? So, someone from the food industry. Then you have BNP Paribas, a bank that's using it for their corporate and their institutional banking. EDEKA is using it to promote some IT services and then you have Java that's set up their developer community on dev.java. So, a variety of different use cases for .brands from food to banking to IT to, you know, coding segments, right? And it's not really a one-size-fits-all, but, you know, we see these different use cases for the different types of TLDs.

So, with that, my first question is for someone who has had success in implementing a TLD for their .brand. So, next slide, please. And this one's directed to Crews. Crews, can you share a specific scenario where having, you know, .fox, your brand TLD, either saved your company money or helped with DNS abuse mitigation, phishing, et cetera, or streamlined any internal operations?

CREWS GORE

Yeah. I could probably answer each part of that. I'm just thinking about things right now. One of our business units requested a

domain name, fox. one of the new gTLDs from the 2012 round and price for that, because it's a three letter, it's a premium so it's like, you know, over \$5,000 a year. And that's the perfect opportunity to say, "Hey, you know, we have the .fox extension, we can get that word that you're looking for .fox for free." So that's something I'm currently working on now.

I brought it up last time, but I think it's really important, you know, with AI taking off, we know that ai.com sold for, you know, over \$70 million. But owning your own namespace, you can have ai.amazon, ai.fox, and we don't have to spend anything on that so you get that premium keyword search.

Cut down on phishing I know that we use it for .fox on internal emails to employees, making sure that we only use .fox links in the emails for InfoSec to be able to better control and make sure that nothing is getting phished within those corporate emails. And then as I've mentioned several other times as well, so all new internal websites at FOX are being set up on .fox domain names. So, it makes that internal operations a lot smoother.

When they're coming to me to request a domain name or going through our portal to request a domain name, they know to request a .fox domain and I'm not going to have to go back and forth to say, "You know what, you're asking for a really premium domain name, that's taken. Let's get a domain broker to try to go get it." It's usually always available, anything that they're asking

for, because we own everything in the namespace. So, that has really helped us streamline our operations internally.

KROOPA SHAH

So, it sounds like just by virtue of having your own namespace, the control over that own namespace made it more efficient, cut down on expenses, and overall, you know, helped towards a more secure, stable environment for employees in general at FOX, right? Because they knew that they could trust things that are coming from a .box domain and, you know, not to click on anything that doesn't come from .fox. So, it was very sort of black and white for everyone. Okay. Thank you, Crews.

My next question is for Matthew at Amazon. I know you've implemented brand TLDs as well, but if you had to pick one roadblock that you faced when applying for or implementing your brand TLD, what would that be? And can you share a little bit?

MATTHEW CROSSMAN

Yeah, thanks, Kroopa. I think I'll talk about the implementation side of things and just call out that it is incredibly important to be really thoughtful about how you're driving internal adoption. That is not a switch that you can just flip. That is a process, a long-term process of building relationships, building trust across the organization, demonstrating value, collaborating with the right stakeholders.

We've been really lucky to have some fantastic partners across Amazon, particularly our security teams, in helping drive adoption of some of our brand TLDs, but that is a relationship that took time to build, and a lot of collaboration and work together, but I think it's incredibly important. I think building those relationships is actually how you unlock some of the maybe more unexpected use cases for brand TLDs, right? So, we've really leaned into using our brand TLDs for internal infrastructure and API use cases. And that honestly is not something that was on my radar when we started going around and talking to teams about using brand TLDs, right?

We sort of have this concept of, you know, a landing page that customers are pointing to, but really what gets our security teams excited and our engineering team's excited is building these services and endpoints on a brand TLD that they control that's secure. But again, that took time for us to get there and a lot of trust building and relationship building.

So, I hope, you know, for those who are applying for the brand TLDs in this round, you know, you're sort of getting over the first hurdle, right, with getting the applications done, but never too early to start thinking about, what are your strategies going to be with driving internal adoption within your organization?

