
ICANN86 Seville | PF – How it Works: Careers in Internet Technology
Tuesday, June 09, 2026 – 10:00 to 11:15 CEST

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Hello, everyone. I hope you enjoyed the first day of ICANN86 and ready to rock for the second day. My name is Siranush Vardanyan, and I will be the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and 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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When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Only questions posted in the chat will be read aloud during this session as time permits and when directed by the chair of the session.

Please state your name for the record and language you will speak if speaking language other than English, and speak clearly at a moderate pace. And I will now hand over and introduce you to

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Adiel, who is a member of our OCTO team, and he might introduce him in a detailed way, and we will start our session. Adiel, the floor is yours.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you, Siranush, and thank you for inviting us and organizing this session, inviting me. I would like to invite somebody on the stage. Ulrich, come. Yes. So, as usual, this is one of the sessions that we like to organize a little bit away from the core of our activities within ICANN and during this meeting in general. I and my team usually run different kind of technical sessions. My team runs technical stuff within ICANN. We also run How It Works. If you are here, you have listened to Ulrich yesterday. He talks about Internet Identifiers.

But beyond all of that, we also thought that it would be an interesting thing, working with Siranush, to engage with participants, particularly those who are new in the ecosystem, those who are going through a specific NextGen program, or those who may be here for a while but wondering what can they take in terms of career, because we are here for the community, but also we want to stay, we want to have incentives that keep us around, and incentives that also allow us to better share our skills with others.

So, this session mainly is about sharing with you, but also hearing from you questions that you may have around how you drive your career within this industry and beyond, sharing with you our

experience and also some of the lesson we have learned navigating this community.

So, I am Adiel Akplogan. I am the Vice President for Technical Engagement at ICANN. The Technical Engagement team, as I mentioned, is in charge of coordinating and promoting ICANN technical missions, specifically globally. I have been at ICANN for almost 10 years now. Almost 10 years. Time flies. Before joining ICANN, I was in the industry. I was the CEO of AFRINIC for 10 years. Before that, I worked for Cisco.

And before that, I ran an ISP in the early 90s in Africa. I have, during those period, being heavily involved in capacity building on the continent and also globally through the INET program that ISOC has run for the second part of the 90s. And that journey has taught me several things. And as you can see, I have navigated between the private sector and the not-for-profit environment, this industry, and those who benefit from the industry as well. I will be entertaining you today with Ulrich, my colleague, who is in charge of Europe. Ulrich, I will let you introduce yourself.

ULRICH WISSER

Hi, I'm Ulrich. I work in technical engagement. Well, I started my career as a developer for embedded systems. Then I came to work for the Swedish registry, for .se for 15 years, then I made the transition to ICANN two years ago. There were a few stages in the middle too, but we jump over them. But that's a little bit about me.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you, Ulrich. And I will be giving the floor time by time to Siranush as well to share a part of her career experience as well. I don't think she needs to introduce herself, right?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you, Adiel. Yes, for the record, Siranush Vardanyan. Actually, my education is to be a teacher. It was actually to be a teacher. My engagement in Internet governance area started in my late 30s because before that we even didn't hear about the computers and Internet in the country where I'm coming from, Armenia.

So, I learned about Internet governance in starting my study in Diplo Foundation. And then I learned about ICANN Fellowship and I became a fellow here for the first time back in 2008. And when I came here first time, I was thinking that I either don't know English or I don't understand these people at all. So, it was completely new language for me. Had no idea what these people are talking about.

And then, after 10 years of becoming addicted to this idea, I started to work on myself, learning what is it. I went back, talked to the Armenian people who were within this area, finding out what's going on, and then, now, like managing the program, which I see so many professionals, and I keep learning from each and every one of these people during the last 10 years. My tenure in ICANN.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Great, Siranush. Thank you for sharing that. So, just a quick poll. How many of you can cite all the organizations that constitute our ecosystem? Beside ICANN, of course. Just I want to know. Do you have an idea? Between one and five? Yeah?

TINUADE OGUNTUYI

IETF, ITU, AFRINIC, IGF, World Wide Web Consortium.

SIRANUSH VADANYAN

And your name?

TINUADE OGUNTUYI

Apologies. Tinuade Oguntuyi. ICANN86 Fellow from Nigeria. Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you very much. So, I won't put everybody on the spot, but I will just ask, do you think there is between 1 and 5, between 5 and 10, or...?

HOUDA CHIH

More than 5, because every time we have upcoming of new organization which is aligned with new technology, especially AI.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

How many of you think that it is beyond 20?

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Quite a number.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Okay, my question, my question. Yeah.

MACIEK PIASECKI

Sorry, I was not able to hear you properly, so I just want to ask, what was the question?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

My question is to know if you know how wide and big the industry is. So, my question is, do you have an idea of how many organizations or companies are involved in our ecosystem? Is it between 1 and 5 or more than 20 or more than 50?

