

Q4 2025

# New gTLD

# Report

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# Letter From the Editor

## "I'll be back:" Another Report Is Here

Suddenly, 2025 is nearly in the rearview mirror, which seems oddly too soon but still fits at the end of this busy year. As we publish our Q4 report, the Northern Hemisphere holiday movie season is about to kick off. With a 2025 remake of the 1987 Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle "The Running Man"<sup>1</sup> about to be released (at the time of this writing) with Glen Powell in the titular role,<sup>2</sup> what better way to introduce this quarter's report than with references to some of Arnold's most famous movies?

### Total Recall<sup>3</sup>

This 1990 science fiction thriller finds Arnold going on a spy-interrupted trip to Mars. Our first article this month is an interview with Stefan Pattberg, the Managing Director of DENIC Services GmbH & Co. KG, who tells us all about what a data escrow agent does – maintaining 'total recall' of the information from a registry so as to be able to put it back together. See the article to understand how it works.

### Twins<sup>4</sup>

Arnold stretched himself as an actor while starring in this 1988 fish-out-of-water comedy with his unlikely brother Danny DeVito. Our second article this month is our latest in our 'Focus on Security' series, which goes over 'twin' security features in a dotBrand registry. Read more to find out exactly what they are.

### Terminator 2<sup>5</sup>

In this 1991 sequel to his breakthrough 1984 time travel hit 'The Terminator,'<sup>6</sup> Arnold returns from the future this time as the helpful and protective cyborg of the title. In our third article, we talk about applying the structure of the SWOT Analysis exercise to the dotBrand application decision. Will the SWOT be the hero like Arnold was? Check it out and let us know your own dotBrand ending.

### Predator<sup>7</sup>

1987 found Arnold knee deep in the jungle, running around after an invisible creature from outer space. While most ICANN attendees won't be shouting "get to the chopper!" as they fly or "Zoom" to the next ICANN meetings in 2026, we can now tell you what those locations are.

And with that our introduction is done. Enjoy the articles and I'll see you another time, per The Running Man... "Ah, he had to split."

Best,

**Chris Niemi**

Manager, Strategic Initiatives

- [1. imdb.com/title/tt0093894](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093894)
- [2. runningmanmovie.com/home](https://www.runningmanmovie.com/home)
- [3. imdb.com/title/tt0100802](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100802)
- [4. imdb.com/title/tt0096320](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096320)
- [5. imdb.com/title/tt0103064](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103064)
- [6. imdb.com/title/tt0088247](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088247)
- [7. imdb.com/title/tt0093773](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0093773)

# In the Spotlight: **DENIC Services GmbH & Co. KG.**

The domain industry has many members who perform different functions with respect to generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs).

In this report, we speak with our special guest, Stefan Pattberg, the Managing Director of an ICANN-approved<sup>1</sup> Data Escrow Agent, DENIC Services GmbH & Co. KG. In the past, we primarily focused on the Registry Service Provider (RSP), also sometimes known as the BackEnd Registry Operator (BERO), and the Brand Registry Group<sup>2</sup> (BRG) in last quarter's report.



Stefan **Pattberg**

**Managing Director**

DENIC Services GmbH & Co. KG.



Chris **Niemi**

**Manager, Strategic Initiatives**

Markmonitor

## Data Escrow and the Domain Name Ecosystem: An Interview with Stefan Pattberg of DENIC Services GmbH & Co. KG.

■ **Chris Niemi (CN):** Hi Stefan, thank you for joining me today.

Before we get into the details, let's start with a broad description of what data escrow is. Per ICANN, data escrow is described as when:

ICANN-approved registrars and registries are required to store copies of some of their registration data with a neutral third party to ensure continuity if the registrar or registry ceases to operate.<sup>3</sup>

That is, a registry or registrar regularly 'escrows data' per requirements in its respective agreement (the Registry Agreement<sup>4</sup> for registries or the Registrar Accreditation Agreement<sup>5</sup> for registrars).

▲ **Stefan Pattberg (SP):** Yes, that is right.

For a bit more context, in case a registrar or registry fails or loses accreditation, ICANN uses the escrowed data to transition domain operations to a successor provider or an Emergency Back-End Registry Operator (EBERO). That minimizes the time of non-availability and the risk of loss for all registrants. This is the main measurement for ICANN to ensure continuity on the Internet.