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Matthew. I think that's really important in terms of adoption because, yes, you can get the application in, but then after the TLD is awarded, if there is no adoption, eventually that

TLD is going to die out and it's going to terminate. There's over 75% of all brand TLDs that were applied for in the last round. They still remain, and that's good because, you know, it shows that there is still trust, that commitment to brand TLDs amongst the brand owners. So, thank you for that. I think I agree, you know, having that relationship with the internal teams, you know, helps drive the adoption as well as trust.

My next question is for Stuart. With the application window open right now, what was the definitive sort of tipping point that made you or your customers say that this is it, you know, 2026, the round's here, we cannot miss this round?

STUART FULLER

Because I think that there isn't one tipping point. I think based on the conversations we've had with brand clients and prospects, there's an underlying theme and I think the underlying theme is the fear of missing out.

The fact that we've waited 14 years to get to this point, and we don't know when the next point is, for a lot of organizations, that is what's driving them to have the internal discussion. But I think layered on top of that is, certainly the clients we're working with this time around, they're coming to us with, this is our use case, not we need to do this just to protect ourselves in the IP space. So, we're seeing way more engagement across the wider business.

And again, I think if you said, what's the tipping point for an organization, what's the tipping point for a board, it is ensuring that it's not one niche area of business that is saying, "Hey, we want to do this." It's security, it's marketing, it's branding, it's IP, it's technical. So, the tipping point is actually the, it's the momentum coming from within the business that's saying that.

I think there are companies that are looking at this and saying, "You know, if this opportunity closes and we've not made a decision, how do we explain that? How do we go to our stakeholders, our investors, and say, 'We decided not to make a decision?'" So again, there's that fear of missing out that I think is definitely part of the conversations that we're seeing with brands.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Stuart. I think that's definitely true. The fact that it took 14 years for us to get here and who knows when the next round, if there's going to be a next round, is going to come around, right, so this could be your opportunity. And if you don't get in now, you may not be able to get in at all. And, you know, that's a scary prospect for someone to have to go and tell either their board or their investors that, yes, we knew that this is it, you know, based on the information we had, and we still decided not to go for it. All right. Well, thank you.

The next question I have is actually for all of the panelists, and I'll go kind of one by one, but I'll start with Crews. How do you think that the 2026 round is different from the 2012 one?

CREWS GORE

Well, there's definitely more use cases now where brands can go in and, you know, use cases of how other brands are using theirs. 2012, you had ideas and, you know, theories about how you could use it and everyone wanted to use it for marketing and switch their main website over from their .com to their .brand. But now there's just so many different use cases around security, marketing, infrastructure that you can kind of talk internally to different business units or parts of the business to see what fits best for your organization.

KROOPA SHAH

Matthew?

MATTHEW CROSSMAN

Yeah, I think we're in sort of this nice sweet spot where we've matured significantly from where we were in 2012 from a governance policy process perspective, much less uncertainty around the process, the application process. And that's in large part due to the good work of this community and in developing that policy and getting us to another round.

Brands, as Crews said, have had some time to understand the sort of operational aspects and what the use cases are. And so, we got

this fairly mature space that also still feels like a tremendous opportunity, right? Like it is still, in my mind, a greenfield for innovation, right? Like the great .brand use cases are still out there. I think, you know, the value of a controlled, trusted namespace as a signal to customers, as a signal to machines and agents, like that is only becoming increasingly relevant. So, I think we're just in a really good place where we've got, you know, good maturity on the policy and process side, but then this remains just a sort of wide-open field for innovation.

KROOPA SHAH

You know, back in the 2012, or as an outcome of the 2012 round, when Audi launched their, I think it was a Q6 or their A6, I'm thinking A6 or Q6, but they launched one of the cars on their .audi name and that was a big deal. I think that was a really big deal. They advertised on it and so we were all really excited because there was this, you know, huge car manufacturer who's actually using their brand TLD, not just to redirect, but actually using it to market actively, you know, the launch of their new products. So, lots of more exciting use cases coming up in the 2026 round. I'll ask Stuart next.

