

Friday, May 29, 2009

### Whois Privacy brings a lawsuit down on Registrar

Following on our explanation of why we do not offer whois masking here at easyDNS, we note tonight that Registrar Namecheap has been sued "over cybersquatting claims for a domain name registered under the NameCheap whois privacy services".

As we outlined in our original article: Whoever is listed as the Registrant in the domain's whois record, effectively owns the domain. If you own the domain, you get all the responsibilities for it. That's why most Registrars simply drop the whois mask at the slightest legal speedbump. Namecheap didn't, and so now it cuts the other way they get the sharp end of the legal stick being poked at the domain.

Technology lawyer Eric Goldman in his analysis of the matter under the subheading Why This is a Troubling Ruling noted: Read literally, every proxy service is exposed to potential contributory ACPA liability for every domain name it services. I can't imagine proxy service providers will be excited about that liability exposure, and some may choose to exit the business.

Some certainly should. Any of the proxy providers who basically viewed whois masking as an easy business which basically pulls in money for doing nothing (which is more or less how I view it, I'm sorry, but that's only my opinion) - should take this as their signal that the party's over and exit the business.

As I've noted before, in it's current implementation: whois privacy doesn't actually protect the underlying registrant's privacy (because most proxy providers will drop the mask at the first sign of trouble) and if they don't, the proxy providers are exposing themselves to inordinate risk. Coupled with the fact that the whois mask puts the underlying registrant's rights to the name in question and the whole thing is just one big mess waiting to blow up.

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 22:26

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

### Do you really need to register your name under .tel?

We've turned up .tel registrations now that they've gone realtime and the initial registry implosion has stabilized. You may have noticed a distinct lack of urgency from us to light a fire under your keester to go register your name under .tel right now before somebody else takes it.

As we outlined previously, we find the hoopla around new top-level domain rollouts both tiresome and for the majority of domain holders, unnecessary. So we have a policy here that we generally a) don't launch the new TLD until it goes realtime and is considered "stable" and b) we don't try to whip our users into a hysterical frenzy ahead of time to register their domains under every new TLD.

The fact is, in the future there will be more top-level-domains, a lot more. So many of them that between obvious typos of one's domain, one's core domain or domains, and one's local geographic top-level domain, it will be a fool's errand to try and register your name under every new TLD that comes along just for the sake of "defending your mark". The other problem is, .tel is severely crippled

While we do find .tel slightly unique in the realm of new TLDs because it actually exists for a reason: to cultivate internet telephony usage. This isn't some country-code ccTLD hiring out their namespace under some made-up reason (.me, .tv, .ws, et al) to draw in foreign registrants, it's an actual TLD geared toward SIP, VOIP and telephony and exists for that reason.

But .tel isn't doing anything under the space that can't be done under any other domain name with the appropriate use of SRV or NAPTR records and to actually make matters worse, you are forced to use their nameservers and your domains are under an Acceptable Use Policy which forces you to use the name for certain things (basically as a "contact" switch rather than a "content" page).

While the objective may be laudable: giving a TLD an actual raison d'etre beyond "register your name before somebody else does!", we don't like that you're forced to use their nameservers and don't have total latitude with your .tel domains. It runs contrary to the ethos behind easyDNS which was, and still is to drive a stake through the heart of lock-in. (It's not like we force everybody who registers a domain through us to use our nameservers because we're an outsourced DNS host, in fact we even allow our members to mirror their DNS from our nameservers from outside DNS hosts).

As such we have not become directly accredited under .tel, instead we're supporting them through our OpenSRS reseller tag, but the functionality is transparent.

Most of you reading this probably have no compelling reason to register your name under .tel unless 1) you like the TLD or 2) you have operations in the IP telephony space that would make sense segmenting under a .tel name and 3) you don't mind the crippled functionality and lock-in.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 11:50

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

### **New easyDNS Member feedback survey**

Many of you may not know that we have an ongoing member feedback survey where we ask for your thoughts and impressions of using easyDNS.

We try to make it as unobtrusive as possible, and for each respondent we make a \$5 donation to a charity of your choosing (World Wildlife Fund, Children's Wish Fund or Unicef).

We've recoded the survey using eSurveys.com. Feel free to give us your thoughts by taking it today. [easyDNS Member Survey](#)

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 16:13

Thursday, November 20, 2008

### Why we do not offer Whois Privacy at easyDNS

We get asked this a lot: Why do you guys not offer whois masking or whois contact privacy?

The brief background on this is: whenever you register a domain name, your contact details are published in a publicly visible database called "whois", where your contact details are instantly harvested by spambots and marketers who proceed to email and postal mail you marketing offers, deceptive "domain slamming" attempts, ads for dubious products, and perhaps even telemarketing calls.

Nobody likes that, so over the years people started resorting to various tactics to protect themselves from the deluge of crap that inevitably comes with simply registering a domain name: throwaway email addresses in whois records, fake postal addresses, fake phone numbers, etc. The problem is, Registrants are obligated under their various end user agreements to provide true and accurate data (not doing so is grounds to lose one's domain), and the US even passed legislation making it unlawful to use fake contact details in a domain name registration.

