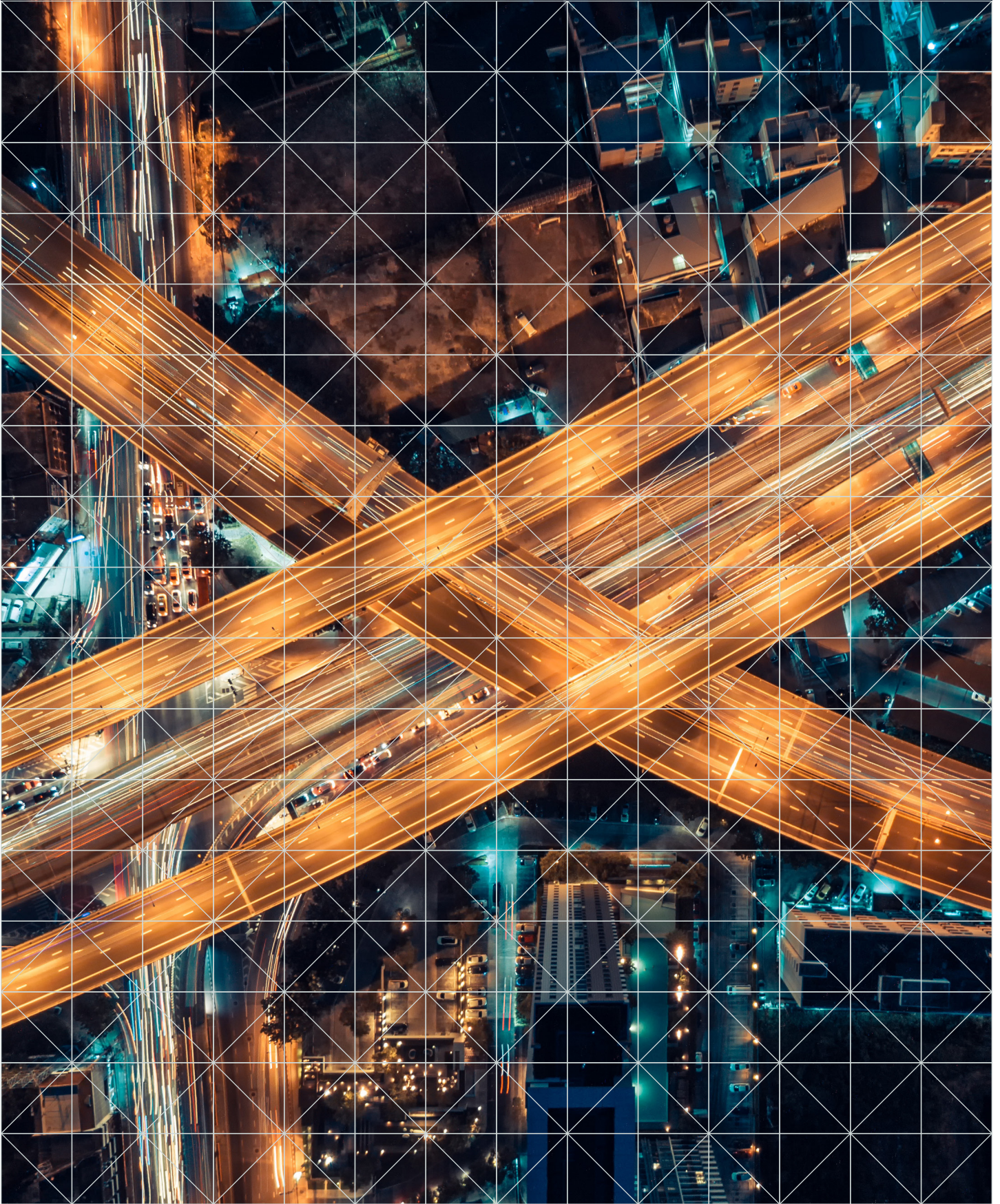


# .brand

**A 360° view on launching and operating your TLD**







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# Foreword

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In my role, I've had the pleasure of working with a large number of .brand TLD applicants over the last seven years. Each organisation has their own unique reason for applying for a TLD back in 2012 – some seeking to be digital pioneers, some simply seeking to protect their trademarks and still others with plans covering everything in between.

We are privileged to work in this space and our team here at Neustar are passionate about helping .brand TLD owners to disrupt the digital ecosystem and leave an impact for generations to come.