STUART FULLER

Yeah, I think there's more educated buyers. I think we know that there are brands out there that regret not making the application in 2012 so they've had a lot of time to think about it, a lot of time to work out what they were going to do. Certainly, from our side,

looking at where the demand is coming from, we're seeing a lot from fintech, martech, legal tech, organizations that weren't around in 2012, organizations that built their business model digital first. So, they see this as an absolutely no-brainer. You know, the fact they can secure their digital namespace with a TLD, to them it's just logical. So, they're coming to us with, this is our use case, this is what we want to do. You know, we've already got projections as to how we're going to do this.

Now, the great thing about that is, it's not even going to be a trickle-down effect. You think about the impact that's going to have on the round one TLDs as well, because all of a sudden, you've got some round one TLDs who haven't yet launched because perhaps they're looking for the right use cases. They're looking for somebody else to be the pioneer. Now, all of a sudden, we're potentially going to have hundreds of new .brand TLDs who from day one, they're going to be active and I think that will have a really positive effect as well on round one TLDs.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Stuart. That's going to be an exciting sort of day one launch, right? We're not going to have to wait for brand TLDs to launch. They're probably just going to launch as they get delegated, which is really exciting for the brand community.

Next question for all panelists is, you've all been part of the 2012 round, right? So, what advice would you give to new .brand applicants who are looking for RSPs to support their brand TLD

applications? And maybe I'll mix it up now. Maybe I'll start with Matthew first.

MATTHEW CROSSMAN

Sure. So, you know, in my mind, the sort of technical side, the services, that all matters, but I wouldn't underestimate the value of the relationship, right? Like having a trusted relationship with someone who is a true partner, right? Our brand TLDs are supporting critical services and so, you know, it's sort of a different use case than say like a commercial gTLD, right?

And so, you want that partner who's going to help, not just be a service provider, but really be side by side and trusted and working together in strategizing and, you know, prioritizing security and stability, really being together at the table rather than that sort of arm's length service provider relationship. So, that's been incredibly valuable for us. We've had some longstanding relationships in this space and so I wouldn't underestimate, as I said, the value of just that relationship.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Matthew. Crews?

CREWS GORE

Yeah, I'm trying to think about this one because I was actually not a part of the 2012 round. Came in in 2014, so right when the TLD was launching and I do think just having that relationship -- I really love data so whenever a provider can, you know, give us data and I

can analyze it and see, you're talking about redirects before and just, you know, NX domain records and seeing where traffic is actually going, I will definitely register those domains and redirect that traffic.

If it's just, you know, people accidentally typing it wrong, I'd rather have them directed right to our website rather than landing to a no page and then going on Google and searching where competitors come up as well. So, data and definitely relationships.

KROOPA SHAH

Stuart?

STUART FULLER

Yeah, interesting question. So, 2012, if I go back and think, at the time I was working with a corporate registrar and we partnered with three RSPs for our clients, none of those RSPs are part of this round.

Now, see, Afilias is Identity Digital. You know, Neustar became Vercara became DigiCert, and Verisign pulled out of that market. So, it's an interesting thing if I think about it, because I agree with Matt, I think relationship is so important in this and working with somebody who can meet your objectives.

Obviously, we've got now the requirement of the ICANN accreditation, but also, it's a balance for the .brand as to what they want to do. You know, how technical, how involved do they want to be? And so, therefore, working with someone who's got the

flexibility to say, “Okay, fine, we can handle that bit, you can handle that bit,” but has that expertise behind them. So, I think that's really key. So, it's flexibility, it's the expertise, the resource, but also, you're probably going to have to be prepared for some change as well, as we've seen.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Stuart. Next question, I guess, this is my last question for all the panelists. In your opinion, are there any factors that would prevent brands from participating in the next round? And again, I'll mix this up and maybe this time I'll start with Stuart.