The successor provider uses the escrow data to maintain DNS resolution and registrant rights. The escrow data contains all essential registration data needed to:

- Rebuild the registry or registrar database
- Restore DNS service
- Ensure registrants retain control of their domain names during a transition

## The Role of Data Escrow Agents

■ **CN:** That all sounds very important. Can you explain in plain terms what a data escrow agent does in the domain name ecosystem?

▲ **SP:** On the one hand, registration data is business data of very high value to registrars and registries. From a technical point of view, it is a business's core data, and nobody wants to share valuable business data with other parties if they can avoid doing so.

On the other hand, such data is needed to ensure continuity for registrants and the internet community as a whole.

The Data Escrow Agent bridges that gap by being a trustee that has no interest in that data except to manage that data exclusively according to the rules that ICANN has set. After having validated a deposit as being compliant with ICANN standards, the Data Escrow Agent has no right to use that deposit in a way other than storing it safely and securely until it either has to be deleted (after one year) or to be delivered to an ICANN nominated successor.

Being the sole Designated Data Escrow Agent<sup>6</sup> for Registry Data Escrow services for ICANN, more than 95% of all ICANN-accredited registrars are depositing with us. On the registry side, we deposit more than 51% of all global domain names.

That shows that a lot of players in this ecosystem trust us and deposit their high value business data with us. We understand this as an important obligation, and that is why our company's motto is: WE PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS.

■ **CN:** What kinds of data are stored in escrow (registrant data, DNS records, etc.)?

▲ **SP:** The formats of deposits from registrars and registrants are different. But the formats are well-defined: for registries, the format is in the Registration Data Policy, and for registrars, the format is in the Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) specifications. Such data includes:

- Details about the Registrant, e.g., the Organization Name,
- Administrative and technical contacts
- Registration dates
- DNS name server data
- Status codes
- Optional: reseller info or billing data

That is the kind of data needed for a successor to continue the service.

■ **CN:** How do you support applicants during ICANN's pre-delegation testing (also known as Registry System Testing) and ongoing compliance audits?

▲ **SP:** Every applicant must not only choose a Data Escrow Agent but — probably more important for the applicant — a Registry Service Provider as well. Our system is already connected to almost all Registry Service Providers known today. That means that if such an RSP knows how to prepare a deposit in a way that we can validate it, it is more than likely that this will work for the pre-delegation test, too.

However, we offer to validate test deposits and help the registry service providers to sort out any problems that come up.

■ **CN:** How is the data encrypted, transmitted, and stored to prevent unauthorized access?

▲ **SP:** Once the deposit has been fed with the requested data according to the required formats, the deposit is encrypted via our

public PGP key. That ensures it can only be decrypted by us. Then the Registry Service Provider signs the deposit using its own PGP key. This signature helps us to prove the integrity of the deposit and that it has been sent by the right organization.

We decrypt the deposit for the validation, re-encrypt it, and store it only in an encrypted way. At no time is the data being stored in an unencrypted manner.

Furthermore, only authorized staff have access to the stored deposits, and there is no link from the internet to the final storage. All access is logged.

In general terms, we are certified according to the ISO27001 and ISO22301 standards. This shows our customers that we are managing IT security and business continuity via established best practices.

And with that I think we have covered the basics of data escrow in the domain space. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about this!

■ **CN:** Thank you for educating our readers on data escrow and your specific services.

With the Next Round fast approaching, data escrow will be an important component of overall services that dotBrand applicants will need to take into consideration.

1. [icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators/services/data-escrow#approved](https://icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators/services/data-escrow#approved)
2. [brandregistrygroup.org](https://brandregistrygroup.org)
3. [icann.org/en/icann-acronyms-and-terms/data-escrow-en](https://icann.org/en/icann-acronyms-and-terms/data-escrow-en)
4. [icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement](https://icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement)
5. [icann.org/en/contracted-parties/accredited-registrars/registrar-accreditation-agreement](https://icann.org/en/contracted-parties/accredited-registrars/registrar-accreditation-agreement)
6. [icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-announces-denic-as-sole-icann-designated-registrar-data-escrow-agent-17-07-2023-en](https://icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-announces-denic-as-sole-icann-designated-registrar-data-escrow-agent-17-07-2023-en)

# Focus on Security: dotBrands and Their Benefits Against Transfers and Registry Takedowns

In the latest installment of our 'Focus on Security' series, we explore two straightforward yet often under-discussed concepts that are integral to the foundational principles of operating a dotBrand registry and offer significant security benefits.