For most, a .brand TLD isn't going to replace your .com or other primary digital property in the short- to mid-term. To ignore the decades of customer engagement, layers of IT infrastructure and millions of dollars invested in developing these identities would be ludicrous and beyond the realms of corporate risk management, let alone common sense.

There are also many elements for us to uncover as we progress with our journey into the new .brand universe, including the impact of .brand TLDs on search and the speed of customer adoption, to name just a few. Fortunately, data from the true pioneers in this space is now available – showing us that new TLDs are working exceptionally well in search and that customers are having very little difficulty in identifying with this concept.

Furthermore, a .brand TLD also provides you with an opportunity to empower your customers and enable brand and message recall like never before through simplified domains. The effectiveness of your marketing has never been so potent and when implemented correctly, the ability to reduce your search expenditure should be immediately realisable.

It's important to remember that whilst this is a transformational project, your .brand is still you. In fact, it is a better version of you – a version that leverages your current brand values and provides it with an opportunity to be more secure, trusted and authentic.

Considering the fact that global leaders such as IBM, Apple and Google have applied for their .brand TLDs, this highlights the possible emergence of a digital 'super brand' for those that seek to harness the power of this revolutionary digital asset.

While the potential of your .brand TLD is infinite, a clear path to success can be difficult to identify given the large range of factors that must be considered. Thus, the importance of a solid and structured .brand TLD strategy has never been more critical.

To be successful, your ultimate .brand TLD strategy should be directly aligned to your goals and challenges. Creating promotional domain names such as promo.brand, whilst useful in some circumstances, simply won't cut it over the long term and does not justify the effort required. Whether you're seeking to improve customer acquisition or retention, develop deeper relationships or any other core strategic objective, actually tying your TLD to your vision will help to maximise its success and impact on your organisation.

In this free, .brand TLD whitepaper – the first ever to provide detailed strategies and a 360 degree perspective on launching a .brand TLD – we highlight our 10 step process for launching a .brand, and show you the necessary elements (both in relation to ICANN and internally) required to develop a .brand TLD strategy.

Neustar's mission for .brand TLDs is clear – we want all .brand TLDs to add genuine, long-term benefit to their respective organisations and help them to generate solid return on investment. In doing so, each of us will collectively play a role in changing the course of the Internet and leave a legacy for generations to come.

We sincerely hope that you find this document useful in helping you with your .brand journey.

In the meantime, feel free to get in touch if you'd like to discuss our approach, or need any assistance on this exciting road ahead.

Kind Regards

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# About Neustar.

Every day, the world generates roughly 2.5 quadrillion bits of data. Neustar (NYSE: NSR) isolates certain elements and analyzes, simplifies and edits them to make precise and valuable decisions that drive results. As one of the few companies capable of knowing with certainty who is on the other end of every interaction, we're trusted by the world's great brands to make critical decisions some 20 billion times a day. We help marketers send timely and relevant messages to the right people. Because we can authoritatively tell a client exactly who is calling or connecting with them, we make critical real-time responses possible. And the same comprehensive information that enables our clients to direct and manage orders also stops attackers. We know when someone isn't who they claim to be, which helps stop fraud and denial of service before they're a problem. Because we're also an experienced manager of some of the world's most complex databases, we help clients control their online identity, registering and protecting their domain name, and routing traffic to the correct network address. By linking the most essential information with the people who depend on it, we provide more than 12,000 clients worldwide with decisions—not just data.

More information is available at

[www.neustar.biz](http://www.neustar.biz)

# About This Whitepaper

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This whitepaper and accompanying template are designed for use by stakeholders of a .brand Top Level Domain (TLD) project. The documents are provided free of charge by Neustar in the hope that they will inform and inspire individuals and organisations to use their .brand TLD to its full potential.

There are three sections to the whitepaper.

## Section 1 – Our 10 Step Process for Launching a .brand TLD

### What is it?

A structured process for organisations to follow when determining the best way to launch their .brand TLD.

Includes strategy development, launch planning and setup to ensure operational readiness and risk minimization.

### How do I use it?

This section should be used as a reference 'map' to help you plan activities and keep track of where you are in the process.

Follow each step in order, utilising our suggested engagement and education processes.

By sharing this document with other stakeholders in your organisation, you can improve project buy-in and share the workload by identifying relevant contributors.

The timeline diagram for Section 1 is a useful example which you should re-create yourself to help in planning and management of the project.

## Section 2 – Understanding the ICANN Requirements

ICANN is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

This section provides the technical steps required by ICANN to get your TLD on the Internet and ready for use.

How do I use it?

This section outlines a process in terms of timing and requirements.