STUART FULLER

Yes, is the simple answer. If you think about the process that a brand has to go through to become a .brand, you know, first and foremost, ensuring the trademark is registered. And we've certainly worked with a couple of brands who didn't have that and then it's caused a bit of internal panic, but, you know, with the right guidance, we've got them there.

We also do a lot of activity around searching for things like, is the term any type of geographical indicator and that could cause an issue. And again, it's about, if that is the case, being able to go and talk to people at the GAC early on and then there's the string similarity issues as well. So again, knowing exactly what you can and can't apply for so the singular and plurals, you know, things that look the same, sound the same.

So, yeah, I think for us, there are quite a few factors, but if you approach it, you head off those factors early and I don't think there's a problem for a brand to say, "You know what, we can't do this." There is a path that says we can't do this because of this and I think that's completely acceptable, but I think the brands need to also think in that respect as well.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Stuart. Matthew?

MATTHEW CROSSMAN

Sure. So, it's not necessarily something that would prevent a brand from applying, but one of the things I've been thinking about and one of my hopes for this round with new applicants is that they're not just bought in on the opportunity, but they are bought into the underlying governance and this multi-stakeholder community that we have here as well, whether that's directly or through participation with the BRG.

I think this is a remarkable community, plays an incredibly important role in security, stability, and resilience of the global internet, that's something that's a huge priority for us as a company and for our customers. So, I hope that the new applicants are bought in on that as well. And if folks have questions or want to better understand that space, I think that's what the BRG is here for. We're more than happy to help sort of demystify things and find places where people can get involved because, yeah, I think it's

part and parcel of sort of the opportunity is really buying into the community here as well.

KROOPA SHAH

Thanks, Matthew. Crews?

CREWS GORE

One of the things that I'm a little worried about is the actual amount of time that the application windows open. Just from an internal perspective, I'm obviously very active within the .brand namespace and I've talked to all of our business units about the next round and if they want to apply. Just having one that is interested and they're still considering it and for me to still push them and say, "Hey, it's not like this is a one-day application where you can just fill it out and click submit. This is going to take some time."

So, just seeing that even from FOX internally, that it takes a lot of time to get buy-in from the business unit who goes to go up to the executives and get everything signed off and then, you know, choose your service provider, choose, you know, outside counsel who can help you with the application, it all takes a lot of time.

So, we've tried our best to educate, but there's obviously so many brands out there that still don't know about this and they may figure it out too late. And because the rounds are only open for that short amount of time, it may be too late.

KROOPA SHAH

I was at Afilias in 2012 when the last round happened, and I recall that I think a day or two before the application window closed down or closed, we had a flood of applicants come through and say, “We really want our brand. Can you please help us? We really want our TLD, not our brand, but our TLD. Can you please help us?”

And there was a lot of running around in those last couple of days before the window closed and, you know, I'm with you a little bit there, Crews. I wonder if the same is going to happen this time as well, where people kind of realize, you know, have the FOMO and they come out and they say, “Oh, August the 12th, it's August the 10th, I really want my brand,” or, “I really want my .brand and, you know, help me get it.”

I want to open this up to others in the room now. You know, based on what you've heard, based on your past experiences, you know, do you have anything that you'd like to contribute, any of your learnings or anything, you know, for people who are listening in as they work towards the 2026 round?

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL

May I? This is Martin Kuechenthal, board member in the BRG and with LEMARIT. We see actually a mixture of what you have been talking about. On the one hand, it's yes, interest on the one hand, but still not a clear picture of what to do. So, it's like we better apply. We have not a real idea what to do at the moment, but we

better apply because we understand that it's not happening so soon again. That is the one group.

And the other group is waltzing around with the topic and saying, "Ah, not now." I said, "yeah, but it's now, or at least in my lifetime in this industry, most likely never, and better do it now and then you can use the time between the application and also the delegation to figure out what you're going to do with it."