MACIEK PIASECKI

I would say it's more than 50, because it depends, of course, what the definition is, but even if we say European Union, you could say that's also the ENISA and the Joint Research Center. So, ENISA is the European Center for Cyber Security and you've got all these companies, like the big tech companies, like Meta and Anthropic, but also there's like the smaller AI startups that I would say probably more than 100. Maciek Piasecki, ICANN Fellow.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER

Yeah, I think it's like more than 20, even more than 15 organizations, because a lot of, even the RIR, we have five RIRS, divided leaders, also in ICANN, a lot of organizations. Yes, it's more than 50, I'm sure, 100%, like that one.

EDUARDO TOME

Yeah, I wanted to say that about the RIRs, because there's at least five Regional Internet Registries, and each of them have thousands, if not members. So, I would say it's thousands of organizations.

CHARBEL CHBIER

Hi, Charbel Chbeir for the record. If I understood the question right, you're asking the ecosystem in ICANN, there are registrars more than 2,000. So, this is my opinion. If we are talking about this issue.

HOUDA CHIHI

We forget to mention ITU and there is open source also organization.

AHMED FARAG

This is Ahmed Farag for the record. I think if we are talking about the involved organization and parts and taking into consideration the multi-stakeholder model, I think we can count the number of the involved parts.

SAMWEL KARIUKI

My name is Samwel Kariuki, an ICANN86 Fellow. From my understanding is that the ecosystem is so huge. I believe it's over 100, governmental and ungovernmental organizations, and many others. Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you very much.

IGNACIO SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ

Hello, Ignacio Sanchez, ICANN Fellow. Yeah, if the question was ICANN ecosystem or even the internet ecosystem, it's really hard to appoint a number, and I would like to add the governments. For example, the GAC membership, which is similar to the ITU member state membership, that would add hundreds of organizations in the institutional way that are part of the internet ecosystem also.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you. So, what I did to start, I just encouraged you. I encouraged you to think that the number is limited, right? It's huge. And why did I ask that question? It's because when we are here gathering and frequent participant to ICANN environment, we think that the ecosystem is very small, right? It is about ICANN, it's probably about the RIR, only about ISOC. But what we do here, we constantly say that we engage in a multi-stakeholder environment.

A multi-stakeholder environment that involves all kinds of areas in the industry. And in each of those groups of stakeholders, it's an industry, very wide, very diverse. And being a technical

organization, we tend to focus only on to the technical part of it. There is a technical, there is a legal, there is a writing, communication, so it is a very wide ecosystem.

So, that is important to start with when thinking about how we can develop our career in this environment, because it opens up the way we think about our capacity, our ability to contribute, our ability to navigate the system, the opportunities that are out there to look into.

Thank you very much for your contribution to this. So, as I mentioned to you, myself, back to my experience, I didn't think a bit that I will actually spend more than 20 years of my career in this specific area of the governance. I am an engineer as a background. When I was studying, my main objective was to create things, to build infrastructure, but from network perspective, to build application.

And that was really my passion at the time. And that passion was, one, a little bit far from what was offered at the time, particularly in Africa in relation to the Internet governance. But secondly, the Internet at the time was not well known, was actually not known. So, the idea was to do that. So, my first job actually, which I learned by being a fellow in a company, an intern I would say, was to actually develop an interconnection at the time between IBM AS400 and a novel system.

For those who understand that, that's the old system that allowed networking at the time, and to bridge the two. So, it was a pure

telecommunication networking internship. And what happened is that during that internship, I was asked to look into a very specific issue that the company was having, which was more on the development side. What do they want? At the time, it is in a French-speaking country.

In France, there was a system called Videotex. I don't know for those who come from the French system, the Minitel. At the time, they wanted to launch a Minitel system for the country. So, they were looking for somebody that can dig into the system and actually help them develop a Minitel system that they can sell to the bank. And that was in 1993.

So, as a young engineer that has no responsibility, I just volunteered myself. Didn't know that I'm going to spend the next five days of my life not sleeping, spending my time in a tiny room trying to find the solution. So, I just dedicated that time to do that, and that was the beginning of my career because after those five days, I was given a job to actually move it because I found a solution.

The lesson I learned from that specific experience that has actually drive the rest of my career is to show up and not being afraid to take challenges. Because to be honest with you, I have no idea about what the Minitel was at the time. Yeah, I hear about it on TV. I never learned about it at school, never know how it works at all, just dig into it.

And yeah, it was tough, but what I learned is that we sometimes refrain ourselves to take some challenge because we have no idea, and we don't know our capacity and the capacity of our brain to actually adapt to the environment when and if we want to attack those. So, that's how I get to the industry. And from that Minitel, we moved gradually to build the first internet infrastructure in 1994 in the country.

And that again was a pure curiosity from ourselves to say, well, this internet thing is happening. We are hearing about it all over. What it is about? What does it entail? What can we do about it? How can we bring it to the local community? How can people benefit from it? So, we start very lightly without international connection.