There are some elements which require internal effort, e.g. from legal, IT or an executive signatory.

Some requirements should be completed or guided by your Registry Services Provider.

The timeline diagram for Section 2 can be modified to include your own dates and should be a close approximation of the actual timeline experienced.

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## Section 3 – Internal Requirements for the Implementation Plan

This section provides more detail on Step 4 (Develop Implementation Plan) of Section 1.

The descriptions and examples given help illustrate the wide range of areas and tasks that must be considered to create the Implementation Plan.

How do I use it?

This section provides more detail on areas and tasks which should be considered for inclusion in the accompanying Implementation Plan template.

This is not a finite list– instead it provides examples to help understand the scope of what the Implementation Plan covers, and helps reveal the importance of participation by all senior stakeholders in the organisation.



HOW DO THE SECTIONS AND TEMPLATE WORK TOGETHER?

**Section 1 – Our 10 Step Process for Launching a .brand**

**Section 3 – Internal Requirements for the Implementation Plan**

MONTH 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

**Section 2 – ICANN Process Requirements**

# Section 1

## Our 10 Step Process for Launching a .brand TLD

As applicants edge closer to activating their .brand TLDs for commercial gain, there is often significant confusion around how the TLD could be used, as well as challenges on how the TLD integrates with existing corporate and digital strategies.

In our experience, launching a .brand is often more complex than most people expect it to be, especially in respect to its impact on every element of the organisation. From the board, to the call centre, the .brand TLD will become part of the culture or digital DNA of the organisation. To ensure that this is done as smoothly as possible, it will require:

- A structured methodology
- A deep understanding of ICANN processes
- Education and engagement of internal resources
- A clear strategy and value proposition for the .brand TLD

Our 10 step process has been continuously refined over the last five years and has been used by many organisations to provide a defined approach to getting the .brand TLD to market.

Utilisation of this 10 step process will ensure that your .brand TLD launch is in the best position to meet all of these necessary requirements, and is aligned with your corporate strategy.

In the subsequent pages of this section, we will explore what needs to

be done for each step, and importantly, how you can tell when you're ready to move to the next step.

### 10 Step Process

1 Undertake Stakeholder Engagement

2 Develop Activation Strategy

3 Develop Transition Strategy

4 Develop Implementation Plan

5 Execute Implementation Plan

6 Develop Policy Framework

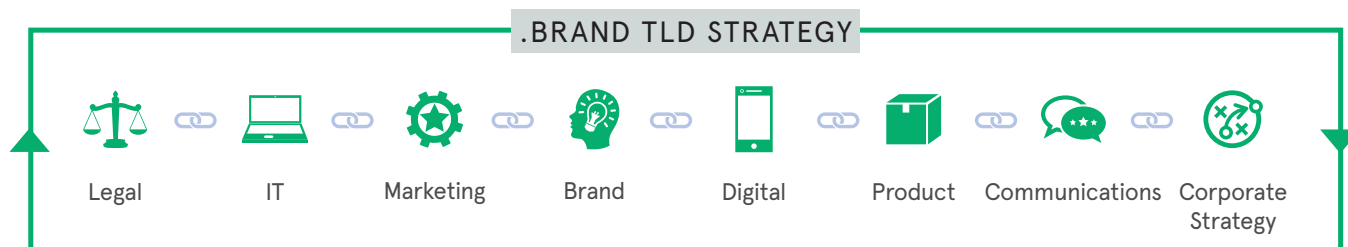
7 Testing and Operational

8 Undertake .brand TLD Launch

9 Ensure Operational/Legal Compliance

10 Monitor and Innovate

# Step 1



## Undertake Stakeholder Engagement

Cross functional awareness of new TLDs, clarity on project ownership and the opportunities afforded by owning a .brand TLD are typically extremely low amongst internal stakeholders. Considerable effort will be required to raise awareness, educate and generate excitement.

The good news is that by raising awareness and the level of enthusiasm for the .brand TLD across the organisation, you will achieve two things that directly benefit you personally:

1. Your profile in the organisation will be raised significantly. When was the last time you had the chance to be the one informing senior people of something truly innovative and transformative? One day soon you will be the one in your organisation who was the visionary.
2. Your workload and responsibility will decrease. Right now, you might be the only one taking any action. As the project progresses, the workload grows. By raising the profile of the project and gaining buy-in from senior stakeholders, delegation can occur.

Launching and operating the .brand TLD will impact the majority of your organisation. Cross-functional involvement from the beginning is the key to ensuring:

Buy-in and support from major stakeholders across the organisation

A deep range of options in which the .brand TLD could be used

Wide range assessment and impact of risks

Understanding of the resource requirements necessary to implement the chosen strategy.