And I think people are underestimating totally the chance, and I feel a big interest of having it, not really knowing how to use it, but I hope it's not the last day or the last days of the application round, but I can see that there's like a growing interest. Like companies, brands who have been informed since years, they're now slowly waking up and this is really somehow really weird and also crazy. Why? I mean, they have been constantly informed by all of us, if it's the BAG or the different providers and now, they say, "Oh, this sounds interesting. Really?" Yeah, but time is running out.

And my personal opinion and view on this is make sure that you have made an informed decision. I don't want anyone to come to me or anyone else here in the room or out there on August 13th and say, "What was that?" And I think it's important to make an informed decision and before it's too late and we all know that two or three days before it's definitely too late. Maybe we have four weeks to make the decision, but time is running out and I think we should play the drums even louder at the moment. And thank you for the panel, thanks guys for [CROSSTALK].

STUART FULLER

Just an add-on to that as well, Martin, again, talking to some brands about the payment, so 19th of August is when the application fee has to be paid. And talking to some brands who are saying, “Well, that means we've got to onboard ICANN as a new provider,” that takes 90 days. And we're like, “Yeah, you've got to pay by this.” “Yeah, but it's going to take us 90 days.” So, you're right.

So, one of the approaches we're trying to take now is to work backwards from the 19th of August and give clients a timeline. You need to have done this by this, this by this, this by this. And that seems to resonate a lot more than giving them a forward-looking timeline of saying, “Hey, we're here today and this is your cut-off date,” but work backwards. But the payment could be challenging for some companies.

RONALD SCHWAERZLER

As you asked me, Ronald Schwaerzler from the geoTLD Group, same experience as made here. Probably even worse because if you approach a city, a region, municipality, money is the issue. It's first of all, money is the issue. If you approach them, give me a letter of support, I do it on my own risk and costs, they say probably yes, but then they get to know that the name is then mine and not theirs. Because if I take the business risk, I want to tell them how many a domain name will cost, et cetera.

And I've talked to lots of European, I must admit, cities, regions, and the awareness, depending where you get into the city, is quite a different one if you approach the marketing or something. It's okay if you approach the politicians who have to give the signature. They, in an instance, say no, because we have holes in the streets, we have cobblestones, loose cobblestones in the streets. How can we tell the people in the street, in our city that we are spending a quarter of a million dollars to get an own TLD for an internet address that we have now for 80 euros a year, Salzburg, to name an example.

You all know the city of Salzburg, probably in Austria, if they want to have a .salzburg, it will cost them at least 80,000 a year. So, the difference between \$80 and \$80,000 for running your own TLD, close to no politician will take this decision to do it. Different with brands, probably, because of quarter million to multinational company is not that much, but I can't tell you how many applications we will have. I can tell you I will have, as my company will have, two additional geoTLDs from Austria. So, this is at least what I can commit to.

NISHA PARKASH

Hi, sorry. Oh, is there another on the queue? No, that's fine. Hi, Nisha Parkash, board member and head of domain management at Sky Group. So, I manage the .sky TLD and like Crews at FOX, I joined just as the TLD was delegated to us.

I just want to say this saying, say yes and figure it out later is very applicable to this round of applications. Like say yes and then just figure out what you do with it later. I've been speaking to a few companies who have asked for my advice on the journey that Sky has gone on and the first thing I can just pick up is the anxiety around, well, when I get it, what do I do with it? And that's literally all they're thinking about.

So, the initial thing is, well, what do I do with the TLD, the brand TLD, it took Sky four years to take .sky off the ground. We really figured it out later, but we had it in the first place to be able to figure it out. I think once you've missed the round, you've missed every opportunity to have a say in how your digital landscape is going to change. You are in control of manipulating your own digital landscape with your .brand TLD.