Our response to this, years ago, was MyPrivacy.ca which protects your email address from being harvested from your whois records, but leaves your other data intact. We didn't see it as a revenue opportunity, in fact we made it free and opened it up to competing registrars, many of whom started recommending it to their customers. We just wanted to drive a stake through the heart of the whois spammers.

It wasn't long though, before many registrars took it a step further and created the concept of "whois masking" or "contact privacy", where all of the domain-holder contact details would be masked from the public whois. Of course, this was heralded as a "value-add" and most outfits charge extra for it.

In today's long overdue post, we're finally revealing why so-called "whois privacy" puts your domains at risk, costs you more and doesn't really protect your privacy. Continue reading "Why we do not offer Whois Privacy at easyDNS"

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 11:29

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Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 11:29

Thursday, November 6, 2008

### MobileMe and easyDNS...

A number of customers have been registering domains to point to their new websites published via iWeb on their MobileMe accounts. Unfortunately, while MobileMe instructs how to point "www.yourdomain.com" to their services, they don't have a way to easily point just "yourdomain.com" to their services. This is especially important as not everyone on the internet will type "www" before a domain name when looking for a website (such as "www.google.com" versus "google.com").

Realising this is an issue for some of our customers who have DNS-Only services, we have implemented a work around. Simply follow the instructions on MobileMe to have your "www.yourdomain.com" CNAME point to "web.me.com". These are correct, and are very important. However, one last step is to leave your "yourdomain.com" record in the "hosts" block pointing to the word "PENDING". It should look something like this: A record (host): yourdomain.com Has IP: PENDING

...with your CNAME looking like this: C name (alias): www.yourdomain.com Points to A record (host): web.me.com Once entered, click "next" to submit your changes, and "next" again after you have confirmed all looks well. These updates may take a few hours to propagate across the internet before you can see them.

If you have any questions at all, please contact our Support Dept., and we would be happy to assist you.

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 13:03

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

### How to explain "URLs" so anybody can understand them

One of our tech support guys just had a conversation with somebody who wanted "to register the URL <http://example.com/something.html>", where [example.com](http://example.com) was already registered, the person couldn't understand why he couldn't have that URL with "something.html" after it. We've heard variations of this one a lot. Like somebody who knows "xyz.zz" is taken "but can I register "www.xyz.zz?", no, you can't.

The easiest way to explain a URL such as this one:<http://www.example.com/something.html> is to think of it as HOW, then WHERE and finally WHAT:<http://www.example.com/something.html>« how?The method we are going to use to retrieve or "get to" the document described by the URL. Common ones are "http" (Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol), you may also see "ftp://" or "mailto:"[www.example.com](mailto:www.example.com)« where?This is the hostname of the server, somewhere on the internet, which is holding the document we actually want/[something.html](http://www.example.com/something.html)« what?Finally, after we know what server we are looking for and how we're going to retrieve the document from it, we now specify exactly which document we want off of the remote server.

Understand those three components and you basically have URLs down cold.

Your web browser (firefox, safari, IE, Opera) is all about "how", what protocols to use to pull all these documents over the web to your desktop.

The web host is the "what" machine. It sits on a server and serves document after document to remote web browsers who send it requests.

Something has to bridge the browser to the web host/server and that's the "where", that's where DNS and domains come in, and that's primarily what we do here at easyDNS. We tell web browsers (and other client applications) the "where" aspect of retrieving and transmitting documents (the "whats") across the internet. We do this via "DNS lookups" ...about a quarter billion times a day.

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 09:47

Monday, September 29, 2008

### **What part of "blanket permission to download" do Michael Moore's lawyers not get?**

Michael Moore released his latest film Slacker Uprising for free, over the web (note: don't click on that link if you live outside of the US or Canada or his lawyers will yell at us again). On the download page for the film Mr. Moore has this to say: "I'm giving you my blanket permission to not only download it, but also to email it, burn it, and share it with anyone and everyone (in the U.S. and Canada only). I want you to use 'Slacker Uprising' in any way you see fit to help with the election or to do the work that you do in your community. You can show my film in your local theater, your high school classroom, your college auditorium, your church, union hall or community center. You can have your friends and neighbors over to the house for a viewing. You can broadcast it on TV, on cable access, on regular channels or on the web. It's completely free -- I don't want to see a dime from this. And if you want, you can charge admission or ask for a donation if it's to raise money for a candidate, a voter drive, or for any non-profit or educational purpose. In other words -- it's yours!"

So, why are his lawyers demanding we take action regarding a torrent posted on a DNS hosting client's website? We received the following takedown request via Fedex today: Continue reading "What part of "blanket permission to download" do Michael Moore's lawyers not get?"

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 17:30

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So, why are his lawyers demanding we take action regarding a torrent posted on a DNS hosting client's website? We received the following takedown request via Fedex today: Continue reading "What part of "blanket permission to download" do Michael Moore's lawyers not get?"