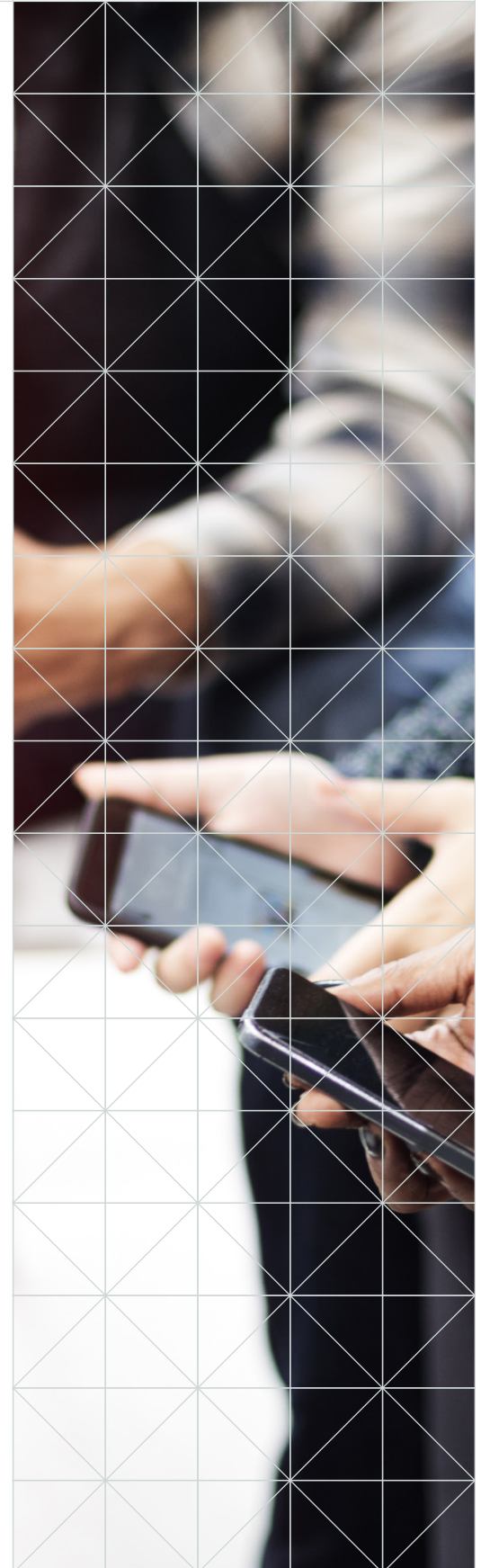
Who needs to be engaged?

The eventual owner will vary by organisation, but the scope of the project necessitates the involvement of most, if not all, functions of the organisation.

## How can you engage stakeholders?

There is no simple answer since everyone's motivations vary, but there are some tried and tested principles which could help influence the outcome:

- **Educate**  
Use whatever medium you can to communicate; videos, slide shows, internal roadshows, a quick chat over coffee, etc. Remember that many people will have little or no understanding when the topic of new TLDs is raised. Start with a background on the program. Highlight the big brands involved (Google, Apple, Nike, IBM, etc.). Show examples of early movers. There will be skeptics, but if done properly you will see people connect the dots and start thinking of possibilities on their own. Deputise these fellow-evangelists and empower them with the tools you created so they too can educate others.
- **Motivate**  
Demonstrate options for the TLD to add value to each department's current goals and ensure returns are clearly articulated. Remind attendees that you're giving them an opportunity to participate in the organisation's digital evolution. For those that don't participate, point out that the direction chosen may negatively impact them for years to come.
- **Leverage executives**  
Educating and motivating the executive member responsible for the function currently managing the .brand TLD project enables that executive member to educate and motivate other senior stakeholders, resulting in a top-down directive for support of the project.





# Step 2

## Develop Activation Strategy

Once the relevant stakeholders have been updated on what owning a .brand TLD entails and the opportunities it presents, it's time to get down to working out how the TLD can work for your organisation.

Your .brand TLD is a branded piece of the internet. It is a powerful tool, but remember that it is a tool to support your organisation's mission/vision/corporate goals. It is not a stand-alone activity that occurs off to one side. Your .brand TLD strategy should rarely bring a new corporate goal. Instead, it should enhance existing goals and bring new opportunities for branding and digital innovation.