And I think from Sky's point of view, having a generic word as well, which I know we shouldn't say in the way it is because it's not classified as a generic word, it is a trademark for a media company, but it gives us so much leverage when our brands are Sky and another generic word so sports, news, cinema. And in this market now, we're finding it impossible to pick up the .coms. And I've had so many opportunities now just to tell the business, "Look, stop spending 30, 40,000 on an acquisition. We don't need to do this anymore. Like we can just launch to .sky," and it's really hit home.

So, our whole corporate narrative has completely changed. We have all our corporate sites launching to .sky now and every single

site is generic. They're all generic terms. They're not made-up words. They are generic words that are now sitting and registered to .sky. And we're now talking, wait, about like 10 years into having .sky, which is how our corporate narrative started changing a decade later. But I mean, you know, I've sat there as head of domain management and I've been in this team for, well, 13 and a half years now and I started in a very junior role at Sky. And to have that influence within the business is amazing, like just to be able to offer opportunities in different online kind of routes and spaces.

So, all I'll say is, say yes and figure it out later, because it's not going to come to you straight away. And of course, I sit alongside great brands in the board and I've worked with -- You know, even though from not a brand point of view, Amazon have launched a few TLDs and being in this space at the BRG, I'm able to just speak to Matt or his colleagues and say, "Look, you're launching this. This is really relevant to Sky. Can we get it even though we don't have trademarks?" And, you know, that's the whole point of this community is come into the BRG and you'll see how you can leverage from all the contacts.

So, you know, .brand is one thing, the BRG and what we can teach you about .brands or just, you know, these generic TLDs that are launching, this is the space to be right now. So yeah, that's my take, say yes, figure it out later. It will make sense, trust me, once you have it.

KROOPA SHAH

I'll respond to that. That's a really good point. The advantage that brands have this round is that there are so many successful use cases now, right? Well, there's information out there on how some of the brands have launched. There's a few very vocal people like yourselves who talk about the success of your brand TLDs and there's so many successful, there's so many use cases, right?

So, I think they also provide the brand with a little more comfort that, yes, you know, I can apply now and figure it out later because look at all these use cases and maybe one of these will fit my business case in, say, two or three years when this brand starts to get delegated. I'll pass it on to Martin.

MARTIN KUECHENTHAL

Yeah, thanks. Nisha, that everybody should listen to what you just said and I agree with that, but we have a situation and that's as a reply in addition to what the geoTLD group is also struggling with, that 14 years ago the general economic situation was different. And, of course, he talked about the pavement, but the problem is companies who have never been, and I don't want to be negative, but it's a situation which we face, especially in some countries in Europe also.

When you lay off people for the first time in 70 years, it's really hard to explain even a quarter million dollars. And that's the reason, if that is the situation and also the budgets are not there, and to open a budget within four weeks for a quarter million or 300,000, 400,000, and also the annual cost, which start maybe end of next

year, that makes it necessary to involve the highest level in the corporation to make this decision.

Because the single departments who are interested, they maybe do not have the budget or cannot fit it into the budget and that's, in my opinion, to circumvent the budget discussion is to start at the highest level possible in the corporation to get this through. Only with the support of the C-level or the family, because we work with family-owned businesses a lot, only with the support of the C-level or the family, you can get that through if you have not taken the decision now.

And we have arguments, not only in the field where Nisha was in, but also digital sovereignty is for me a very, very, very important point. I mean, everyone, especially in Europe, is talking about digital sovereignty and that is what you get by having your own .brand. People forget this argument, yeah, and also the AI-related components.

There was a great article posted or published by the BRG about that, how much that means to control your entire namespace also for better controlling, if we can do that, AI and all these aspects, they really need to be spread out. But on the other side, the decision has to be made on the highest level to get it through in the short timeframe we have left. Thanks. Sorry.

NISHA PARKASH

Can I just add, sorry, that people have this impression that the TLD needs to be based on a website only. Like it's like this. This is in their head like, "Oh, I need to actually launch a website," one of the best use cases that could come out of a .brand TLD in this current climate with fraudulent activity and the fact that people will literally spoof C-suite email addresses to where these people are decision makers within the business. And you're literally going to find like a CEO of a company, their email address being spoofed, is if you are creating your C-suite to have their email addresses ending in their .brand, it can only be them emailing you.