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 15:51

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

### **Running an affiliate program? Don't pay for sales you already had in the bag**

People have tried this on us so many times I figure it must still work in many cases so after the last one I decided to post a brief note about this.

We run an affiliate program via Commission Junction, it pays \$20 per new customer acquisition. We also come up first in all major search engines for our own name: "easydns", "easydns.com", "www.easydns.com", and "easyDNS Technologies Inc". Every online business probably comes up first in Google for their own name. (If you don't, you have larger problems and you should probably address those).

Here's what I consider, if not a "black hat" PPC technique, a grey one which we're not interested in because it costs us affiliate commissions on sales we would have gotten without the affiliate ever being involved. Here's how the scam works: Continue reading "Running an affiliate program? Don't pay for sales you already had in the bag"

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 11:31

Thursday, July 31, 2008

## **Ten Years of easyDNS**

10 years ago on this day, we removed the password block on easyDNS.com and sent out a couple of innocuous email announcements to the PHP and Mysql mailing lists announcing that we had developed a DNS management system using php and mysql and it was now open for business. We had three nameservers, 1 in our office (where the "other server", that ran everything was), one downtown in somebody else's cage at 151 Front street, and some friends of ours in Buffalo who were running an email company called chek.com let us run a third nameserver on one of their servers. That was the initial setup of easyDNS... Continue reading "Ten Years of easyDNS"

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 10:25

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

### DNS cache poisoning exploit released

Hi There,

There is a new DNS Cache poisoning disclosure that has been inadvertently leaked before it was scheduled to be released by Dan Kaminsky (IOActive). This is a very serious flaw in the DNS protocol that impacts caching resolvers, like the resolvers hosted at your service provider that help your workstation resolve IP addresses to domain names.

This bug does not directly impact authoritative name servers like the ones used to host your domain names at EasyDNS. Our name servers do not request answers from external sources, and rely entirely on internal cache files to offer answers. So for example, nobody will be able to change your IP information on our end. That part of the bug is unfortunately located at the caching end.

That being said; this is still a serious flaw, and we are taking this opportunity to upgrade the DNS software on our authoritative name servers to ensure that we are 100% compatible across the board with the newly upgraded caching name servers located at your Internet Service Provider. These upgrades should not impact name resolution if you are using more than one of our name servers to serve answers for your domain name (actually, please ensure that you are).

To make sure your Internet Service Provider is up to speed, you can use Dan Kaminsky's test script at DoXPora Research. If your Internet Service Provider is not yet up to speed, you may want to give them a nudge and/or change your DNS resolver configuration to a more trusted service. Update It is now making news that an exploit to this attack has been released., please see our post about our newly launched DNSresolvers.com if you are looking for safe resolvers.

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 20:52

Thursday, July 17, 2008

### **.ME Top Level Domain launch indicative of new TLD rollouts**

We've gotten a few invitations to apply to be a .ME top-level domain registrar, to which we assigned no urgency after we took a straw poll internally and found that pretty well zero of our customers were asking for it. Today, Techcrunch reports that the .ME landrush, at least through one large operator, had degraded into a fracas. We have an unwritten policy here: new Top Level Domain roll outs are to be avoided until they i) get past sunrise without erupting into a maelstrom of lawsuits and ii) get past "go-live" without imploding.

It runs contrary to industry standards where registrars whip their customer base into a frenzy over an exaggerated need to protect one's trademarks and claim one's stake in the latest "must have" TLD. The fact is, all you really need to care about are .COM, .NET and .ORG plus the ccTLD of the country you live in or do a lot of business in. (I will probably catch flack for saying .BIZ and .INFO are not crucial must-haves to your domain portfolio - we grabbed ours, at considerable expense in the case of .INFO and it was our experience in the roll out of these two that largely formed our policy.)

That most of these new TLDs roll out with initial 2-year registration period minimums are just an outright cash grab from the registry that most participating registrars are happy to join in on. They know that the sunrise and landrush frenzies they hope to whip up are the single greatest revenue events these TLDs ever experience. After the hoopla dies off and organizations realize how unimportant owning say ".ZX" is in their overall domain strategy and the domainers who piled in find out the aftermarket for the TLD is lackluster at best, the renewal rates predictably fall off a cliff.

So when the next "must have" TLD comes along and participating registrars start lovebombing their customers with reasons why they absolutely must "protect their name" in the new TLD, we often commit the egregious sin among investment bankers, VC's and pundits - that of "leaving money on the table" and we just don't rush in and push the new TLD. If it prevents us from leading our members off a cliff in to a major debacle, we consider ourselves as having done our job. (This was a similar rationale to why we never entered the IDN space, as long as you need a browser plug-in to make internationalized domain names even borderline usable they are, in our opinion, of marginal utility - we stayed out of it)

This is in line with our lifelong strategy of cultivating members who actually use their domains rather than pushing the "get your name before its gone" angle for every TLD under the sun on anybody who can fog a mirror. When we launched back in '98, we couldn't even register domains at all, so our member base was exclusively people who were actively using their domains and wanted outsourced DNS and/or forwarding. That set the tone for our positioning and culture ever since, and while now we do have a lot of customers using us "as registrar", our core is always the active domain users.