Continue reading to learn how dotBrand gTLDs offer:

1. Protection against malicious or accidental domain name transfers
2. Functionally zero DNS abuse that results in registry takedown avoidance

## Transfers Aren't Us

The first concept comes from ICANN's Specification 13<sup>1</sup>, which defines a dotBrand gTLD or 'closed' registry.

Those in the domain space take for granted that Specification 13 determines such things as the limitations of a dotBrand's potential registrants, noting that "only Registry Operator, its Affiliates or Trademark Licensees [can be] registrants of domain names in the TLD."<sup>2</sup>

'Spec 13' also limits the number of registrars for a dotBrand; a Registry Operator must "designate no more than three ICANN accredited registrars at any point in time to serve as the exclusive registrar(s) for the TLD."<sup>3</sup>

So, what does this mean in practice?

As the majority of dotBrand registries have fewer than 2,000 domains registered,<sup>4</sup> supporting a dotBrand is not a volume play for a registrar. Likewise, a dotBrand registry generally does not find it price effective or efficient to engage with more than one registrar at a single time given the often fewer number of domains in question. As such, the single registrar dotBrand model rules the day.

And why is that important?

If there is only a single registrar on a dotBrand gTLD, it means there is no second, third, or fourth registrar available to transfer a domain to, unlike on an open gTLD (whether 'legacy' or 'new'). And so, for dotBrands, domain hijacking functionally does not exist.

No threat of domain hijacking is a clear security advantage for dotBrand domains, and

gives the registry operator one less security issue to worry about.

## Down With the Takedowns

The second security concept comes from the registry operator requirements of the ICANN Registry Agreement (hereafter RA).<sup>5</sup> As part of the RA, the registry operator must address DNS Abuse as follows:

Where a Registry Operator reasonably determines, based on actionable evidence, that a registered domain name in the TLD is being used for DNS Abuse, Registry Operator must promptly take the appropriate mitigation action(s) that are reasonably necessary to contribute to stopping, or otherwise disrupting, the domain name from being used for DNS Abuse.<sup>6</sup>

The mitigation actions can vary, up to and including the registry operator executing a suspension of the DNS on a domain name (a 'takedown').

Mitigating DNS Abuse is a legitimate activity and an important responsibility of both registries and registrars, having been a large focus of the ICANN community over the past few years.

That said, the RA does not differentiate between open or restricted gTLDs and dotBrand gTLDs, so all registry operators are held to the same standards.

As one might imagine, operational and support models of registry operators can vary widely. For instance, there are open registries with domains under management in the hundreds of thousands or millions with similar numbers of unrelated registrants. On the other end of the continuum, there are dotBrand registries

that have 20 domains registered in total and all to a single registrant.

The larger registries may have large and sophisticated abuse management systems and teams that offer varying levels of decisive mitigation actions tied to potentially relatively short response times, especially given the high levels of DNS abuse conducted via bad actors in their respective TLDs. Unrestricted and inexpensive TLDs sometimes find themselves in this 'high abuse' area.

While an 'act quickly and decisively' mindset is often appropriate or even encouraged, especially in situations where phishing or other fraudulent activities are occurring, it can be inappropriate at other times. That is, a dotBrand registry may have functionally zero DNS abuse given its high level of internal controls and organizational policies that affect how and when a dotBrand gets registered.

This is all to say that while a dotBrand registry operator obviously needs to follow appropriate DNS Abuse mitigation activities per the RA, by its nature, a dotBrand will functionally self-select itself out of the need to do so aggressively given its overall lack of DNS abuse in the registry. *[Editor's note: there are a small number of dotBrand registries that are using their dotBrands as parts of services delivered to third parties and may have some DNS abuse, but those are a corner case that is outside the scope of this discussion.]*

### **Why Should Domain Takedown Risk Matter for Brands?**

In the illustrations of open TLDs given above, domain name holders may be under the rules of registry operators who can sometimes be

unpredictable in exactly how takedowns are done, as well as how quickly they are done (this can be particularly unnerving in smaller and less sophisticated ccTLD registries).