We start providing internet service for almost three years without international connection. We were providing the service only to the local people. No international connection, look at how this looks like. We were building website that were purely local, not connected to the rest of the world. We were providing email service using our Minitel service as a bridge at the time. It was a very limited environment. But again, the same thing, not being afraid to tackle the challenge. I will tell you more about the next step.

What I have quickly realized as well is about the question I asked you when I started, is that when we start digging into the Internet, even at the time, I quickly realized that the industry was bigger than what we can see from my perspective, from where I'm coming

from. Exactly, again, a very tiny small country in Africa, no international exposure.

The first time I have attended, in 1996, an INET and ISOC conference, I just realized how big this was internationally, how much people were very deep, passionate, and engaged in that environment. And for me, as a young engineer, that just amplifies my desire, my curiosity, by saying, well, this is an environment that I can easily make change, I can easily contribute to, because one, it is a very bubbly and new environment.

Secondly, it's huge. There is a lot of opportunity, a lot of different, I would say, skills that contribute to build and develop the Internet at the time. And thirdly, I won't lie, it also gives me the opportunity to be exposed to the international community. So, for me, it was a way of also getting exposed, getting the ability to interact with people beyond my small environment. So, that's the first lesson learned that I would like to share with you, which is to be able to take the challenge. Oh, there is a comment, yes.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And there is a comment from Kalash that this just shows how amazing Internet is, and you don't need to be connected to the main world Internet, and you can create amazing local ecosystems with that. Thank you for your input.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you. Yeah, definitely. Definitely. We tend, and again, it's part of what we do here at ICANN, to have the global view of everything we do, to have that high-level view. But really where you can do, you can make impact most is locally, by actually taking a lot of this locally and building locally. And even at the local level, there is a huge opportunity in terms of career, in terms of ability to bring in different perspectives to all of this. Before continuing or giving, I will ask Ulrich.

You mentioned a few minutes ago that you started as a developer. Can you tell us a little bit how, from a developer standpoint, because development has nothing to do really with the Internet from what we see, or with its governance, what you are doing at ICANN. How do you do this transition? How do you get more involved into the governance?

ULRICH WISSER

Well, yeah, I started with the technology and I was really not interested in all the governance policy stuff. Actually, I was actively opposed to it, I would say. Yeah. So, it's like, I was the nerd who wanted to do the technical stuff and please leave me alone. Well, and then, sometimes you learn. And I learned that that stuff is really important. And I learned that, well, oh, there's these RFC things.

And, oh, there are standards, and they tell us how to do things so that other people understand what I'm doing. And then you look there, but how do these things get made? Oh, there's a whole world

to explore and to find out. And then, oh, yeah, so, I went to the IETF, and I met all these wonderful nerds, which I really like the environment, and then it turns out, well, there's a world beyond that where all of this stuff needs policy to work.

And then I found out that there's a whole world where it is important that you know about technology, but you also know about policy. Both sides need each other. And, yeah, well, that's how I ended up here.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Great. Thank you. Siranush.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

There is a question from online participants. How to keep track of so many institutions and how can one choose which one to contribute or look to join?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Interesting. I don't think the objective is to be able to track all of them. You won't be able to track all of them. It's valid for this industry, it's valid for many other industries. But what is important is to continue looking at what exactly matches what you are passionate about. What are the group of people, start from the group of people.

Again, I want to put the emphasis on that. Start with the group of people that share the same value as you, that share the same

ambition as you, that share something that is deep onto your core. Start engaging with them, and you will see that that group of people probably have some organization that are around them. What are those organizations? What is the impact they are making around them?

And engage and work with them and try to understand, go deep into what they are doing, and that will give you a more, I would say, focused approach to how you are developing your career in that environment. Because if you start looking at what are all the organizations, you are going to waste your energy too broadly and miss the opportunity. So, that would be my answer to that specific question.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

And we'll take the second question from a remote participant, Pramod, who is an ICANN85 Fellow from the previous meeting. He's saying, I have been introduced to the broader internet governance ecosystem and its different career paths. From your perspective, what are the most effective ways for young professionals to turn that initial exposure into long-term meaningful contributions within the internet community?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

So, again, and you will hear me saying this again and again, I think what you learn by contributing or participating at ICANN, first thing, take it back home. Take it back home. Because that is the

way you can directly apply what you see globally. Build your community locally. Get engaged in groups of people that are working on open source, that are working on improving connectivity, that are working on making the internet available to everyone, or making IT in general available to everyone.

Get something local that can keep you going between ICANN meeting, between international meeting, because that is important to keep yourself emerged into the environment. That will also give you exposure locally, because your first exposure is going to be local. Secondly, when you come to international meeting like this, build network. Talk to people. Keep in touch with them in between meetings.

Ask them about what they are doing, which is interesting. Ask them what you can do to contribute to what they are doing. That will also give you the other part of the exposure, which is working on the international level. But keep showing up, keep showing and expressing your passion, your engagement is what is going to attract people to you to see what is the impact you are doing.