You may have noticed that the generic examples shown are not about replacing your main existing website. That could be one of the options you explore, but it shouldn't limit your thinking in terms of other options.

It's vital to have a breadth of experience available to identify possible activation concepts and we typically run these as interactive workshops whereby we encourage all ideas – big or small. Having senior staff available for this can help to refine concepts within the boundaries of the current or future organisational goals or digital strategy. Invite your agencies – they will need to be involved downstream so it makes sense to engage them as soon as possible.

Don't be concerned if you find there are more options than you had expected as it's not uncommon to find over 100 ideas being circulated once everyone gets their creative juices flowing. Rationalising these ideas takes time and effort, but success should be measured upon having a number of qualified options.

To build your final activation strategy, evaluate concepts against:

- Alignment to existing strategy/brand value
- Cost of implementation
- Availability of resources
- Anticipated return on investment, and
- Level of effort required to educate end users

## There are numerous ways the .brand TLD can support your existing goals, but here are a few examples:

### Increase penetration into a new territory.

Launch a region-focused campaign using the new domains. Leverage existing brand qualities, e.g. atlast.brandtld if your brand is playful.

### Be seen as a leader in technology.

TLD to support a new promotional campaign for a flagship product. Use one main new domain (e.g. newproduct.brandtld) supported by regularly changing new domains in a rolling campaign.

### Customer retention.

Provide a personal online concierge via a unique domain for each high value customer, e.g. johnsmith.brandtld.



# Step 3

## Develop Transition Strategy

Now that the plan for the .brand TLD has some great ideas that have been developed by a range of key stakeholders in the organisation, the next major question is: How do we introduce this concept into our customer experience as smoothly as possible?

Focusing on the path to transition is an absolute must. From a customer's perspective, imagine their first interaction with your new .brand TLD. How will consumers and stakeholders react when they first see your .brand placed on a billboard or in a television commercial?

Your transition strategy should include tools to help overcome these mental barriers for customers and provide them with sufficient confidence and trust to support your transition to a .brand TLD.

The initial launch phase of the .brand TLD communication needs to include elements of education and evangelism of new TLDs, alongside the product/service/event you are using the TLD to promote.

Elements you may wish to consider:

- Clearly articulating a 'purpose' for your .brand TLD that doesn't confuse from your normal home page
- A communications campaign in advance of the launch
- Offering an incentive or rewarding customers who are early adopters
- Encourage two-way communication by letting customers provide feedback

Whatever your approach, the strategy for transition must be based upon consistency of messaging, clearly articulated purpose for the new TLD and a path for gradual, yet strategic roll out of the TLD.

# Step 4

## Develop Implementation Plan

An Implementation Plan considers all major elements which need to be addressed in order to launch and operate a .brand TLD. One way to understand the Implementation Plan is to think of it like a checklist to help prevent critical items being overlooked.

Based upon our extensive experience in launching major .brand TLDs around the world, we have built a proprietary .brand TLD Implementation Plan to help organisations document all of these requirements in a structured way.

The Implementation Plan is based upon 21 key areas of activity – each of which is listed in Section 3 of this document. However, it's worth noting that whilst these pillars provide a helpful guide for the activity you'll be required to do, each .brand TLD strategy is different and needs to be customised to your plan accordingly.

The Implementation Plan forms the basis for the full project plan which is followed from pre-launch through launch and ongoing operation. The internal project owner should take the Implementation Plan and develop it into a full, detailed plan with timelines and assignments that fit in with available internal resources and budget.

An Implementation Plan considers all major elements which need to be addressed in order to launch and operate a .brand TLD.



# Step 5

## Implementation Plan

Project implementation involves building and executing upon the full project plan determined in the previous step in order to launch and operate the .brand TLD. This phase will take months and depends heavily on the complexity of the organisation, the ambition of the strategy, and the length of the rollout/launch promotion.

Responsibility for the project works best in one of the two following forms:

1. **Senior project owner with project management skills. This person must be able to interact with the full range of functions inside the organisation and outside (e.g. digital agency), but also dedicate the time to executing on the full project plan.**
2. **Senior project owner plus a project manager. The senior project owner is responsible for high-level deliverables, resource participation and reporting to the executive. The project manager executes the day-to-day activity and reports back to the senior project owner.**

It's also important to realise the numerous areas of support that you'll need to execute the TLD Implementation Plan, including:

- Internal Resources – IT, Marketing, Brand, Legal, Digital, Product, Communications, Corporate Strategy
- External Resources – Agency support (Digital, Search, Marketing/Brand), TLD Registrar, TLD Backend Registry Provider, TLD industry experts, Other Suppliers (Content Delivery, Technical, Etc.)