Having a dotBrand can give the domain name holder peace of mind as they are now both the registrant and registry operator, so they hold the power to write strong policies for acceptable use while also having the ability to 'enforce on themselves' as it were. Obviously, a dotBrand needs to conduct itself appropriately and follow the rules of the RA, but it can sleep a little more soundly when it knows that the registry and the registrant are one and the same, with the former likely to avoid ever taking down the domain of the latter.

### **Additional dotBrand Security Benefits**

Running a dotBrand gTLD is a way for a brand holder/registry operator to control an entire namespace and maximize its security approach.

Owning a dotBrand can make unwanted domain transfers a thing of the past, as well as eliminate exposure to unpredictable registries that could intentionally or unintentionally take down a domain.

DotBrands can also deploy additional measures, such as utilizing DNSSEC on dotBrand domains, implementing PSD DMARC on a dotBrand gTLD, and adding the gTLD to the HTTP Strict Transport Security (HSTS) Preload List, to strengthen its security posture.

### **Considering Applying for a dotBrand?**

If your organization would like to apply for its

own dotBrand gTLD in the ICANN New gTLD Program: Next Round<sup>7</sup> in April 2026 to utilize the security features described above, please contact your Domain Portfolio Advisor or reach out to us here.<sup>8</sup>

Otherwise, check our next report to see what else is happening in the New gTLD space.

1. [icann.org/en/registry-agreements/related-materials#specification-13](https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/related-materials#specification-13)
2. [Ibid, Section 9.3, ii.](#)
3. [Ibid, Section 5.](#)
4. [ntldstats.com/tld](https://ntldstats.com/tld)
5. [icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement](https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement)
6. [Ibid, Specification 6, Section 4.2.](#)
7. [newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2](https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2)
8. [markmonitor.com/dotbrand](https://markmonitor.com/dotbrand)



# SWOT Analysis

## Is a dotBrand Right for You?



## SWOT Analysis to Help With dotBrand Considerations

In this article, we outline an exercise that can help potential applicants who are undecided about whether to proceed with a dotBrand application make a decision.

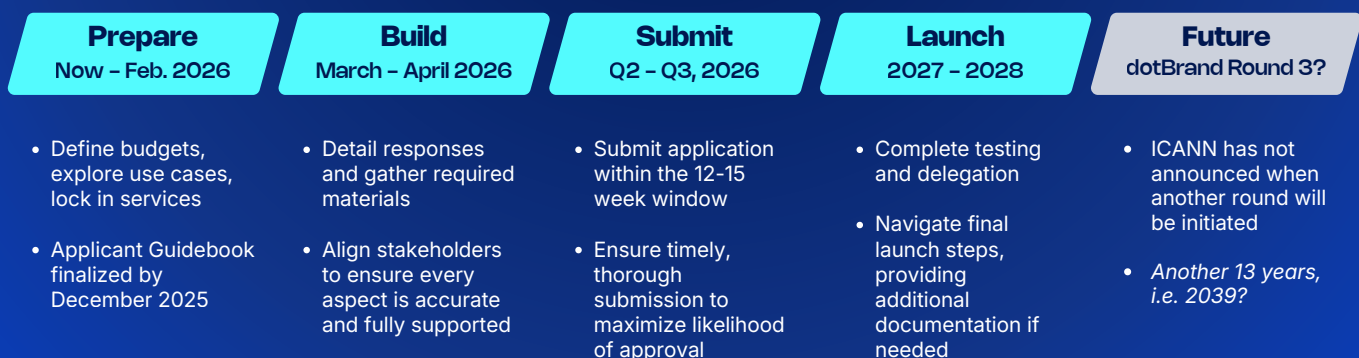
This brings us to the SWOT Analysis, a tool that's become common over the last ~70 years in business schools around the world.

The SWOT Analysis is “a strategic planning tool that assesses four key elements — strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) — to inform decision-making and improve competitive advantage in business and other domains.”<sup>1</sup> Now the last word in that sentence clearly means the broader idea of “a sphere of knowledge, influence, or activity”<sup>2</sup> but given that we are talking about the domain name space we will take it... literally.