We have almost zero "domainers" with large portfolios of parked domains and speculative registrations because our model simply doesn't work for those types of users. It's not a judgement against domainers, it's just not where we came from.

All that said, you would probably think we are opposed to the new "free-for-all" TLD expansion policy hinted to in the recent ICANN meeting in Paris. We are not. We would welcome this new tlds policy (if it ever actually happens) because it removes the artificial scarcity and counteracts that "cashgrab" mentality we sniff at the root of many a new TLD. If new TLDs are coming out all over the place, two things happen:

- 1) Organizations realize that it is no longer practical to attempt to "protect their name" in every TLD space, so they stop trying. This removes a lot of the "easy money" underwriting new TLDs, some of which would otherwise launch for the thinly disguised reason of trying to milk the Sunrise for all its worth.
- 2) The above impetus gone, new TLDs will have to compete in a much more open market. Registries, while having de facto localized monopolies within their own TLDs will have to provide actual value to compete with other TLDs. That appeals to our sense of market freedom: less artificial barriers compelling a drive toward providing more value and benefits. The winners in the end should be the domain registrants, who are, let's not forget, our customers.

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Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 07:52

## Blog Export: Exile From the Herd, <http://www.privateworld.com/>

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

### **Please note: ORDB anti-spam list no longer operational...**

A number of our customers who maintain their own mailservers have called reporting issues with the delivery of their email in the last 24 hours. If you are experiencing something similar, please ensure that you are not using the ORDB anti-spam list.

The ORDB anti-spam list was shut down in December 2006, and in an effort to fully deactivate the list, ORDB is now sending out false positives. This means that if your mailserver relies on the ORDB anti-spam list, your mailserver is more than likely rejecting ALL EMAIL that is being relayed to it.

Please ensure you remove your mailserver's dependence on ORDB, as this will correct this specific issue.

Discussion about this recent development with ORDB can be found at the following URL upon

Slashdot:<http://it.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=08/03/25/2124224>

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 14:46

Thursday, March 6, 2008

### **easyURL adds "FEDEX" tracking widget**

Trivial but handy: I found myself having to email out some Fedex tracking ID's today, so I thought what would make it easy would be a way to create a redirect to the Fedex tracking page for that ID without having to visit a URL shortener site to create the redirect.

That's the core idea behind the "URL Widgets" or "Redirect Widgets" of easyURL, which are described here We also have them setup for Amazon products, domain lookups (surprise), Wikipedia pages and RFC's.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 15:08

Sunday, March 2, 2008

## **How to use your own domain name with Google Apps**

Many Ayromlou does it again, publishing another step-by-step tutorial, complete with screen shots on how to use your own domain name on easyDNS with Google Apps..

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 18:40

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

### **easyDNS announces Guaranteed Lookup Privacy for easyWHOiS.com**

In light of the recent ICANN advisory on domain lookup frontrunning we've made the guarantee that your domain lookups on easyWhois have and always will be, private.

What is domain lookup front running? It is when an unscrupulous operator between you and a domain lookup tool, such as a whois lookup website, perhaps even the site operators themselves, monitor your domain name searches and then go and grab some of the available domain names you search on before you get the chance to.

I never thought anybody would be so brazen, but silly me, I once again underestimated the widespread use of sleazeball tactics on the internet.

You can read the easyDNS press release on the subject and our new Guaranteed Lookup Privacy Policy at easyWhois. We've also added SSL encryption to easyWHOiS to eliminate the possibility of queries being eavesdropped.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 15:45

Tuesday, September 11, 2007

### **Don't forget to vote in the CIRA Board elections**

I just finished voting in the Canadian Internet Registration Authority Board of Directors election. This year's election is the first under the new election process and reformed membership structure that was ushered in last year at the special member's meeting in Toronto.

I have mixed feelings about the new membership reform, having spent a good deal of my term on the Board working on it and finally seeing it get ratified by the membership shortly after the end of my stint. I found the re-authorization process of the membership confusing. If I found it confusing, having been in the belly of the beast so to speak, it must have been utterly unfathomable to a lot of casual .CA domain holders. I think 90% of .CA domain holders don't even really understand who CIRA is or why they consistently get cryptic emails from them telling them to authorize this, confirm that, verify your id ("your paperssss pleasss").Continue reading "Don't forget to vote in the CIRA Board elections"

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 10:52

Thursday, August 16, 2007

### **easyURL enables bookmarking and tagging with openid**

You probably didn't know we operated a URL shortening service at [easyURL.net](http://easyURL.net), which has some nice features like being able to create your own short label for a shortened URL and tracking of access stats. After awhile I noticed that I was also using it as a pseudo-bookmarking mechanism, but of course it required that I actually remember the shortened URL. So we went ahead and added bookmarking and tagging to [easyURL.net](http://easyURL.net). The bookmarking features are accessible via OpenID tokens because we're finding people are getting less and less interested in creating a new account on every site they use. For people without OpenID, you can always use a site like [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us), for those with, use this.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via [easyDNS](#) blog at 14:00

