

Intellectual Property & Technology Update

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IMPORTANT ALERT TO ALL BRAND OWNERS: Upcoming Launch of Unlimited Domain Extensions

After much debate, the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers \(ICANN\)](#) has now approved the implementation of the New gTLD Program (generic top-level domain program), which could result in the expansion of the number of gTLDs into the thousands. The implementation of the New gTLD Program should have a significant impact on brand owners in terms of both Internet brand real estate and brand protection.

To date, domain names have been limited to 21 top-level domains (e.g., .com, .net and .org) and country code domain names (e.g., .uk, .de and .us). The New gTLD Program will allow for the filing of an unlimited number of domain designations, ranging from generic terms (.insurance, .cars and .shopping) and geographic terms (.philly, .boston and .nyc) to established brands (.coke, .google and .exxon). Essentially, companies and organizations will be able to choose from an unlimited number of arbitrary suffixes for their internet domain names. Further, the use of non-latin characters (Arabic and Chinese) will also be allowed. Below is the planned timeline for the application process:

- Communication period opens June 20, 2011 and runs until the end of 2011
- Application window will open on January 12, 2012 and run for 90 days until April 12, 2012
- Initial evaluation results on the applications will be published in November 2012
- New gTLDs that are awarded will likely launch no earlier than 2013.

New gTLDs will be assigned based on a complex application procedure and the costs involved (\$185,000 for initial application with an annual fee of \$25,000), is expected limit the number of filings to an estimated 500-1,000 applications in the first round. According to .Nxt, Inc. there are currently already over 120 applications <http://dot-nxt.com/applicants> that will be filed during the application period, which is useful as a snapshot of the types of applications that will be filed. All information about the program, including the Applicant Guidebook, can be found via ICANN at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm>.

For further information, or for help and questions regarding the application process, please contact your relationship attorney at Blank Rome.

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