Karaitiana Taiuru
http://www.taiuru.maori.nz
8/1/2012

Feasibility of <.maori> as a new Internet address.

Discussion about the costs, procedures and the currently vast amount of space on the Internet for Māori that is either under utilised or not utilised at all. The issue that it will take at least two separate, but more likely three separate applications to have a safe .maori environment are explored the fact that there are alternatives to creating a new .maori domain.

Feasibility of <.maori> as a new Internet address.

Contents

1. Introduction

ICANN the worlds governing body of Internet Names and Numbers recently announced that anyone could apply for the creation of a new Internet address suffix to add to the current extensions such as .com, .org. , .net etc[1]. Technically this is called a GTLD – General Top Level Domain or a string. There are currently 22 GTLD's and 280 Country Code Top Level Domains including .nz .

The introduction of the new strings will see the internet flooded with new strings. In the first round there could possibly be another 1,930 strings to consider using when registering a domain name.

.maori is a possible suffix that is being discussed by groups of Māori and non Māori.

This paper explores the facts that *.maori* is both myopic and an unsustainable investment that will add no further benefits to online Māori. In fact *.maori* could in fact create more issues for Māori on the web.

I discuss the costs, procedures and the currently vast amount of space on the Internet for Māori that is either underutilised or not utilised at all. I raise the issue that it will take at least two separate, but more likely three separate applications to have a safe *.maori* environment. Then I discuss the fact that there are alternatives to creating a new .maori domain name including partnerships with other Indigenous Peoples.

Finally I recommend that if an organisation has money to invest in a new Internet sting, then some consideration could be given to *.Aotearoa* or similar that is truly representative of a bi-cultural New Zealand/Aotearoa, then I argue against this application.

---

[1] http://www.icann.org/

2. Background

New web addresses or strings are coming to the web and there is no stopping them[2]. In the first round over 1,930 applications were received for new strings[3]. The majority of applications are from conglomerates and large organisations with seamlessly endless disposable income to protect their brands such as Coke, Pepsi, Amazon etc. The end consumer- the web site owner will soon be rich in choice as to which domain they will use for their web site.

The first round of applicants will set the standards and will have the financial/legal/human resources to not worry too much about extra costs and issues that may arise. The second round will likely be those organisations with large amounts of resources but who are cautious and who can wait to see what issues may arise from the first round of applications.

The third round will likely consist of applicants who cannot afford to make a mistake and to have their application declined. If you are declined you don't get all of your money back. It is in this third round I believe we will see more culture strings and new issues of ownership and rights to access such strings.

The idea of a *.pacific* string was discussed by the Pacific Islands Internet Society (PICISOC) and decided against as there would not be enough interest and the costs were too high[4].

The Pacific Islands population is about 10 million and has a number of islands with communities and businesses that would benefit a *.pacific* string. This in comparison to the whole population of New Zealand which is less than 4.5 million, with the population of Maori being 673,00[5]. No up to date statistics exist for Māori access to the Internet, but it is likely Māori will still be lower users to the Internet via a computer and higher users of mobile access.

InternetNZ held a consultation period of its members to discuss .kiwi string[6]. After a great deal of resources and effort it was deemed not to be feasible.

---

[2] http://newgtlds.icann.org
[3] http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/program-status/application-results/strings-1200utc-13jun12-en
[4] www.picisoc.org/
[5] http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/maori-population-estimates.aspx
[6] http://internetnz.net.nz

3. Application for .maori

A hopeful applicant will firstly need to study the 338 pages of the application book to decide if they are eligible to apply for the new gtld[7].

Each application has an application fee of US$185,000 of which a non-refundable US$5,000 must be paid upon application and is not refundable if your application is declined. If you change your mind or your business changes, the refunds available vary from nothing to 80% of the application fee.

In addition to the application fee, there are other associated costs that are expected to be at least US$250,000 per annum.[8]

Applicants could partner with an organisation who is able to satisfy ICANN's financial requests, but this would create new issues and dilute the profit margins even further. It would also create a new issue of not having complete sovereignty of your own Indigenous space or at the very least you would have to create a comprehensive business plan showing how you would make a profit for that partner to come on board.

For *.maori* to be of any use to Māori, at least one extra application *.māori* (note the macron) would also need to be applied for. This would achieve three things.

(a) Duplicate the fact that *.maori.nz* is also available as *.māori.nz*
(b) Would satisfy the orthographic conventions as set out by the Māori Language Commission and is almost the standard way of writing in Māori.
(c) It is common to see both versions of the word with and with out the macron.

As macron technology is still relevantly new and for many years Māori used the German umlaut (two dots) a third application for *.mäori* may be necessary to counter cyber-squatting issues and security. For people who still use outdated macron technology, their computers place a third dot in the umlaut making it impossible to see the umlaut. Hence, in the very least, a study into the word *mäori* would be required to ensure that it is not a common word in another language that is likely to be registered as a new string.

If this preventitive step is not taken, it would be an easy task for a dubious organisation to simply register *.mäori* and bring *.maori* into disrepute, thus making it an unsafe domain to register and to be seen in with other strings such as *.tk*.[9]

There is the fourth option which could be considered and that is the fact that is acceptable to use a double vowel in place of a macron i.e. Maaori.

Assuming the application only used the two common spellings of the word Maori, the application would equate to two sums of US$185,000 which equals US$370,000 for only the application fee. This does not include the annual costs as discussed earlier.

---

[7] http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb
[8] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1lY3hUNcgg
[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.tk

Anyone with a genuine interest in Māori development and success rates could use the estimated US$1,000,000 to give every child in New Zealand/Aotearoa a laptop and training or other large scale social initiatives to assist the wider population of Māori. The return on investment would be much greater in terms of social responsibility and financial returns.