## Blog Export: Exile From the Herd, <http://www.privateworld.com/>

Thursday, May 31, 2007

### How to use your domain name with blogger

Title says it all, easyDNS member Many Ayromlou wrote a clear step-by-step mini-howto today explaining the procedure to get your domain name registered through us working with your blogger.com  
blog:<http://www.nerdlogger.com/2007/05/how-to-use-custom-dns-name-with-blogger.html>  
My only comment is Step 6 shouldn't be a few hours' wait, not unless you've already typed your domain name into your browser before you do this and now your local ISP's nameservers have cached your old IP.  
But thanks to Many, I'm sure a lot of bloggers interested on using their own domain name with blogger.com will reference this.

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 20:52

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

### **Four essential components of Search Engine Optimization**

I've been helping a longtime customer debug getting his website setup with a google sitemap and stealth redirection and he asked me in more general terms if I had any advice for him around search engine optimization. Here are four essential "must have's" for SEO. Three you can do right now, the fourth is not under your control as much. Before embarking on a concentrated SEO campaign, be sure the first three are in place. Continue reading "Four essential components of Search Engine Optimization"

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 13:02

Monday, September 18, 2006

### **CIRA Board Elections On Now, Please Vote**

During my 3-year tenure on the CIRA Board, I got the opportunity to travel across the country. Whenever we held a public forum anywhere in Canada, the turnout was usually quite high and the participants informed and enthusiastic. Then near the end of every open forum I made it a habit to ask the attendees the following question: "How many people here voted in the last election?" and the silence was usually deafening. Less than 10 hands would go up every time, guaranteed.

So why the disconnect between getting live bodies out to an actual event and getting stakeholders to click a few buttons through their web browser?

Given the discontent I've seen among netizens over some gTLD issues with .COM (remember sitefinder?) and ICANN oversight, CIRA has set the standard for accessibility and stakeholder guidance for .CA. People should be seizing these opportunities and making their views known and voting.

Running country code top level domain registries carry unique challenges and require industry experience balanced with a sense of stewardship. .CA is after all a "key public resource" and the kind of people I want on the Board are those that take that stewardship capacity seriously.

This year I'm voting for the following member nominees: Paul Andersen

[https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/44/enClyde Beattie](https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/44/enClyde%20Beattie) [https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/22/enRoss Rader](https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/22/enRoss%20Rader) <https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/35/en>

And from nomination committee I'm voting for: Raymond Benoit [https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/13/enBill Reid](https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/13/enBill%20Reid) [https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/12/enJeff Ryback](https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/12/enJeff%20Ryback) <https://elections.cira.ca/2006/finalsplate/show/10/en>

I encourage all .CA domain holders who are CIRA members to vote now.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 16:11

Monday, July 10, 2006

### Enhanced DNS resolution using OpenDNS

OpenDNS is an enhanced DNS resolver open to the public (as of today) and free to use. It contains a number of enhancements such as typo correction and phishing protection.

It is also fully configurable for the end users, so individual features can be turned off at the users' discretion.

I've also posted a comment on CircleID explaining why OpenDNS is not Sitefinder 2.0

(By way of quick explanation to the layman, there are three kinds of nameservers that affect your life: Root nameservers: which top level domain registries operate, such as the root nameservers for .com or .ca  
Authoritative nameservers: for individual domains. This is the business easyDNS is in: answering DNS queries authoritatively for its member domains.  
Recursive nameservers or resolvers: these nameservers find out DNS info on behalf of its users. Usually these are transparent to end-users and supplied by ISPs, often via DHCP. OpenDNS is now in this business. )

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 17:04

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

### **Want to reduce email spam to your mail server? Stop using backup spooling**

It is with regret that we have come to the following conclusion, but here it is: Offsite backup SMTP spoolers and backup mail exchangers have become worse than useless

The problem is spam and the software that delivers it exploiting the weak authentication schemes inherent in the SMTP protocol itself. It used to be an annoyance, then it became a concern, it is now an epidemic and has resulted in the death of the offsite backup MX handler.

What happens is this: spammers try "dictionary attacks" on target domain names, trying to deliver email messages at random usernames at the target domain. The primary mailserver knows which usernames are valid and rejects the rest. The offsite backup MX spooler doesn't know what usernames are valid and what are junk, so it just forwards everything it receives for a domain it is spooling for to the primary MX handler.

Spammers and other malicious parties know this, so they may not even bother trying the primary MX at all, they'll just throw everything at the backup mail spooler which dutifully forwards it all (or tries to) to the primary. It is a dead-easy method of launching a Denial-Of-Service attack as well.