Because in this environment in general, it is about what you are contributing. It is an open ecosystem. So, what you are contributing is what is going to attract people. So, the way you can stay in is to keep showing up, keep contributing, but make sure that your impact is felt. And the way it can be felt is mostly locally.

ULRICH WISSER

Yeah, so I want to second Adiel on this, and I would like to give you a little bit different view on this. That is, if I was the hiring manager, who do I look for? And I'm looking for people that are engaged, people that can solve problems. I don't need somebody in my office that I have to say, now you take the pen, now you write this, now you write that. I want somebody who is solving problems for me.

And, well, that is people that are engaged. So, by engaging, being active in the community, you show that you are somebody that can actually do that for me. So, this is part of your career. It's not just something that you're passionate about. It shows the world that you are the one we want. And that is universal thing for hiring managers, I would say.

MARIA PERICÀS RIERA

Hi, good morning. I'm Maria Pericàs. I'm a NextGen Fellow. So, in NextGen, we're all students, university students, and I don't know if the older ones are aware about how crazy the job market is right now for these entry-level positions. So, I was wondering if you have any tips for us, especially now taking into account that so many of the tasks for these entry-level positions are being automated by artificial intelligence, or maybe which skills should we build over these next years to be ready for the crazy job market that we have ahead? Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Yeah, I think the job market is very dynamic and could be seen when you are not in yet as a challenging one to come in with everything you have listed, the artificial intelligence and all. I would say that, again, when you are a student and you are getting ready to get into the job market, the first tip I would say is doing what you who are here does, which is looking for what is beyond what you have been given during your academic career.

Again, looking at what you are passionate about and how deep can you dig into that aspect. If you are here today, it's because you look for, oh, I'm very interested about what is happening behind the scene for the Internet, for instance. What are those organizations? What do they offer? They offer fellowship. I'm going to apply for that fellowship. I'm going to learn more about this organization.

Then when you are within the fellowship program, what do you do? You build network. You meet people. You meet people who have different challenges. You think about those challenges. You think about what can I do to impact that challenge. Can I share my idea with them? Can I make the bridge between what I'm learning in my academic courses with what I'm seeing on the real life?

How can I show people around me that I'm not only focused on the academic side, but I'm also focused, I'm also providing solutions? As Ulrich said, what anyone that wants to hire somebody wants to see is how are you going to help me solve real issues on the ground? And when you are interacting with people, they are looking for that

as well. When you are interacting, what are you bringing on the table?

So, I think one first advice will be keep building your network and keep linking always what you like and digging into it to learn exactly how it works on the ground. The second thing I will say, maybe looking at it on a very actual what is happening, you mentioned artificial intelligence, you mentioned the evolution of the environment, and don't get me wrong, this environment is very dynamic. It keeps changing every time. It's moving very fast.

What I tell people in general is that artificial intelligence, look at it as a tool. Keep looking at it as a tool. It is a tool that will help you be better in what you are doing. When I'm talking about artificial intelligence, I'm talking about LLM, I'm talking about the agentic AI in general. No matter what you do, what is your skill, what you are studying, what you need to do now is like what we have done in the 90s.

How do I use word processing software to be faster in writing, to write better? Today, artificial intelligence, first thing first is how we use it to do our job better, to modify, to do it even at the scale that we are not able to do today. But the human factor is still there, will continue to be there. So, we shouldn't be afraid and think that we are being removed from the picture.

We are in the picture, but it depends on how we use that tool to magnify what we have studied. And showing that again and again on how you present yourself in your CV, how you practically

integrate that in what you are doing, is something that any person recruiting will look at. The third element I will mention is the human centric part of how you handle your career.

We, particularly when you are passionate, you are geek, we tend to be very on the professional, on the technical stuff and forget that we interact with humans. We are human after all. In this IT environment where the materialization is the core of the thing, we forget that we interact and everything we produce is used by humans. There are people behind everything that we do. So, we need to also keep bringing our stance, our positioning back to who we are as humans.

How do we keep those skills that build people, that make people confident? How do we project that? How do we project our humanity in our interaction? I'm saying that because sometimes we are so lost or so passionate about what we're doing that we forget that aspect.

Anything that is hiring more and more nowadays, look at how is this person going to contribute to the harmony or the cohesion of my team? And that is about what the human capacity or human quality you are bringing on the table. And that is also something very important to have in mind.

SAMWEL KARIUKI

For the record, my name is Samwel Kariuki. I'm an ICANN86 Fellow. I understand transitioning from what we are doing to probably

what we need to do is quite challenging. I would like to understand what were your initial challenges when you were transitioning to what you are doing today? And what do you face as a challenge in today's evolving world? Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

So, if I got your question correctly is to share the challenge transitioning to what I'm doing now. Is that the first question? And how to tackle the challenge that we have today? So, for me, the transition was in two phases. As I mentioned, originally, I was a network engineer, an IT engineer, my passion was about building things. I got into the internet world when I discover that we can connect each other using the technology, an open technology.

