

Composition of the PAB

I have spent some time recently trying to stand back and look at the PAB from the point of view of an outside observer and have also listened to the views of several people both inside and outside of the PAB and Nominet.

It has become clear to me that, as a group, elected PAB members are perceived by many as unrepresentative of the wider Nominet membership, and in some cases as 'crusaders' more focussed on influencing the direction the company takes than on the interests of the wider stakeholder groups. There is also a feeling that the PAB spends too much time considering detail and should step back and look at the broader policy issues, possibly giving advice on the schools of thought that exist rather than seeking to make a recommendation on every issue. It has reached the stage where the PAB is now considered by many to be holding back any changes in how Nominet operates and creating a situation where Nominet cannot be responsive to its customers needs within a reasonable timescale, to the detriment of those customers and other stakeholders.

I have concluded that the PAB as currently constituted is 'broken' and that if something isn't done then it will become irrevocably broken and may cease to exist in any meaningful sense. So I'm going to suggest some changes that I personally feel may help the PAB return to being a valuable Advisory Body.

1) I feel that there are too many people on the PAB. Experience tells me that committees numbering over 12 do not function well. Therefore I suggest a reduction in the number of the PAB to 12.

2) I feel that the proportion of elected members is out of proportion to the stated aims of the PAB to provide policy advice reflecting the views and interests of all stakeholders. Nominet members (via elected PAB members) are currently over-represented. Things have changed since Nominet was formed in 1996, when Nominet members may well have been the majority of those with a stakeholder interest in .uk. That is no longer the case. So I'd suggest that the PAB consist of 3 elected members and 9 appointed members.

3) It has long been clear that the 'one member one vote' system of electing PAB members leads to a majority of those elected coming from the smaller sized Nominet members. The lack of a PAB member with experience of the issues faced by the larger tagholders such as Pipex, Schlund, UK2, etc is (IMO) a serious flaw. So I'd suggest some kind of electoral college system of election where the three elected members would come one each from small, medium and large tagholders.

The PAB should not be about the membership of Nominet setting policy for Nominet. It should be about representatives of all stakeholders having an input into future Nominet policy.

This is a paper for discussion and it is not expected that any agreement will be reached at this meeting. The hope is that all concerned will think about the issues I have identified and the possible solutions I have proposed with a view to reaching an agreement at the March meeting.

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