# Step 6

## Develop Policy Framework

ICANN mandates that certain policies must be published by each Registry Operator. However, the policy framework also needs to consider how the .brand TLD relates to the organisation on a commercial level, which is ultimately dependent on the strategy for the .brand TLD.

A policy framework consists of two major sections:

1. ICANN mandated policies
2. Additional policies for commercial purposes, designed to:
  - Protect your TLD
  - Protect your brand/trademarks
  - Minimise costly and time consuming disputes and challenges
  - Support your ability to take action against malicious activity, etc

The policy framework for a .brand TLD needs to consider the organisation, TLD strategy, regional implications, industry(s) served and associated regulatory environment(s), competitive landscape, existing privacy and data retention policies, and more.

Developing a policy framework is not as simple as cutting and pasting elements from existing TLDs or using a template provided by a third party. The process often takes longer than anticipated.

Although the policy framework is not required until the TLD is delegated, a copy of your policy must be provided to ICANN as part of the TLD Startup Info pack, prior to go-live.

Due to the broad range of functions within the organisation affected by the .brand TLD, revisions and sign-off can be a lengthy process and will almost certainly rely on your internal legal team. We strongly suggest this phase is started many months before a launch is planned.

# Step 7

## Undertake Testing / Ensure Operational Readiness

Depending on the strategy, the scope of the launch may vary greatly. Some factors should be common regardless of the scope, such as:

- **Pre-launch testing**  
Not just worse-case-scenario IT testing, but user experience, device/browser/platform testing, customer support and investor relations readiness, website re-directs, web traffic management and measurement, and more.
- **Continuous evaluation**  
The speed of the rollout should be tied to defined metrics. If the initial results meet these targets, continue or even speed up the rollout. If not, ensure that associated promotions and communications can also be slowed down until issues can be addressed.
- **Media relations**  
The launch will attract media attention, but not necessarily the media that normally focuses on the organisation. Digital marketing media, IT media, and even investor/analyst relations enquiries may be different from those the communications team typically deal with.
- **Security matters**  
Planning should obviously consider how existing security protocols need to evolve to accommodate the .brand TLD launch. However, even the best-laid plans cannot consider all scenarios, so post-event analysis should be conducted to identify any unforeseen security issues that arise during the launch.

Preparing for and executing the launch typically has the highest visibility of the entire .brand TLD project and is vital to ensuring that the hard work of identifying the strategy and building the digital assets adds value to customers.

More than any other technology project of this size, the ability to slow down, speed up, or change course should be built into the launch plan.