So it is with a heavy heart we have to admit that any utility of having an offsite backup MX handler is in most cases far outweighed by the advantages it hands to spammers and other miscreants.

The good news is this: without a backup mail spooler defined for your domain, originating mail servers simply queue the mail locally for a later retry. So owing to the design of the SMTP protocol, you do not really lose any redundancy when you remove a backup MX spooler from your DNS settings. But you probably cut down on the amount of spam your domain receives through the back door that is the backup MX spooler.

Posted by easyDNS: Tips and Tricks in via easyDNS blog at 16:33

Thursday, April 20, 2006

### **Seeking beta users for easySMTP: outbound mail service**

We have been testing our outbound mail service (codenamed "easySMTP&trade;") and it looks good. It supports TLS and listens on numerous alternative ports. easySMTP outbound mail service will be bundled with DNS-plus packages at no extra cost.

We are now accepting beta users for this service. If you would like to be a beta user and are currently subscribed with DNS-plus service, please contact support with your username and we will enable this feature for your account.

Many of us here at the office have been using this from home and it works great, so we anticipate a short beta period and a quick promotion to "production" status, at which point it will be available to all DNS-plus domains.

Details on the easySMTP outbound mail service can be viewed [here](#)

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 11:41

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

### China Top Level Domain news

There has been a remarkable lack of chatter today around domain policy circles, given the rather stunning announcement out of china that starting tomorrow, China will be launching its own Top Level Domain roots for the .COM, .NET TLDs so that "[Chinese] Internet users don't have to surf the Web via the servers under the management of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) of the United States."

Up until now, the underlying premise was that no matter what happened to naming policies, nothing would ever be done to change the tenet that (aside from deliberate design decisions like esoteric routing, geo-targetting, anycasting, etc) any two people typing "example.com" into their application could always expect the same results, forever.

Not so after tomorrow, when according to the one single article at the root of all this, China will be introducing .COM and .NET of their own.

CIRA Board member and internet governance commentator Michael Geist comments on the development here, and another domain insider I'll leave nameless (since it came in a private mail) said "Although innocuous you should mark and remember this day as the day the root was fractured - it is a big deal..."

I'm still trying to verify for myself that this is happening in the way it's been interpreted.

As I write this, it's approximately 2:45am March 1st in China and I'm not seeing any alternative root glue for .com or .net in the .cn root nameservers, which I was expecting to see. (It also begs the question: how will they backport a new root hints file into every single DNS resolver in the country?)

When I started this post, the soa on cn was

```
a.dns.cn. root.cnnic.cn. 2006022806 7200 3600 2419200 21600
```

and since I've been writing it has been changed to

```
a.dns.cn. root.cnnic.cn. 2006030101 7200 3600 2419200 21600
```

And also, since I've started this post, under the new SOA serial there are now these:

```
$ host -t soa com.cn
```

```
com.cn SOA a.dns.cn. root.cnnic.cn. 2006030101 7200 3600 2419200 21600
```

and

```
$ host -t soa net.cn
```

```
net.cn SOA a.dns.cn. root.cnnic.cn. 2006030101 7200 3600 2419200 21600
```

So I'm withholding reaction on this as I begin to suspect a poorly translated article was in reality announcing .com.cn and .net.cn subdomains which are non-events by comparison. Update:

It has become clearer after trading a couple emails around that the news is indeed that China has added com.cn and net.cn as well as their own alternate character set implementations for com and net.

Basically, this comes down to similar efforts over the years to launch competing or expanded root domains. What does make this interesting is that, while typically these enterprises are carried out by net.kooks, this is being done by a government. My guess is they will get some more traction than earlier efforts but what will eventually happen is ICANN (or whoever) will come to the table at some point and a way will be negotiated to maintain visibility and continuity in the root.

But for now, there is no fragmentation and no collision crisis to speak of. Update #2 (7:30pm EST):

Michael Geist just forwarded me this, the salient bit being:

The new domain name system also sets three temporary top-level domain names "China", "Company" and "Network".

This means from now on, the routing of these websites will go directly through the Chinese domestic analysis server instead of the ones used by ICANN. In effect, these three create an intranet within China.

This is tough to assess because I'm still unsure if this applies to the alternate character set com and net TLDs or if we're really talking about alternative com's and net's in China, which is pretty radical. This article re-iterates that the .com and .net TLDs are in the alternative chinese character set.

The excerpt above about the "domestic analysis server" makes me curious. Do they intend to somehow reroute requests inside China for the legacy .com and .net TLDs into the chinese charset ones? That would be extreme.

Another source whom I know likes to stay anonymous just emailed me:

Subject: sigh

I'm so surprised people didn't know China directs almost all root server requests to their own root?

They may not be taking over .com. but they have an alternate root for a while..

Still digging...(jeez, no pun intended)

**Blog Export: Exile From the Herd, <http://www.privateworld.com/>**

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 06:32

Monday, February 6, 2006

### **Yahoo and AOL's paid email delivery system**

An interesting turn of events surfaced over the weekend with AOL and Yahoo's announced plans to charge a fraction of a cent for "preferred delivery" of email.