We didn't need authorization from anyone. And that's what really brought me to this industry, because I realized that there is a technology where we don't need "government approval" to innovate, right? At the time, telecommunication companies were dominating everything. And telecommunication companies at the time, they needed the ITU to accept something before they implemented it.

So, it was very hard at the time. So, that brought me into digging into that technology at the time. But more I was evolving because I run an ISP company, the first thing I discovered in that environment was the RIR. Because as an ISP, our first interaction are with RIR because we need IP address to run our network. So

that is my first encounter with the multi-stakeholder approach to policy development for instance, looking at that and say, ah.

So, not only this protocol or this technology is open, the way it is governed, who decides what to do is also open. So, I can get my verse here. So, start following what RIPE NCC is doing, at the time it was RIPE NCC, checking what they are doing until I had the opportunity, really to get involved with the idea to set up a registry in the region, in Africa, because as ISP we realized that we needed a registry that is out of the continent.

The criteria that we have, the policy that were developed at the time, were not really in line with the way we run network in Africa. We were small, we have smaller network, we cannot meet some of the criteria. So, that's where the idea comes from to set up something. But if we want to set up something, we need to understand how the governance works, how we want to develop our own policy.

And that leads to getting more involved in the process of setting up AFRINIC. I will say that my immersion into the bigger picture, well, following what ICANN does, but at the more global level, happened really at the end of the WSIS process when the IGF was set up.

I was exposed at the time, in 2006, into the first Multistakeholder Advisory Group, the MAG. And I think that participation has clearly convince me that beyond my technical engagement, and at the time I'll say I've started moving to the managerial thing because I was already the CEO of AFRINIC at the time, there is, beyond those

two skills, a more in-depth engagement on the policy side, and when I say policy side, is how to bring different people together to build consensus at the global level toward a real issue.

The first MAG at the time, all about the internet governance issue was really at the core of it. And the core question at the time was not just about we want to defend the multistakeholder, it was about will the multistakeholder model suit government at the time. And you need to be prepared to defend how multistakeholder and openness at the core of the internet as a technology can help government achieve their goal.

And that you need to have a good understanding of the public policy side, but also good understanding of the technology side and show how technology evolution can rely on a multistakeholder, non-governmental organization to benefit government. So, that has been something that helped me, actually, I would say, focus more on the policy side and focus more on how to translate some of this thing that we as technical people, we know, but how do we translate them in the way that people who are not technical as background can understand them?

Not only understand them generally, but understand them in the way that it benefits them. Because people will listen to you unless what you are telling them, they see anything in it for themselves. So, you need to develop that skill of bridging the gap between technology and policy. The real challenge for somebody that has a technical background is “to give up technology,” to be able to

move away from being the geek behind the screen developing thing, building thing.

It's like moving a step down, looking at what you know technologically, but using that to develop something else, that will benefit the technology. And moving away and staying away, I would say, globally from the geeky part of the technology has been challenging. But, again, the challenge that is, I will say, matched by my desire to bridge that gap, to make sure that we use technology really as a component for development, all kinds of development, and how can we explain that in the way that those who are in charge of development understand it.

So, that has been my personal commitment and my personal engagement to say let's work better as technological people for others to understand it. So, that has driven my engagement and the way I direct my career as well since then to be places where I can be impactful, right? Today I lead technical engagement at ICANN, and 60% of what we do is taking complex technology issues and translating them into the way that we can engage with all kinds of stakeholders that ICANN is engaged with, not only in developing countries, but globally, right?

Being able to talk to non-technical people and explain technical issues, answering technical questions, but also talking to engineers that want to dig further into this environment, that want to follow the evolution of the technology. And that evolution as well, non-technical people need to keep up with it, because it's moving. So,

for me, it is a way again to bridge that gap because it boils down to that.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN There are a couple of questions online.

ULRICH WISSER And I just want to say, you can't talk to politicians and still be a geek.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN There is a question from Maciek, and actually this is from the person who himself, after being a Fellow, gets so passionate that currently is elected to represent end users in ALAC from Europe. So, the question is --

MACIEK PIASECKI I can actually read that. I'm here.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN I know that you are -- You posted there, so I'm reading.

MACIEK PIASECKI I got a bit confused when you said that only the questions in the Q&A are going to be read. I could phrase my question.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Okay, I know you're here. You posted the question. I'm reading your question. But go ahead. You can do it yourself.

MACIEK PIASECKI

This is the autistic side of me. So, I'm Maciek Piasecki. I'm a Fellow, but I'm also with EURALO when I'm one of the leads for the phishing campaign, which is, I think, a great opportunity.

But I see that there's a lot of lawyers, a lot of engineers, some people from the academia, more on the technical side here, but myself I'm a historian who worked as a journalist for more than a decade but this has been a shrinking industry, I needed to retrain also because of my health, and I think there's going to be more and more people from the creative industries that are going to be looking for their new paths whether they're filmmakers writers, artists, et cetera.

So, what would you say is the best learning path for them especially if they're a bit later in life in their 30s or in their 40s and they're no longer able to sustain their job, and they don't have so many resources, because I would love to buy a ticket to Kenya to attend an IGF and to learn and to network, but there are not so many of those possibilities.