While the origins of the SWOT analysis go back to either the 1950s at Harvard Business School<sup>3</sup> or the 1960s at Stanford Research Institute,<sup>4</sup> depending on the source, it became a popular tool in the late 1980s and is still used up through the modern day.<sup>5</sup> It can be argued that the tool might be an oversimplification in complicated business circumstances, but for our purposes of analyzing how a company might make a ‘go/no-go’ decision on applying for a dotBrand generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) it is a useful enough framework from which to start.

## Next Round Timeline for Decision-Making and Application

As we know, the ICANN New gTLD Program: Next Round<sup>6</sup> is on a timetable<sup>7</sup> so whether they like it or not, would-be applicants have a clock ticking in the background with an uncertain next round potentially years later, as seen in the timeline below.



Applying for a gTLD requires an organization to pay a substantial application fee (minimum of \$227,000 USD), submit numerous pages of answers to ICANN (including important business data and information), and respond as needed throughout multiple months of evaluation steps and processes.

Considering that an organization needs to marshal a lot of resources to apply for a dotBrand, and must do so in a relatively short timeframe, it may prove fruitful for an organization to work through a relevant strategic exercise, and that's where the SWOT analysis comes in.

*[Editor's notes:*

- 1. The process of strategy development is highly contextual to the organization doing it, the industry they are in, as well as the broader economic conditions so while we will discuss some broader issues, they might not apply to everyone.*
- 2. The idea of this exercise is to complete it internally and relatively quickly to reach a decision shortly. Given the time frames in play, working with outside strategy consultants on formal projects that could take weeks to complete the analysis is likely a non-starter.*
- 3. We will be talking about dotBrand strategy as a subset of the organization's larger domain strategy; the organization's broader business strategy is outside of this scope.]*

With that said, let's dive into the elements of a SWOT analysis and review ideas and examples.

## S – STRENGTHS

As simple as it sounds, strengths simply mean what your organization or brand is good at ("what is on your side?"). Ideas or examples to consider might be:

- **Overall Domain Strategy:** I have an existing, well-defined domain management strategy where adding a dotBrand would make sense.
- **Brand String – Strength and Structure:** I have a brand that is clear and logical in the language represented, character set used, and number of characters in the brand.
- **Business Structure:** I have a clear Affiliate/Franchise model where the 'parent company/home office' wants control over all online presence.
- **Industry Fit<sup>8</sup>:** My brand operates in one of the following industries: Financial Services, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Retail & eCommerce, Technology & SaaS, Travel & Hospitality.
  - High-value transactional and regulated industries are of particular interest.
- **Company/Brand Name Fit<sup>9</sup>:** My company/brand name is in one of these descriptors: Short/Memorable, Initial-based, Online-Native/Digital-First, High Security/Continuity Requirements, Common/Generic Trademarks

There are many other potential strengths that may be relevant so be sure to consider anything that applies to your organization and/or brand.

## W – WEAKNESSES

The flip side of strengths — these are the challenges that your organization faces (“What do I need help with?”).

Ideas to consider might be:

- **Overall Domain Strategy:** I have a current domain management strategy that is poorly defined
- **Business Structure:** I have a decentralized business model with lots of independent business units spread globally that manage their domains locally
- **Application Fee:** I see the \$227,000 ICANN Application Fee as a high cost that my organization may not want to pay
- **Organizational Inertia:** My organization lacks understanding of domains and how to manage them across functional teams – missing how they can contribute to brand protection and other worthwhile efforts
- **Unclear Use Cases:** My executives cannot understand the value of a dotBrand based on what existing dotBrands are currently doing in their respective industries, so they are not confident
- **Brand String – Strength and Structure:** I have a brand that simply not work within the Applicant Guidebook<sup>10</sup> rules or doesn't make sense (language/character set/number of characters)

Other weaknesses should be considered as well within the context of your domain management structure as well as potential brand string, etc.

## O – OPPORTUNITIES

These are areas that the organization can take advantage of in regard to competitors (“Where can I get an edge?”).