Both companies will still accept unpaid email, but by paying the charges, senders will be able to bypass inbound spam filters and have their mail delivered directly to the user's inbox.

The predictable backlash will come from this, but in terms of what we think about it here at easyDNS, we're ambivalent. We should go on record to our users now to state that we will not pay AOL or Yahoo on a per-email basis to get forwarded mail through. Mail passing through our forwarders will still be accepted by Yahoo and AOL, but if they add additional restrictions to it based on the fact that we haven't paid for preferred delivery, I foresee a mass exodus of email accounts from both services.

We are currently whitelisted by AOL, and I would even consider paying a monthly or annual license fee for that status based on our mail volumes, it would help us further differentiate as a premium domain manager and provide incentive to ramp up our spam filtering here (we're working on that as we speak). But the per-email delivery charge doesn't fit the model for mail forwarders and I see few, if any eager to assume those fees.

As mail forwarders, we're largely indifferent to where we forward our members' email to and our entire value proposition is based on the concept of giving our users the ability to route their email around network outages, localized ISP failures, and procedural and commercial roadblocks such as this.

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 08:34

### **MyPrivacy upgrades and new features**

The MyPrivacy.ca whois-record-spamguard system has been upgraded to new hardware and now supports personalized whitelists.

This means individual users can add their own whitelists, either email based or hostname based, which opens myprivacy.ca up to much more flexibility beyond protecting your whois records.

An myprivacy.ca accounts are still free.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 08:31

Monday, November 28, 2005

### Domain suffixes not an endangered species

I've seen several references to the firm that wants to get rid of net suffixes over the weekend, and at the risk of sounding like a stuffy curmudgeon I have to state my suspicion that it is at least partially attributable to a "slow technews weekend" after the US Thanksgiving. From monday morning's vantage point this outfit's 15 seconds of fame have probably already expired.

At first glance I thought this was another doomed protocol to sit on top of the DNS layer like the long defunct Realnames but further reading reveals this to be just another alternate root server initiative.

Whenever these things are brought to my attention I am quick to concede a few points: There is nothing revolutionary or innovative about creating an alternative root structure. All it takes is a nameserver. You can load anything you want into your root hints file and then try to convince people to use it. The current state of the DNS and the internet naming structure is built entirely on consensus and held together by convention. Thus, it is theoretically possible to alter consensus and change convention. There probably exist already "private" roots outside of the legacy namespace which are not visible to the world at large and this is intentional and by design (most VPNs can fit in the category but I suspect there are "pseudo-public" ones. My theoretical example has always posited the existence of a .CDC root for the Cult of the Dead Cow hacker group)

In practical terms, all you have to do is convince every nameserver operator in the world to change their root hints to [insert magic bullet solution to all the world's naming ills here] and if enough parties do it, absolute chaos will reign supreme until 100% uptake is achieved.

100% uptake will never be achieved. I have a friend who once made an apt analogy: "convince every car owner in the world to change their tires on the same day".

Thus, the best an alternative root structure can hope to achieve is to cause permanent and lasting damage, to in effect "break the internet".

If not enough parties do it, it will sink into the internet graveyard where all the other alternative root structures go to die. (It is a place that runs exclusively on IPv8 and INEGroup's Bindplus software has a de facto monopoly)

People may ask: Would easyDNS "support" these alternative roots? Our reply is that we'll provide DNS for anything our members want DNS for. If you want to give some company \$1000 USD to register "mycompany" as a Top Level Domain in a namespace nobody else on the planet can see, we'll provide DNS for it on request. It's your money. (We will caution you up front that this borders on vapourware) but to us it's just another zone in our nameservers (one that doesn't get a whole lot of queries).

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 10:01

Monday, September 19, 2005

### Does your business advertise via PPC? Then stop paying for spammed clicks

One hears many complaints about Technorati's blog search engine, that all it does it return "useless" blogspam search results. Is this a sign of a "bad" search engine or is it indicative of a deeper problem within the blogosphere itself, that it's riddled with blogspam and automatically generated scraper sites? (Blogger is particularly bad because of its "export" feature. Spammers can export their entire blog to a remote server, thus scraper sites can distribute themselves over multiple IP addresses and keyword stuffed domain names and leverage the resulting linkpop into search engine results).

I've been noticing my technorati search for easyDNS almost always turns up more blog spam than anything else, i.e. <http://www.dnshostingpro.info/dns-hosting/dns+hosting.html>"Today's DNS Hosting Article" is a joke, it looks like the ad copy from ours and our competitors' Adwords campaigns being scraped out and simply concatenated into an keyword stuffed blob of crap with a Google Adsense block running over it. So those of us buying keywords via Google are paying for these ads on these scraper sites and something tells me those clicks are garbage traffic.

Last night I remembered that you can now click on the "Ads By Goooooogle" link in the corner of the Adsense block and report a policy violation, which I am now doing. I report that as a paying Adwords advertiser I'm not impressed seeing my keywords scraped and recycled into blogspam, only to pay for the priviledge of having my own ads run on them.