There are things like ICANN Fellowship, which I'm grateful for, but then again, I need to have a day job. I cannot spend so much time in volunteering or doing unpaid jobs, as you mentioned. So, what would you say is the way forward for people like me?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Yeah, I think that's a real challenge, particularly the aspect of being able to travel or sustain the ability to expose yourself. But I will say today the environment has evolved a lot from what it was before it was 20 years ago. Today, remote participation is available in most of these environments. We have learned the lesson after the COVID that it is part of the process. It's not novel when you are going to a conference to have remote participation.

So, I think what I will suggest in a situation like that is still is not the perfect way, but still use the remote participation tool that are available more and more today to show up. But not only by participating or just showing up, but use the ability that those tools offer today to ask a question, to make yourself visible, because it's a little bit more difficult to be visible when you are attending remotely than if you are physical there, right?

The only way you can keep yourself visible is to use the tool to actually ask a question or share your view. That is the very simple practical way. The second thing is also to participate into forum where topic that you are interested in are discussed throughout the year, I would say, long. And again, not being shy to share your view in that environment.

Third, is also something that I know, is that there is also some funding that are available beyond what ICANN can offer, what the IETF can offer, what ISOC can offer. Those are fund within the ecosystem. There are fund beyond the ecosystem as well that are

there to help people to be able to attend this kind of thing. It is always important when you are seeking those supports or you want to use those to show how mutual beneficial your use of those funds is going to be for those third parties, right?

So, that means you need to always find a way to bridge the gap or to build a link between what you are doing. Finally, I will go back to what I said again, local. How do you start impacting your local environment?

If you're a journalist, if you're a filmmaker, how do you take a local story, how do you bring your passion or what you are learning virtually to the local community, to the local people, so that you can build a community? Once you build a community, the visibility starts popping up from that so that you can actually project yourself to the global. I don't know if that touched your question. Because it is a challenge, it is not all the organizations that --

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

There is a very interesting question from an online participant, Kamba Benard. Many of us working in government face institutional and policy constraints on our participation in external processes. How can government professionals continue to contribute meaningfully to ICANN's objectives and the multi-stakeholder model at the local level while respecting those restrictions? Being in a government, having policies, how to engage with all those restrictions?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Yeah, I think there are two aspects of that. The first is your role as a government representative. In that specific role, you have some constraints policy that you have to go by. But as an individual, I think you can always have the ability to act as an individual beyond your capacity as government representative. That already gives you a way to kind of separate your constraints from what you want to do, really.

The second thing I will say is usually, those constraints are driven by policy, policy that are not well informed by what is happening globally or the importance or the positive impact that international participation, engaging with organizations that are not intergovernmental, bring in.

So, while separating those two personalities, working to bridge the gap again comes in because explaining to government this policy is preventing us to take advantage of this, that can help government achieve their goal. How can you elaborate on that? How can you lay that down so that people who said the policy see an advantage of either adjusting the rule, it will take time, I know, to allow more and more participation. Because it's not only about individual.

That's also something important I want to say. It's not when you are defending those kinds of things in government or institutional environment, don't put yourself at the forefront. Because when it seems like it's a personal interest, you create a barrier

automatically because people think that you are promoting this for your personal gain. It has to be about building more people. It's about to be moving the objective of the institution or the organization.

And this doesn't happen only for government. There are also private companies that have rules, that have policies, that can hamper your participation at the global level. So, it is something that can happen, but it shouldn't prevent our individual and personal participation, our personal capacity. But that needs to be also backed with the constant interest of explaining, of deconstructing the global concept and the complex concept into the way that those who are creating a barrier see benefits from our participation. And that's where the work needs to happen more and the exposure.

I also think that sometimes bringing or connecting using the network we built here to connect peer also help. Government people talking to other government people, sharing what they are doing, what is happening in their environment can also help there. I don't know if you want to add something.

ULRICH WISSER

I give you the example of my own life. I work for ICANN. Obviously, I am not allowed to participate in the ICANN community. I mean, that would be a conflict of interest. We all realize that, right? But I

actually participate in RIPE. I'm the chair of the RIPE DNS working group. That is not a conflict of interest.

But when in the RIPE community, they discuss policies that affect ICANN, for example, now with the number of resource organizations, I will abstain because it's a conflict of interest. But I still can participate meaningfully in the RIPE community and in other local communities where I live. So, you find your ways to do that. And there's some constraints and there's some ways I can contribute.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

That separation of your representation role and your personal engagement, that's an example.

HOUDA CHIH

Thank you so much for all these shared tips. My question is how -- Houda Chihi from Tunisia, ICANN Fellow. Okay, so the question is how any taking jobs helped you to move to the next one? Is it about skills or network? What helped you much?

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

What helped me most? I think in my personal case, I think what helped me most is how my constant focus on willing to impact my local environment. I think I have always pushed all the connections I have on how we can change things where things are not where they have to be. What do I mean by that? I mean by always focusing on the impact my skills, definitely my experience, my skills, my

knowledge of the environment can make in my either local environment or in company I'm working on.