Ideas to consider might be:

- **Innovation/future technologies:** I would like to be ready for the future and access or maximize new technologies through a dotBrand [see our recent piece on AI and Search<sup>11</sup>]
- **Security:** I would like to improve my security posture and stand out as a more secure option in the market for prospects and customers
- **Improvements in Domain Management:** I would like to optimize my overall portfolio while lowering future costs via purchasing fewer expensive aftermarket domains
- **Branding/Authenticity:** I would like to strengthen my brand and my relationship with my customers by conveying the source of valid and authentic information on emails, websites, and other sources more clearly
- **Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs):** My organization does business in geographies that speak in languages primarily outside of English

There may be other opportunities as well that should be examined.

## T – THREATS

These are the areas that might cause an organization difficulty.

Ideas to consider might be:

- **Competitor Activity in Same Industry:** I have direct competitors who have existing dotBrand gTLDs, and/or I anticipate they would apply in this gTLD application window
- **Competitor Activity in Trademark Space:** I know another party with the same trademark or with a similar trademark (different trademark class) or in a different industry
- **Future Round (post-2026) Timing Uncertainty:** As I don't know when the next application window after 2026 is, I think there could be organizational risk in not applying in 2026
- **Increased Regulation:** I don't know if changes to government or industry regulation could affect digital/authenticated identity, so I want to act now

There are clearly many threats to a business or a brand, these are just a few but are meant to get you thinking about what could happen.

### Conduct a SWOT Analysis of Your Own

Taking all that into account, you can use these materials as a jumping-off point to complete your own SWOT Analysis, referencing our template on the following pages.

1. [thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/swot-analysis](https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/swot-analysis)
2. [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domain](https://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/domain)
3. [hbs.edu](https://hbs.edu)
4. [sri.com](https://sri.com)
5. [thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/swot-analysis](https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/swot-analysis)
6. [newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2](https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2)
7. [markmonitor.com/blog/dotbrand-new-gtlds-a-timeline](https://markmonitor.com/blog/dotbrand-new-gtlds-a-timeline)
8. [markmonitor.com/blog/5-sectors-that-should-consider-applying-for-a-dotbrand-in-2026](https://markmonitor.com/blog/5-sectors-that-should-consider-applying-for-a-dotbrand-in-2026)
9. [markmonitor.com/blog/5-types-of-company-names-that-work-well-as-dotbrand-gtlds](https://markmonitor.com/blog/5-types-of-company-names-that-work-well-as-dotbrand-gtlds)
10. [newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/agb](https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/agb)
11. [markmonitor.com/news/maximizing-impact-dotbrands-and-ai-in-the-evolving-search-landscape](https://markmonitor.com/news/maximizing-impact-dotbrands-and-ai-in-the-evolving-search-landscape)
12. [itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/policy-development/agb-subsequent-application-rounds-topic3-10-09-2024-en.pdf](https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/policy-development/agb-subsequent-application-rounds-topic3-10-09-2024-en.pdf)

# SWOT Analysis

## Strengths

| Questions / Thoughts   | Response |
|--|----------|
| <p><b>Overall Domain Strategy:</b> Do I have an existing well-defined domain management strategy where dotBrand would fulfill a particular role/function that makes sense?</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Brand String – Strength and Structure:</b> Depending on the use case in question, does the language represented, character set used, and number of characters in the brand makes sense within the context of a dotBrand?</p>                                       |          |
| <p><b>Business Structure:</b> Many models can work successfully; Affiliate/Franchise models where the 'parent company/home office' wants control over usage might be particularly applicable.</p>  |          |
| <p><b>Industry Fit:</b> Is the Brand represented in one of the following industries that seem particularly well-suited for dotBrand use? Financial Services, Healthcare &amp; Life Sciences, Retail &amp; eCommerce, Technology &amp; SaaS, Travel &amp; Hospitality</p> |          |
| <p><b>Company/Brand Name Fit:</b> Does your company/brand name fall in one of these descriptors? Short/Memorable, Initial-based, Online-Native/Digital-First, High Security/Continuity Requirements, Common/Generic Trademarks</p>                                       |          |

