

Communications with Stakeholders

For discussion at December 2001 PAB meeting.

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Nominet should invest more in communications with stakeholders. The communication that Nominet does is generally of very high quality however there are areas where communications that are not currently carried out or could be significantly enhanced with some investment.

Obviously there are two distinct categories of stakeholders that can be dealt with in different ways - members/tag holders and the public.

The public, of course, include business and consumers. Awareness of Nominet and what it does is somewhat lacking amongst this group of stakeholders. There are many ways in which Nominet could be promoted without infringing upon others peoples interests. Consumer advertising, PR and a better web site and online communications methods could be used to contact with them.

The members and tag holders are a somewhat easier group to communicate to - we know who they are and they are (mostly) technologically competent and aware of Nominet. However they are perhaps not so aware as they should be of all the things that Nominet does. Things can be improved through better use of email lists with communiques and posting agendas. Redesigning of the web site to make it easier for the membership to get access to intricate details of Nominet and how it all works as well as introducing members/tag holder access to their accounts via the web. As for communication from members to Nominet, one member has suggested that electronic voting should be introduced in an attempt to make it easier for members to vote in Nominet ballots - this could be done automaton style.

Some rough discussion ideas for Nominet interaction with the public.

This document is a starting point for the consideration of more public interaction. It is not intended as a complete proposal to be implemented as is but providing the background for it.

Some options explored here are:

- Public online forum.
- Public announce mailing list.
- Advertising.
- Public events
- Public online Forum.

While I believe there is generally a positive perception of Nominet amongst the general public that know who Nominet is, this can too easily be harmed while there is relatively little public interaction on a regular basis.

There have been occasions where significant and very good consultations have been carried out by Nominet on specific topics but very little obvious ongoing interaction. An inexpensive way of a channel for the general public would be to open up a web based forum (mailing list also an option but reduces the ability for the less technical to participate) aimed at public discussion of Nominet and domain names in general as opposed to members discussion.

Such an area would have the benefit of allowing the thoughts of the general internet using public more carefully focussed back at Nominet rather than being picked up from discussions that occur here or there on the internet. It would provide a very easy and powerful method of Nominet ensuring its side of the story is heard by the public when there are cases of concern to the public. What is more is that it is very cheap to implement!

Public-announce mailing list

Allow the general public to supply email addresses for regular Nominet news updates by email... this can be used as an open newsletter promoting things like "me.uk" when it is to be launched.

This again is very cheap to do and the building of a community of interest around Nominet will be very helpful for obtaining future feedback.

For PR spin purposes this could be glossed up as a "community stakeholders" scheme to keep people interested.

A small amount of spin and gloss on a web site could make a large difference to general interest in Nominet and the UK namespace.

At the same time perhaps the "problems" with successfully getting addresses added to the members list could be eradicated once and for all.

Advertising

The public and businesses don't know who Nominet is, this is not an ideal situation. Some level of advertising could be carried out which could combine the following objectives:

- Educate about who Nominet is.
- Educate as to what co.uk/org.uk/ltd.uk/plc.uk/me.uk are intended for... hence generally raising the .uk profile to compete with gTLDs.
- Where you can get domains from (e.g. Members).

Perhaps combining with INCOP awareness campaigns too...

Questions may be asked as to why Nominet is advertising but Nominet is supposed to work for the benefit of the UK namespace and its stakeholders and it will fail to do so if it does not compete with gTLDs where appropriate.

Advertising could be combined with press releases to maximise the impact. It might also be possible to do so in conjunction with money from Local Development Agencies who have budgets to encourage people and business in their area onto the internet.

Is Nominets PR agency employed to carry out all round promotion or just press management?

Public events

Nominet should be out there participating and raising its profile at internet events. Internet World has exhibitions in London, Glasgow and Manchester and Nominet should be there speaking to the general public about what it does. It was pointed out that Internet World London is mostly attracts the industry rather than the public - I'm not sure if that is the same for the regional events.

In addition to participation in public events why not speak to Local Development Agencies around the country and get them to subsidise roadshows in shopping centres promoting .uk domain names? It'll easily fall in the LDA budget for getting people and businesses online and shouldn't be much of an issue since Nominet is NFP and will get you out there where the people are. It doesn't need the same level of setup as a member talkback session just a few people manning a stand... For example this could be trialled in the start up phase of me.uk promoting it as something the public need to know about...