

ICANN Domain Transfer Request Policy Puts Owners on Notice

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The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has enacted new rules for domain transfer requests. Domain owners must heighten security and account accuracy or risk losing domain ownership.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 12 November 2004, ICANN enacted new rules for domain transfers. ICANN will automatically approve domain transfer requests in five days, unless the account owner explicitly denies the request. (Currently, a domain's ownership and nameservers remain unchanged if there is no response to a transfer request.)

Analysis

The new five-day turnaround policy is one of ICANN's many new policies governing inter-registrar domain transfers. The policy aims to ease the process of moving from one registrar to another and increase competition among registrars. Timely transfers benefit businesses, but the new policy also increases the risk of domain hijacking for businesses that fail to maintain accurate registration records.

Recommendations: To reduce the risk of losing ownership, domain administrators should:

- Use a registrar that offers a "transfer lock" option, and activate the lock. A domain cannot be transferred while locked, even if the owner fails to respond to a transfer request.
- Provide contact information through role accounts handled by a group of employees, rather than a single employee. (This protects the company against problems caused by employee departures and vacations.) Examples of role account contacts include: e-mail — a "hostmaster" address that goes to a mailing list read by multiple employees; telephone — a shared voicemail box that is checked regularly; fax — a shared fax machine that is checked regularly; and postal — addressed to the IT department.
- Ensure that domain contact information is correct.
- Use the strictest level of security and verification offered by the registrar, including cryptographic methods if they are offered.
- Whenever possible, consolidate registrars and create an internal cross-domain team, with members from the IT, legal and marketing departments, to create and enforce internal domain name registration policies.

Analytical Sources: Lydia Leong, Rich Mogull and Ted Chamberlin, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "Valuing Domain Names in a Buyers' Market" — Understand how to value a domain before making an offer. **By Ray Valdes and Ted Chamberlin**
- "Multiple Internet Connections Increase Performance, Create Complexity" — Businesses purchasing multiple Internet access links should balance the efficiencies of consolidation vs. the benefits of redundancy. **By Lydia Leong**

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