# SWOT Analysis

## Weaknesses

| Questions / Thoughts   | Response |
|--|----------|
| <p><b>Overall Domain Strategy:</b> Is my current domain management strategy poorly defined? Would adding a dotBrand into the mix help or hinder my domain management approach?</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Business Structure:</b> Some business models can be more difficult to manage; for example, a decentralized business model with lots of independent business units spread globally who manage their domains locally might have issues following a structured system that a dotBrand would function best within.</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Organizational Inertia:</b> If the organization as a whole lacks understanding of domains and how they can contribute to brand protection, address that education gap so that the value of a dotBrand can be understood internally.</p>  |          |
| <p><b>Unclear Use Cases:</b> If executives cannot see the value of a dotBrand based on what existing dotBrands are currently doing in their respective industries, it may lead to a lack of faith in the relevance of a dotBrand.</p>  |          |
| <p><b>Brand String – Strength and Structure:</b> Does the language represented, character set used, and number of characters in the brand simply not work within the Applicant Guidebook rules? That is, is your brand three ASCII characters when a minimum of three are required? Or is your brand one Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) character when a minimum of two are required?</p> |          |

# SWOT Analysis

## Opportunities

| Questions /Thoughts   | Response |
|---|----------|
| <p><b>Innovation/future technologies:</b> Does getting a dotBrand give my organization potential new access to or the ability to maximize new technologies? For instance, see our recent piece on <a href="#">AI and Search</a> and how dotBrand may lead to advantages in this area.</p> |          |
| <p><b>Security:</b> Can I use dotBrand to add to my security posture? Could this make me stand out as a more secure option in the market for prospects and customers?</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Improvements in Domain Management:</b> By adding a dotBrand to my domain management strategy, can I potentially optimize my overall portfolio while lowering future costs via fewer purchases of expensive aftermarket domains?</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Branding/Authenticity:</b> Can I strengthen my relationship with my customers and thereby my brand by using a dotBrand to better convey the source of valid and authentic information on emails, websites, and other sources?</p>   |          |
| <p><b>Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs):</b> Does my organization do business in geographies that speak primary languages other than English? Would it be worth it to have a website in the local language and apply for a dotBrand in that language?</p>                             |          |

# SWOT Analysis

## Threats

| Questions / Thoughts   | Response |
|--|----------|
| <p><b>Competitor Activity in Same Industry:</b> Does your direct competitors have existing gTLDs? If not, do you anticipate they would apply in this gTLD application window? If the answer is yes to each of those questions, would that affect your decision to apply for a dotBrand?</p>                |          |
| <p><b>Competitor Activity in Trademark Space:</b> Do you have a known entity with the same trademark or with a similar trademark that may be in a different trademark class and/or in a different industry altogether? If the answer is yes, would that affect your decision to apply for a dotBrand?</p>  |          |
| <p><b>Next Round (post-2026) Timing Uncertainty:</b> The first round of ICANN's New gTLD Program opened in 2012, the Next Round opens in April of 2026, and it is not clear when a future round will occur. If that uncertainty is worrisome, would that affect your decision to apply for a dotBrand?</p> |          |
| <p><b>Increased Regulation:</b> Could possible changes in government or industry regulation down the road have effects on digital/authenticated identity? Would applying for a dotBrand now potentially minimize that risk?</p>  |          |

# SWOT Analysis

## Template

Examine and identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats your organization faces as you consider applying for a dotBrand gTLD. Use the findings from your SWOT analysis to inform your business decisions and improve your competitive advantage.

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|                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>STRENGTHS</b>     | <b>WEAKNESSES</b> |
| <b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> | <b>THREATS</b>    |