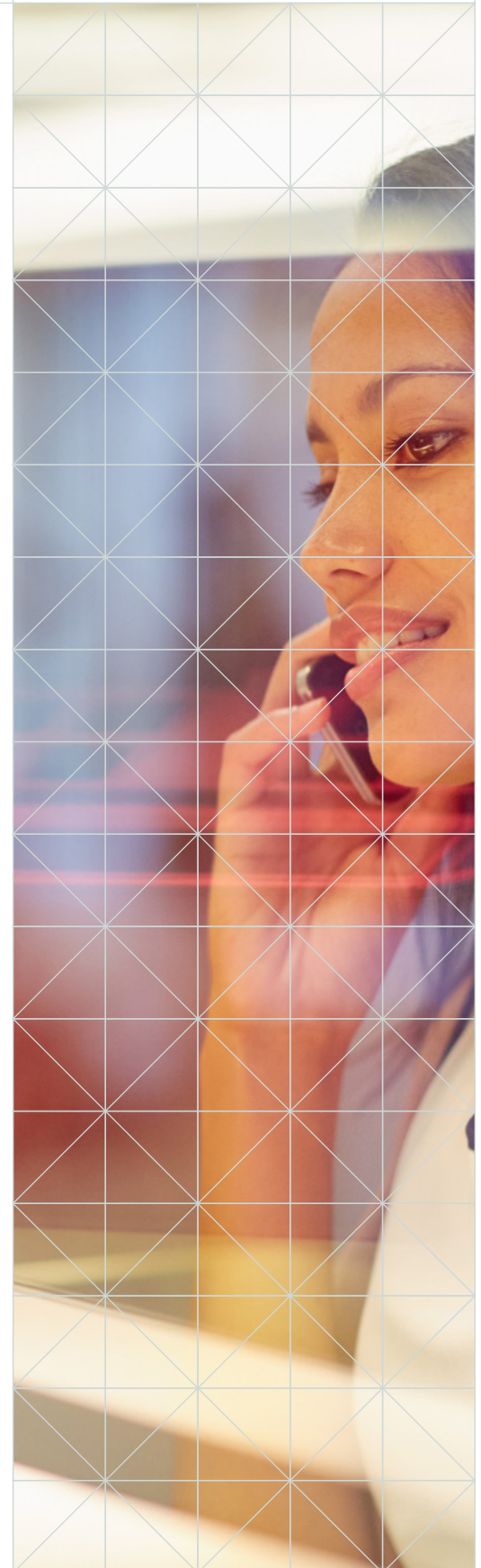
# Step 8

## Undertake .brand TLD Launch

This is the most exciting part of the project; you're ready to set sail with your new digital branding asset.

There are two key elements that you need to be aware of at the time of launch.

- **Preparation**  
Ensuring that your customer focused messaging is prepared ahead of launch is vital as it's reasonable to expect that you'll get some attention from the media, suppliers and other stakeholders if you've done the launch correctly. This will impact every part of the organisation – from the Board to the call centre – so it's also vital that your internal communications are undertaken before you go to market. For public companies, this level of preparation is potentially even more important.
- **Monitoring/Response**  
Managing the feedback is also key during the first phases of launch, and monitoring social media and other forums is absolutely vital to receiving feedback, handling criticism etc. Similarly, having your front line service staff up to speed is also important, as consistency of messaging with customer enquiries can be very useful to help any potentially negative feedback.





# Step 9

## Ensure Operational/Legal Compliance

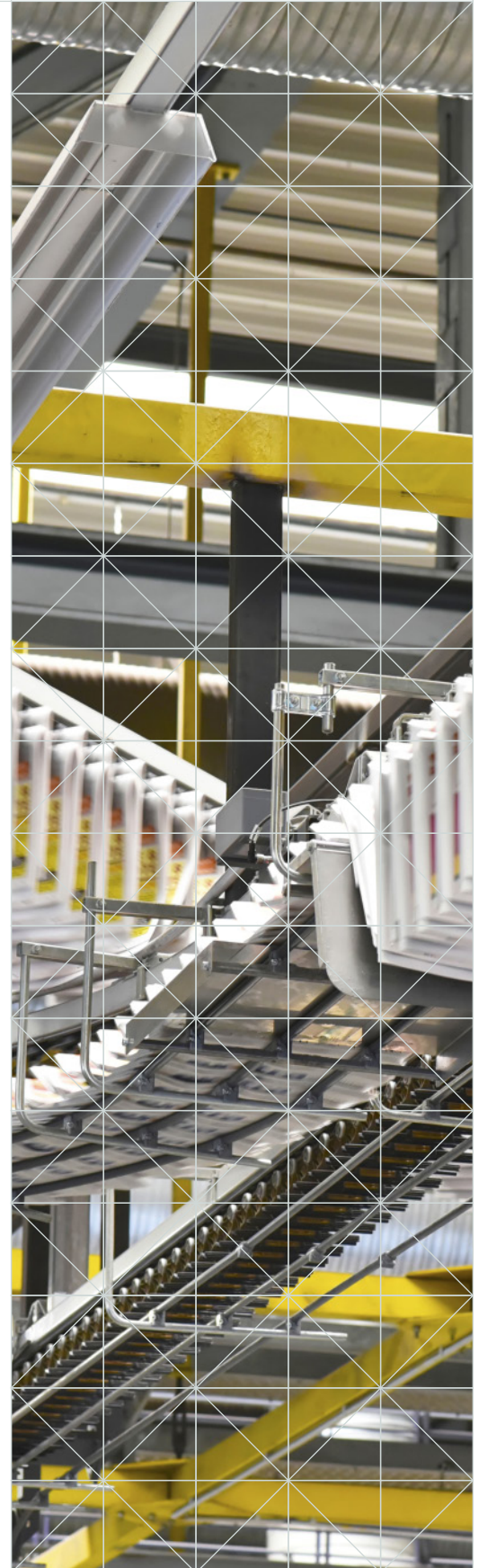
There is significant activity required beyond the execution of the ICANN registry agreement to meet contractual ICANN obligations, reduce legal exposure and protect the TLD asset in a fast-evolving regulatory environment. This includes:

### ICANN Compliance Obligations

- Day to day handling of ICANN compliance enquiries.
- Reporting, record keeping, policy upkeep and management, consensus policies, Specification 13 (the .brand designation in the Registry Agreement).
- ICANN audits – which can occur up to two times per year, and will definitely occur at least once per three year period. Only two weeks warning is given prior to an audit.
- Names collisions obligations require offending names to be removed from the registry within two hours, which requires 24/7/365 availability of a suitably qualified support team.