One example I will give is when we are running the ISPs, the first time I attended an international conference, the country codes, top-level domain of my country, was not delegated at the time. So, I met a lot of people, great people, people who were at the core of setting up the Internet, Jon Postel and all those people. They were happy to see somebody coming from a small country, et cetera, talking about --

But one of the things I was more concerned about is how can we manage our own ccTLD. What can I do to get it? I want it. So, we start talking, and what I take out from that first meeting was, okay, this is what you need to do. Get it to us, and we'll give you the TLD. Two weeks down the road, we have all the things, and we got the TLDs.

We got the TLD and we started running it. So, what I want to say is that instead of pushing for my own advancement, what I did was how can I use the knowledge, the exposure to advance things. That has helped when people were looking for someone to help do capacity building in the region, for instance. Who do they think about? Somebody that wants to make a local impact.

Adiel, can you go to Liberia and do a training because they want to connect to the internet, right? That was a volunteer engagement, but of course, your travel is funded. So, that helps people trust the fact that my interest is not personal. It's about building a

community, and at that time, it was novel. So, I think keep focusing on what you are passionate about and how you can make a difference. That is fundamental.

ULRICH WISSER

And I would say, don't shy away from challenges. Take opportunities. It's frightening. You have to jump in the pool without knowing if the water is scaring you. But we all have this, at night you lay in bed and you think, oh God, what did I do? But, well, have confidence in yourself and you obviously have to work for it, but in the end, it will pay off if you take these challenges.

For my own career, I always jumped on there's this new project that the company wants to run, and I'm like, okay, I do it I have no idea what to do, I find out, and it worked out, because next time there's a new challenge, something to learn, they ask me first, because he's the guy who's going to do the stuff. And one other thing, communication skills.

Communication, communication, communication. You need to be able to talk to people, and not only talk to my nerdy peers, being able to talk to management is a skill that is really important.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Okay, we have Tinuade, and there is one more question from online participant, and we have one there.

TINUADE OGUNTUYI

Okay, thank you so much for all the things you have shared, and it's really been valuable. Tinuade Oguntuyi, ICANN86 Fellow for the records. I actually penned down here that in internet governance or internet ecosystem as a whole, must it always be that somebody will have to volunteer? Because if we're looking at careers, I can tell somebody coming out from school, because I lead a foundation where we try to encourage girls going to STEM, and I really want to confidently tell them, you can move from school and pursue this career, not only as a cybersecurity person.

Must it always be the volunteering route that people will come into this space? That's one. Because I know as an ICANN community, we say, oh, he's volunteering. We contribute to different constituencies, and we know we're volunteering. Of course, impacting, like you have emphasized. That said, that's my question.

But I also penned down some things, and I just wanted to use that to also encourage many people, maybe online and here. I've been in the internet ecosystem for years, and I say this always, maybe about 17 years plus, and I joined Internet Society then just to have the number and to put it on my CV. I was not participating. Not until 2024, early 2024, my girlfriend called and said, Tinu, you are in Internet Society, but I don't see you do anything. I said, really? I am. She said, no, you are not. That you have to join Internet Society like you're really part of it.

And that 2024 alone, because she said that, and I just wanted to say that to also buttress what you said, that when you really want to do something, you just see everything align. I got information from the president of ISOC through that same person, and I indicated interest. That very year, I did the School of Internet Governance, and that's where I heard about ICANN.

And when I heard about ICANN in August -- I'm coming to that. When I heard about ICANN in August, I joined online. Which means it's not every time we can be in the physical room. But I joined ICANN81 online, ICANN82 online. I couldn't even make any applications because some were not suitable or some were closed. Then I had connected to her online and I saw her post. She wanted to do a webinar on how to become ICANN Fellows. Then I joined.

Then I had all of this, and honestly, this is where I am. And when I tell people that, oh, I started this journey fully, aside from my professional career, in 2024. They're like, are you serious? You know this much? You talk this much about it? And I just wanted to use that to encourage people. When you were talking about the local impact, I think another way, yesterday I was at an event and I was talking to a lady that said, oh, she would want to be a Fellow.

I said, see, I think you have to pick it from your place of passion. What do you do right now? Everybody would necessarily not be technical people. You can come from what you can contribute. And I think that grows it. At-Large, talks to end user interest and you can come from that perspective. And we might not be able to

reach everybody online, to be honest. I know this is hybrid, but we can also tell our stories to people we meet every day.

I was in a community of parties. I wanted to reach seniors. We know we cannot necessarily use online things, but we planned like a market storm, where we can do like a town cry, talk to them in the language they understand, and break down these principles. The more we do that, the more people will come.

Once somebody shared the experience that knowing about ICANN was in a local place, because one person was generous enough to state it in a book so that people will know about ICANN. So, I think responsibility also falls on us as people that are in this room, upcoming fellows or fellows and even NextGeners, I thought to say that. Thank you.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you very much. That was exactly the point about it. There's another question?