4. Who has the right to *.maori*

.maori if applied for would likely be disputed by the community on many grounds including who owns the right to *.maori* ? Is it Iwi, The Māori Council, Waitangi Tribunal or the individual or a myriad of other people and organisations. Or is *.maori* simply a term and a string that cannot be owned by any one person or organisation; Māori or non Māori.

Once ownership of the string *.maori* was settled, there would be new issues of who should profit from the string? Is it all Māori or the commercial entity who is profiteering off every person in the world who calls themselves Māori?

We have already seen one cultural string .scot for Scottish People enduring ownership disputes with the Scottish government recently giving permission to one organisation to apply for the string.[10]

---

[10] http://www.theregister.co.uk/2012/03/26/gov_gives_nod_to_scotland_domain_name/

5. .aotearoa

.maori is very restrictive in what it represents, while Aotearoa is a more general word that reflects a bi-cultural country and a name that most New Zealanders are familiar with and associate with.

Using the name would also open up a larger market of potential customers. The issue is that Aotearoa is an alternative name for New Zealand. Such a name is likely to not be allowed without the permission of the New Zealand Government.[11] Again, this would raise issues around the right of ownership of a Māori word.

The alternative would be to look at using the abbreviated version .ao and negotiate with Angola for such rights[12].

---

[11] http://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/gac-board-geographic-names-21feb11-en.pdf
[12] https://www.reg.it.ao/

6. Maori space on the Web

Māori have created small amounts of representative space on the Web in the past decade. There are options to expand this area without the need to create any further space that could turn into expensive digital ghetto.

a) .nz

There are three Māori specific domain names in the *.nz* space: *.iwi.nz*, *.maori.nz* and *.māori.nz* which is simply an alternative method of accessing *.maori.nz*.

.iwi.nz is moderated[13] so that only Iwi can use it, hence the uptake is small with only 79 registrations at the end of June 2012.[14]

.maori.nz and *.māori.nz* are open so that anyone in the world can register the domain name for whatever reason they want. Despite the openness of *.maori.nz*, there are still only 956 registrations while *.co.nz* has 425,194 at the end of June 2012.[15]

In the past the .maori.nz domain has been used for racist venting against Māori, cyber-squatting [16]. The .nz policies have assisted the demise of such web sites as have a small group of individual's (Ross Himona, Karaitiana Taiuru and Te Rangikaiwhiria Kemara) who exposed the story and contact details of the cyber squatter. [17]

The uptake for *.maori.nz* is small and a good indication that *.maori* would see a similar fate[18]. This despite the fact that *.maori.nz* has been available for over a decade and the fact that some of the many Māori web sites including the largest and popular Māori sites on the web utilise *.com* and *org.* Examples include:

maori.org

tangatawhenua.com (*.maori.nz* equivalent has been cyber squatted)

maoritelevision.com (*.maori.nz* equivalent is redirected to *.com*)

And even some Iwi still choose not to use *.iwi.nz* such as:

Te Rarawa who use *terarawa.co.nz*

Ngati Te Rangi who use *ngaiterangi.org.nz*

---

[13] http://www.register.iwi.nz
[14] http://dnc.org.nz/content/2012-06_stats.html
[15] http://dnc.org.nz/content/2012-06_stats.html
[16] http://www.taiuru.maori.nz/cybersquatting-in-the-maori-nz/
[17] http://www.nzherald.co.nz/technology/news/article.cfm?c_id=5&objectid=2497146
[18] http://dnc.org.nz/statistics/

b) New .nz strings

Before contemplating spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new string *.maori* ,there is the option to expand the *.nz* space by applying for the creation of new domains in *.nz* for the cost of NZ$1000.00 per application[19]. The application process is easy and fair. This is how *.maori.nz* was created by the author of this paper.

c) .kiwi

.kiwi is a new domain name that has been applied for as part of the first round of new domain strings[20]. *.kiwi* will be the first domain name in the world that has consulted with Indigenous Peoples and has offered a Māori bilingual domain name system of alternative names as seen in *.nz* as well as the protection of tapu (sacred) names that cannot be registered. This means that Māori will essentially have their own domain name in the .kiwi space without the issues mentioned in this paper of the application process.

---

[19] http://dnc.org.nz/content/secondleveldomains.html
[20] http://www.dot-kiwi.com/

7. Getting creative with current domain names for Māori

Other options include looking at other countries domain names and seeking a co-operative relationship, or if the domain name is open to any registrations, then simply registering in that domain.

The initial registration could be used to create sub domains to reflect Māori society such as iwi, marae etc. that would create a whole new Māori Domain Name System. Alternatively these names could be used as a URL shortener service that produces Māori Language specific domain names.

The list below is a list of the obvious domain names that are Māori language and society ready and applicable[21].

.ai , .ae , .ae , .ai , .am , .ao , .au , .co , .fm , .ie , .io , .ke , .ki , .ma , .me , .mo , .mu , .na , .ng , .ne , .pa , .re , .ro , .ru , .ru , .to , .tv, .mobi, .tv and .biz .

---

[21] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains

8. Creating a Māori specific Alternative Domain Name System

An alternative Domain Name system that piggy backs on the current infrastructure of the Internet is possible but will only work for people who have installed a special piece of software in their computer. The alternative domain name system would not work for anyone out of your circles and is likely to attract condemnation from law enforcement, technical community and the security industries.

9. Conclusion

An application for *.maori* would not be beneficial to Māori, to New Zealand or to the Internet. There is a myriad of potential issues including allocation of funds to such a project and the fact that Māori have good representation on the Internet both internationally and locally.

There are many other more effective options that can be explored if the real need arises for greater space on the web.