# Get Involved

## Interested in Getting More Involved With ICANN and Policy Work?

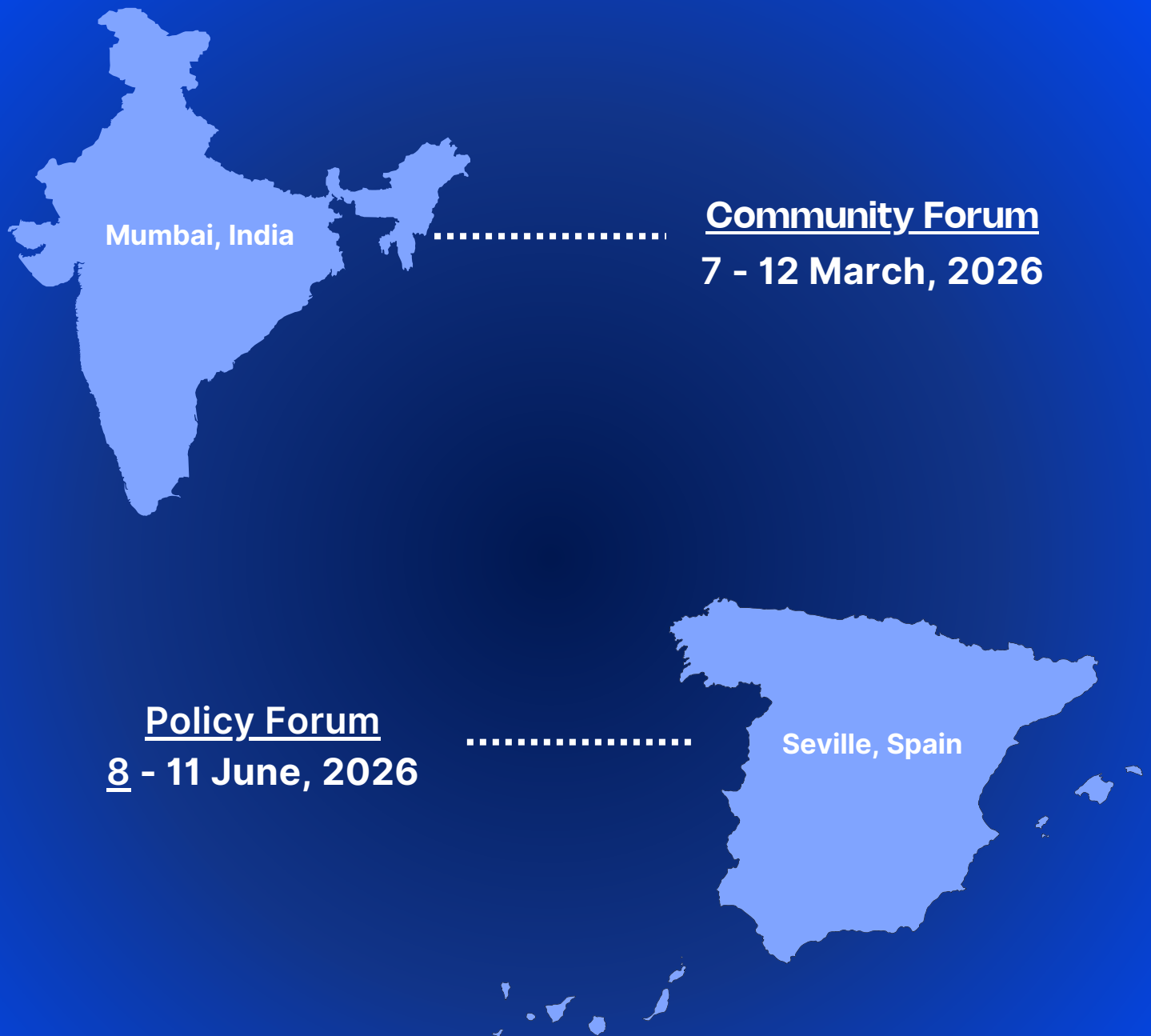
Consider joining the following groups (as relevant to your business):

- ICANN Business Constituency, [icannbc.org](https://icannbc.org)
- Intellectual Property Constituency, [ipconstituency.org](https://ipconstituency.org)
- Brand Registry Group, [brandregistrygroup.org](https://brandregistrygroup.org)



L-R: Members of Markmonitor's Global Industry Relations Team - Leanne Kenny, Heidi Zhang, Prudence Malinki, and Chris Niemi

# Upcoming ICANN Meetings





Should you need any further information or assistance, please contact your Domain Portfolio Advisor (DPA) or email [customer.service@markmonitor.com](mailto:customer.service@markmonitor.com)

Markmonitor provides strategic domain management solutions that help protect the revenue and reputation of the world's leading brands.

Since 1999, Markmonitor has served the domain portfolio needs of businesses around the globe, including many of the most visited websites in the world. An ICANN accredited domain registrar since its establishment, Markmonitor leverages its extensive industry relationships, innovative technology, and broad expertise to manage and protect company domain portfolios, all with data-driven, white-glove consultation designed to maximize domain portfolio value.