ICANN Global dot branding: Singular policy or plural options

By Naseem Javed   30 Apr 2013

Naming rules originated from common sense, transformed into common laws and later created the trademark philosophy to govern 'naming' as a prime and civil component of businesses across the globe.

This centuries-old thinking is almost like what electricity is to the Internet. Basically without the core component they are just useless. The current ICANN gTLD exuberance now requires a worldwide awakening, particularly in the diverse domain name industry that without well balanced trademark rules the domain name expansion is basically headed toward disaster.

Applying the same common sense, except for the rightful name owners we have never registered trademarks like Yahoos, Apples, Googles, Rolexes, Nikes, Guccies or Panasonics for others. Because common sense rejects the concept of 'selling house-locks with Three Keys'; the buyer of house-lock gets two keys while seller keeps the third key to be sold later to the highest bidder. Now does this sound more like an alarm selling scheme or what? Common sense created common laws to provide legitimacy to common sense thinking.

Is ICANN gTLDs 'name selection process' doubtful whether '.hotel' and '.hotels' are one name or two buildings? Is it the fertilization of the bottom-up model that has created its own thick fog to avoid clarity? The rules of 'similarity' should provide the light.

Petrified lawyers

Masters of Internet architecture and speculative domain trade are now expected to have some advance level knowledge of 'naming rules'. Lawyers would be petrified to render bold and formal opinions on 'Internet protocols' without having a certified education on the subject. The rhetoric coming from various corridors now must pass the acid test of hardcore knowledge. If internet architecture requires authoritative knowledge to manage the global circuitry, similarly the global nomenclature and naming architecture expects the same balance. At this late stage some dissection is critical. Here are the facts:

ICANN is the best global mother ship to the Internet protocols but has yet to prove its global efficiency on naming complexities and trademark understanding. The original 'first come basis' chaos, URDP explosion and defensive name registrations industry boom, all reflects on that reality.

Let common sense rule

The debate about singular v/s plural names must be resolved immediately in favour of common sense rules as any further lingering will create the beginning of an endless tunnel where weak and abusive name selection policies will create chaos and only enrich conflicts. The name evaluation processes must become a solid foundation as the number of gTLDs in the second round would easily be ten-folds. Otherwise, adjusting to every 'similar, confusing or problematic naming' issue via bottom-up and top-down debates the name evaluation process would simply implode. ICANN needs clear decisions with singular policy and avoid not endless plural solutions.

Currently, a new gTLD under right combination is the cheapest and most powerful name identity expansion tool ever but such endorsements are based on common sense trademark rules to create long term name identity and brand assets. If gTLDs were to be moulded on 'first come first' name snatch model mathematically a quick collapse of the entire gTLD system can be easily proven.

The awakening on this topic should start right away; currently what appears like a romantic tango dance between the Internet techies and guardians of 'naming rules' is in reality a fierce bull fight. Ole! The time has come to take the bull by the horn.

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