



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

15 August 2017

RESPONSE to SUSPENSION of DOMAIN NAMES WHEN WHOIS CONTACT INFORMATION IS NOT VERIFIED VIA EMAIL

Jason A. Wood
Immersion Technology, Inc.

Dear Jason A. Wood,

Thank you for your submission regarding the suspension of a domain name(s) that is imposed when the Whois contact details are not verified, and for your suggested solution that the verification process be performed during domain name renewal in order to avoid unnecessary work by all parties. I appreciate the frustration this has caused you and understand that sometimes the complex rules around domain registrations can be challenging to navigate. I've researched this issue with various departments inside the ICANN organization and worked with the Contractual Compliance team to provide you with this response.

Following my research and internal discussions, I have found out that removing the requirement for registrars to suspend domain names under certain circumstances prescribed by the [Whois Accuracy Program Specification](#) contained in the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement is not something the ICANN organization has the authority to change. While I suspect this is not the answer you were hoping for, I thought it might be helpful to provide background information as to why we are not authorized to implement your suggested changes, and some guidance on how to get involved and contribute your thoughts and ideas to ICANN's work.

ICANN is not a governmental agency but instead a private sector, non-profit organization with limited technical responsibility for coordinating the assignment of Internet domain names and IP addresses. This coordination is provided using a bottom-up, consensus-driven, multi-stakeholder model comprised of three parts: [the ICANN Community](#), [the ICANN Board](#), and [the ICANN Organization](#). The ICANN community is a volunteer-based group of diverse stakeholders from across the world. They work together to give advice and develop policy within ICANN's mission. In order to create new policies or amend existing ones, the [Policy Development Process](#) described in [ICANN's Bylaws](#) must be utilized and driven by the ICANN community. The ICANN Board is a group of representatives from the ICANN community that oversees the ICANN organization. The ICANN organization provides staff and resources to support the ICANN community and Board, and implements policies developed by the community.

The ICANN organization accredits registrars and registries to provide certain domain name registration services. ICANN's authority is purely contractual, and limited to [registrar agreements](#), [registry agreements](#), and [ICANN community developed policies](#). The agreements



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between ICANN and registrars and registries outline certain responsibilities for both ICANN, the registrar and the registry. The ICANN organization is responsible for overseeing and enforcing the contracts.

As you have identified, there is a requirement – the Whois Accuracy Program Specification – contained in registrar contracts, specifically the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement, to verify certain contact data. The 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement is the result of bilateral contract negotiations between ICANN and Registrars, input from the ICANN Community including law enforcement and the Governmental Advisory Committee, and public comments from interested parties.

The Whois Accuracy Program Specification defines standardized requirements for registrars to verify and validate Whois information and customer contact information for domain names at specified times. These specified times include within fifteen days of (1) the registration of a domain name sponsored by the registrar, (2) the inbound transfer of a domain name to the registrar, (3) any change in the registrant with respect to any domain name sponsored by the registrar or (4) the registrar having any information suggesting that the contact information on the domain name is incorrect. The Whois Accuracy Program also leaves certain implementation details to registrars providing a balance between standardized requirements applicable to all registrars, and registrars having some flexibility to do things that fit their individual business model(s). Therefore, while registrars may choose to implement additional non-standard requirements like Whois verification efforts at other times such as the domain name's renewal, registrars are still required to conduct Whois verification whenever any of these four time triggers occurs. Failure to obtain the required verification from registrants may result in suspension or deletion of the domain name(s) being verified. The easiest way to avoid suspension or deletion of your domain name(s) is to work with your registrar and respond to their verification requests within fifteen days of receipt (or sooner, as specified by the registrar). Please be aware that the Whois Accuracy Program Specification attempts to mitigate the enablement of domain name abuse that may occur because inaccurate Whois and contact information makes it more difficult to locate abusive registrants.

The multi-stakeholder model, established by ICANN's Bylaws, provides a venue for all users of the domain name system to participate in developing policies. Participating in ICANN provides the opportunity to share your thoughts and concerns regarding current and future policies and contractual requirements. I encourage you to consider contributing to the work of the ICANN community. If you're interested in learning more about how to participate, you can review the "[About ICANN](#)" section of our website. You may also want to think about reviewing and commenting on proposals through our [Public Comment Forums](#), or attending an [ICANN Meeting](#) in person or remotely.

Thank you again for your submission regarding the suspension of domain names that is imposed when the Whois contact details are not verified. For these reasons, the ICANN organization is



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unable to remove the requirement that registrars verify and validate the Whois information and customer contact information for domain names at the four specific times described above. Although ICANN cannot fulfill your request, I hope this information was useful to you.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this information and encourage you to consider participating in the ICANN model.

Kind regards,
Krista Papac
Complaints Officer
ICANN