So, it's not just about having your website. Literally, email exchange is probably one of the best use cases in this current climate. Just to turn around and say, we can, you know, whether you're a small company, large organizations fine to change the digital narrative on 10,000 plus people's email addresses is a different story. But if you target very specific people within large organizations to actually have email addresses ending in your .brand, you know that when the CEO is emailing you and then it ends something .brand, it has to be them emailing you.

So, in the world that we're in with fraudulent activity, phishing is happening, people are being exploited, their names are being used out there, stop thinking about it being just a website. You know, you've got opportunities to use your .brand for email exchange, backend infrastructure. DNS abuse is pretty much non-existent. It is the safest place to put huge infrastructure.

Some of our biggest backend infrastructure on streaming services sits on .sky, but I will say email use case is fantastic. Like it is helping us so much at Sky to be able to just literally brand our email addresses ending .sky. And people need to stop believing that it's just about what the customer sees in an internet browser. It is far beyond an internet browser now. It is everything about your brand. Anything you can do online, if you can end it .brand, you've got the opportunity.

STUART FULLER

I'm going to give you another one as well and it's one of the use cases that I think is one of the smartest ones out there, which is URL shorteners. And URL shorteners, I mean, if you look at big organizations and how many links they put out, say, using bit.ly every single day, and every single URL shortener you use that is like that you can't control the destination and you can't therefore control that customer journey. But if you're using a .brand, everyone knows that that link is secure because it's been published under a .brand.

And we did some work earlier on this year and the Interbrand top 100 companies, five use a URL shortener featuring their brand. Now, obviously, I can't remember off the top of my head, I think there was 28 of them have a .brand, but even so, less than a quarter are using that for their .brand. But one of the biggest users is Zara so everything Zara put out in social media with a link to anything is go.zara. You know it comes from Zara. It says Zara in the URL and

that's a really simple use case because you're only ever using one domain. It's all sitting under one domain. And by controlling that and controlling the link space, that brings a lot of authenticity into the .brand straight away and it's simple to do.

CREWS GORE

That's a great point. I just want to do a quick shout out to FOX because we do, do that. So, if you're in the U.S. and watch either the sports or news broadcasts, you'll see in the bottom right-hand corner, it'll be go.fox slash whatever that we want to forward the traffic to. So, definitely a good use case.

KROOPA SHAH

All right. Well, thank you to everyone for your comments. Thank you to the panelists, Matthew, Crews, and Stuart, for participating with me today. August 12th is around the corner and I really hope that the insights that you shared today will inspire other brands to really, you know, act on getting their .brand before this round closes. And hopefully, you know, not getting their application in on August 11th, but, you know, a fair amount of time before that.

Thank you to the BRG for inviting me to be part of the BRG panel today. I appreciate it and with that, I'll turn it back over to Jennifer.

JENNIFER GORE

Thanks, Kroopa, for your time and for all the information that you presented and hello, everyone. My name is Jennifer Gore. I'm the executive director of the BRG. It's nice to see everybody here today.

The board members so perfectly teed up the next topic for discussion around AI recently, thanks, Martin, and I didn't pay him to do that either, next slide, please, put out an article that I just want to kind of walk through with everyone here around autonomous AI agents and their impact to .brands.

So, each day we're seeing an increased number of autonomous AI agents that are basically providing automatic decision making, becoming cybersecurity tools, impacting browsers through machine driven workflows. The Internet obviously is changing given the use of the AI and they're essentially no longer human in the loop when it comes to DNS resolution. Historically, you know, we didn't have to be concerned around LLMs making decisions around domain names, whether they're authentic or safe or controlled by the right organization.