SHEILA KAKOOZA

Should I speak? All right, thank you. My name is Sheila Kakooza for the record. I'm from the Uganda DNS Forum. My point, mine is not a question, it is a contribution about partnerships. The work we do back home is mainly with people with a technical background. I myself, I have a technical background. I work in IT.

ICANN is really policy inclined but I still think that with partnerships, you can contribute to the ecosystem even without

completely losing your technical side. I'm going to give an example. If you are a website developer, you can contribute immensely to ICANN's work by partnering with people who are interested in universal acceptance.

Is your website UA-ready and stuff like that. And even if you are just coming out of school, with the power of partnerships, we always know someone who knows someone who can eventually mention a name somewhere.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Yeah, definitely. The partnership aspect is important. And then partnership, not only institutional partnership, though, I will also say personal partnership. So, when we talk about partnership, we need to look at it also between people of same interest, how to share. And that's a partnership as well. As this session is about career, I want to properly connect everything we are talking about on how this helps you advance.

We talk about what you need to know, how you need to use the exposure you have to link it back to your local environment. The next step is to be able to translate that into your CV and how you present yourself and translate that in how you make it known by people who want to hire you where you have the opportunity.

You need to be able to put that on your CV, what you are doing in details, how your work, how your experience meeting people who have the same passion as you, how that impacts you, how that

transforms you, and how you want to bring that passion to the person that is hiring you.

Personally, I have interviewed thousands of people, but one of the things I always look for when I'm hiring someone is how is the person expressing, not the skill he has at school, but his passion. How is he expressing it? How is he connecting it to the work that he's going to do? And how has he learned from it? So, being able to express that is also very important.

Ulrich talked about communication sometime before, communication, storytelling. Tell your story. Not being afraid to translate all you are being exposed to into your own CV, which is what will build your career. And when you have the opportunity, jump into it in any interview, in interacting with somebody you want to work with, to tell your story. Say how you are passionate about it.

And also, explain how that can help what he wants to achieve. And that is also important in talking about our career, because at the end of the day, it comes to the way we project ourselves as individuals. And I'll give an example about that. As I mentioned to you, I've been a geek, I have worked on all, but how do I end up from that to the CEO of AFRINIC? And that is, again, about how I again, project the skill that is not a technical skill specifically, but a skill of consensus building.

One of the reasons why I got the job in the first place was my ability to get people from very different opinions together and build

something beyond that. Because if you know the story of AFRINIC, AFRINIC has been in the bill since 1998 until 2002, when sales started moving gradually, it's because a group of us focused on what is the issue.

The issue is getting people together to talk and being able to focus on what is the goal beyond that. And one of the skills, I think, that helped me move from the project manager to the CEO role is my ability, while I was project manager, to volunteer, not paid, to bring people together around some of the very, I would say, opposing topics and focusing on the goal, which is a registry.

And by being able to build a consensus, even if people don't agree on what is the most important, I think I've made a difference, which allows people to trust me to do it, even though I subscribed for two years, stayed for ten years. So, it is also the way we project some of the skill that is needed to achieve the goal beyond the academic skill.

The academic skill is one aspect, engineering, management, et cetera, but what will give people confidence to give you the responsibility is how you translate those into, yeah, immeasurable goals that benefit the environment.

ULRICH WISSER

I wanted to say that you might think, well, I'm young, I haven't done so much, but you have done plenty. Just the fact that you're here is a proof of that. And be proud of that, remember that, and put it

in your CV. Don't think, oh, just because you did it in school, it doesn't count. Everybody in school did it. Yeah, but you did it too. It's important.

Be proud of it, make a story out of it. I give you an example. I hired interns and I had a lot of applications. There was IT, mostly guys, there were a lot of guys, there were three girls. So, I invited three guys. I invited the three girls. Turns out there was one girl which was the least favorite candidate, I can tell you. She had worked at 7-Eleven. That was her whole CV.

Well, it turns out in school she had done the Cisco system administrator course. She was the most qualified candidate. But because she'd done it in school, she didn't have it in her CV. That's crazy. So, don't make that error. Be proud of the things you did, even if you did them in school or at home. You were the coach at your local basketball club. I don't know. That's something to put in your CV. Be proud of the things you did.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Thank you. Yeah, I think that looks like a very good way to conclude this. Be proud of what you do, talk about it, and connect it always to the local impact.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Thank you very much. I think this was really very insightful session, and we got a lot of feedback there. And I would like to conclude

this, that if someone can, then I definitely can, and we all can. So, thank you very much, guys. And with that, the session is concluded.

HOUDA CHIH

Siranush, you always bring good people and bring new tips for the tables. Thank you, Siranush.

ADIEL AKPLOGAN

Pleasure talking to you. I will be around the whole week. If you want to talk directly, feel free to connect.

SIRANUSH VARDANYAN

Adiel is amazing. If you want to ask questions, just talk to him.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]