

Industry Standards: PAB Discussion paper

1. Introduction.

At the November 2008 PAB meeting it was agreed that Industry Standards would become a standing item for the PAB through the years in order to help guide Nominet, it's registrars and the wider community on meeting the legitimate needs and expectations of stakeholders. At the September 2008 PAB meeting BERR had highlighted the importance of industry standards and self-regulation in order to ensure Government did not feel the need to act.

2. Background.

2.1. Regulation.

Over the years the UK government has shown it's preference for industry self-regulation being the best way to achieve public policy results while not placing unnecessary costs and burdens on industry. To this end in the UK domain names were explicitly excluded from regulation by Statutory Instrument. It is clear that the expectations on the wider topic of internet regulation (self or imposed) have grown over the years and that while the stated preference remains for the industry to sort it out that requires industry to take a pro-active approach to reach stakeholder expectations. Not all of the issues will be relevant to all members of the industry but that should not stop participation in encouraging those standards.

Self-regulation is not about "enforcement" of any particular actions but is about ways that players in the industry can come together on a socially responsible agenda within the framework of competition law that lead to the needs and expectations of stakeholders in public policy terms being met or exceeded without the significant burden and constraints of a formal regulatory framework.

2.2. Nominet's vision.

Nominet's vision is of "a world where the Internet is a trusted space, which everyone can be part of and has a positive impact on people's lives."

The actions, and reactions, of the industry to all the issues affecting the wider stakeholders in the use of the internet will clearly have a direct impact on how trusted the internet will be and ultimately the success of the internet economy.

Nominet's mission is "to make a positive difference to UK Internet users and to shape the development of the Internet. We will do this by delivering excellence and innovation in our products and services, driven by the needs of our stakeholders, and creating a company where our people love coming to work. "

There are a few ways that Nominet can make a positive difference to achieve Nominet's vision:

1. Direct actions by Nominet itself.
2. Strategic partnerships where Nominet work with others.
3. Promoting self-regulation as an opportunity for the industry and encouraging debate and action on the needs of stakeholders.

2.3 Policy Advisory Body discussions.

All members present at the November 2008 showed interest in participating in providing input into taking this topic forward. It was therefore decided that in order that everyone could be involved in a more focussed discussion as a full group this should be done at the January 2009 PAB meeting after having taken input from PAB members first. PAB members were asked to provide answers to the questions posed in the November 2008 meeting paper for input into this paper by 16th December 2008. As only 3 PAB members (Nora, Gordon and Ulrika) have given any input it seems that further discussion is required before we can progress the topics.

3. PAB Industry Standards next steps

The paper produced for the November 2008 PAB meeting raised some questions in order to help guide the discussion. These started with fact finding queries of :

1. What are the issues of concern for stakeholders in the use of the internet?

Remembering that stakeholders have a diverse range of interests there are therefore a diverse set of issues that need reconciled. In summary the issues identified so far as stakeholder concerns include:

- Trust in the online environment.
- Fraud prevention.
 - Phishing
 - Pharming
- Spam
- IP protection
- Domaining
- Other illegal activities
 - Malware
 - Child pornography
 - Hacking.
 - Denial of Service attacks
- Business viability
 - Return on investment in online marketing, sales and branding.
 - Internet as a revenue generator
 - Internet as a fundraiser for charities
 - Business continuity if supplier fails (in recession).
 - Communications supplier.
 - Hosting supplier.
 - Domain Registrar.
- Registrars
 - market forces driving prices lower
 - costs increasing.
 - threat of regulation
 - margin squeeze

1.1 Are there any missing issues or concerns?

1.2 What are our initial thoughts on these issues?

1.3 Which issues should we group together to consider the policy?

2. Which stakeholder representatives can we usefully engage to further develop our understanding of these needs and concerns?