Stuart mentioned Bitly, that's a great example, right? You can't control the customer's user experience if it's not associated with a .brand. With that, .brands have become uniquely positioned for this shift. This is another reason why there's a benefit to having the .brands because they are now considered trust indicators, not just around marketing your TLD, you know, understanding the brand for every email you send, as you referred to MX records when we were talking about email. But it's really around the trusted

ownership of the .brand and ensuring that the email or the website is authenticated associated with that brand. Next slide, please.

So, activities that once required sophisticated threat actors can now be automated and scaled. So, what does that mean? That means domain abuse will be more prevalent or attempted domain abuse will be more prevalent with AI. AI enables that through faster, cheaper, more scalable, harder to detect activities.

So, it also reduces the barrier to traditional domain name abuse. You know, we're going to see things around conducting credential harvesting, automatic typosquatting campaigns, generating phishing domains and activities will be auto-generated. Launching of multinational impersonation attacks, and exploiting registrar workflows and the domain lifecycle process itself. So, as AI matures, abuse can operate at machine level speeds across fragmented domains in the ecosystem, which is another benefit of having a .brand.

So, .brands reduce the opportunity for the abuse in the namespace. I say reduce, but I'd like to say, you know, vastly minimizes that abuse in the namespace because the authenticated brand owner obviously registers and manages that name. And it creates a structural safer environment than an open TLD, where third parties may register it confusing or deceptive domain names. Any questions related to that? There was something that came up in the chat.

Oh, Cyrus, to add on Andy's note, ICANN has also made it available for a free quotation pro forma document that brands might find useful. Thank you for this. I will include this in the meeting notes. Appreciate that. Next slide, please.

So, .brands are no longer just about branding assets, .brands should be viewed as a cybersecurity identified identity and a long-term trusted infrastructure. I'm thinking that we've repeated that theme of messaging throughout today's session. A traditional view, .brands have been around marketing or brand expression, but in the world and the era of AI, which didn't exist in the 2012 round, .brands should increasingly understand that it is a cybersecurity investment. It's a digital identity strategy. It is a mechanism to protect their brand. It is interaction environment to perform trusted AI and it's a long-term infrastructure decision. So, with that, are there any questions related to the impact of AI, AI agents on brands versus open TLDs? Anyone? Okay.

So, now we're going to pivot into a Q&A open forum session to allow the members and the participants in today's session ask questions of the board and the executive committee with inside the BRG. Are there any questions? If not, I miraculously have some. Please, Kroopa.

KROOPA SHAH

Are there specific materials that the BRG is preparing for brands as they evaluate or as they prepare the applications before August 12th?

JENNIFER GORE

ICANN's put together some materials that we were just referencing. We have some materials that we have posted. On behalf of .brands we have offered to host a couple brown bag sessions related to the application process. And we do have a welcome kit as far as the benefits of joining the BRG and assistance in that process. So, all of that's available on our website. Great question, though. Thanks.

There was one question actually that came up during, Kroopa, your stat presentation, which I told Maxim I would talk to you about offline, which was the traffic patterns in the presentation about DNS growth. Did they include DDoS traffic? You might have to look into that.

KROOPA SHAH

So, the short answer is, I don't know. It's whatever operators reported in their monthly ICANN reporting or the monthly registry reporting into ICANN, which is publicly available. That's the data that was presented here. Yeah. So, I'm not sure if they reported DDoS traffic or not. I think that would depend on the individual TLD.

JENNIFER GORE

Of course. Thank you for that. Any other questions for the room? I think this has been a very interactive session. I thank all the participants for joining us today and please engage with BRG early and often. We'll be here all week and look forward to collaborating and having discussions around .brands. Thank you.

NIKKI SCHULER

We can end the recording. Thank you.

SUE SCHULER

We are going to have a group photo for the Brand Registry Group. So, those that are sitting over here on the side of the table, stay where you are. Anybody else that's part of the group, please stand behind them, fill in some of the empty seats, and we'll take a quick photo.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]