I think anybody buying Adwords should think about doing this. It only takes a minute: Subscribe to your own company name via Technorati's blog search and then complain about the blog spam you find scraping your ads. You'll be doing yourself and the blogosphere a service.

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 11:45

Wednesday, July 6, 2005

### **Widespread PHP vulnerability in XML-RPC**

I didn't bother mentioning the new PHP XML-RPC vulnerability to somebody yesterday, assuming they already knew. Alas, they got burned by it so I'm making it a point to mention these things in a widespread generic sense from now on. As such: if you are running PHP content management systems like blogs, postnuke or anything that uses PEAR XML\_RPC

Posted by easyDNS: of Interest in via easyDNS blog at 14:58

Friday, June 3, 2005

### Domain name dispute in Canadian House of Commons

It'll be interesting to see what comes of the domain name dispute debate which took place in the House of Commons over same-sex marriage opponents who registered MP's names as domains and setup websites on them to drum up support for their cause. As Michael Geist comments, the actions are nebulous and under the current rules in place at CIRA, these do not constitute "bad faith" registrations and thus not really eligible for action under the CDRP. I don't expect this to be added to the agenda for next week's CIRA Board meeting in St. John's Newfoundland (my last one as a director), but we may get a few questions on it during the public forum. What eludes me in this day and age is how semi-public figures like politicians don't bother registering their own names as domain names as a matter of course. At the very least they can avoid situations like this and at best the clueful (and bold) ones can run blogs on their own domain names. Note: I later found out that this domain was registered and then allowed to lapse, where it subsequently washed out via TBR and was picked up by the current registrant. While there are, I am sure, other members of the politburo who have not adequately guarded their own named domains, this illustrates another point, that of formulating a coherent domain registration and retention policy within your organization, as described in our Domain Management Resources: 10 Domain Management Tips article.

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 13:07

Thursday, May 19, 2005

### Canadian Anti-Spam Task Force report

Yesterday Industry Canada's Anti-Spam Task Force delivered its report. Included therein was a group of industry best practices assembled by the Working Group on Network Technology sub-group which I was privileged to take part in. This analysis is posted on CircleID while Michael Giest, who was on the Task Force and chaired the Legal Issues Working Group, discusses next steps at his webpage. In a nutshell, the ISP Best Practices are as follows:

1. All Canadian registrants and hosts of domain names should publish Sender Policy Framework (SPF) information in their respective domain name server zone files as soon as possible. [Follow this link if you are interested in implementing SPF on your domains at easyDNS]
2. ISPs and other network operators should limit, by default, the use of port 25 by end-users. If necessary, the ability to send or receive mail over port 25 should be restricted to hosts on the provider's network. Use of port 25 by end-users should be permitted on an as-needed basis, or as set out in the provider's end-user agreement / terms of service.
3. ISPs and other network operators should block email file attachments with specific extensions known to carry infections, or should filter email file attachments based on content properties.
4. ISPs and other network operators should actively monitor the volume of inbound and outbound email traffic to determine unusual network activity and the source of such activity, and should respond appropriately.
5. ISPs and other network operators should establish and consistently maintain effective and timely processes to allow compromised network elements to be managed and eliminated as sources of spam.
6. ISPs and other network operators should establish appropriate intercompany processes for reacting to other network operators' incident reports.
7. ISPs, other network operators and enterprise email providers should communicate their security policies and procedures to their subscribers.
8. ISPs and other network operators should implement email validation on all their Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) servers (inbound, outbound and relay).
9. Non-delivery notices (NDNs) should only be sent for legitimate emails.
10. ISPs and other network operators should ensure that all domain names, Domain Name System (DNS) records and applicable Internet protocol (IP) address registration records (e.g. WHOIS, Shared WHOIS Project [SWIP] or referral WHOIS [RWHOIS]) are responsibly maintained with correct, complete and current information. This information should include points of contact for roles responsible for resolving abuse issues including, but not limited to, postal address, phone number and email address.
11. ISPs and other network operators should ensure that all their publicly routable and Internet-visible IP addresses have appropriate and up-to-date forward and reverse DNS records and WHOIS and SWIP entries. All local area network (LAN) operators should be compliant with Request for Comments (RFCs) 1918 "Address Allocation for Private Internets." In particular, LANs should not use IP space globally registered to someone else, or IP space not registered to anyone, as private IP space.
12. ISPs and other network operators should prohibit the sending of email that contains deceptive or forged headers. Header-tracing information should be correct and compliant with relevant RFCs, including RFC 822 and RFC 2822, and reference domains and IP addresses should have up-to-date, accurate registration information.

I'll follow up in a later post on my personal thoughts on these recommendations but I will mention here that I'm very happy to see #9. The amount of backscatter clogging up the net from broken spam and virus blockers is just compounding the problem and helping absolutely nobody.

Posted by easyDNS: Domain Industry Watch in via easyDNS blog at 17:53