### Malicious Activity Management

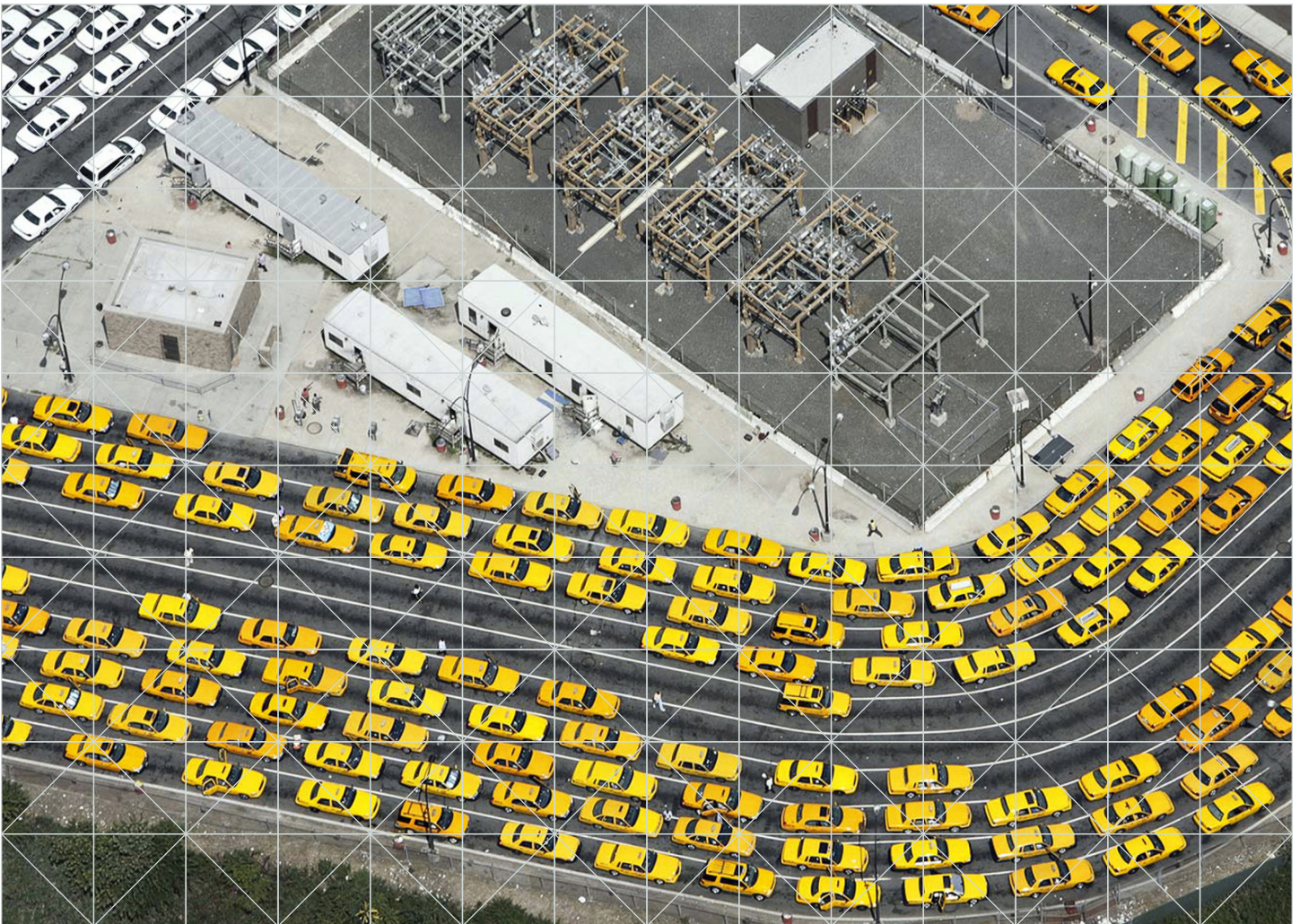
- To meet obligations per Specification 11 of the ICANN Registry Agreement, any activity deemed malicious (e.g. spam, malware, phishing, botnets, etc.) must be actively monitored, addressed and documented.
- The challenge with managing malicious activity is identifying truly malicious activity versus false positives. Acting on a false positive can be very damaging to an organisation and its brand, so robust and expert assistance is strongly suggested here.



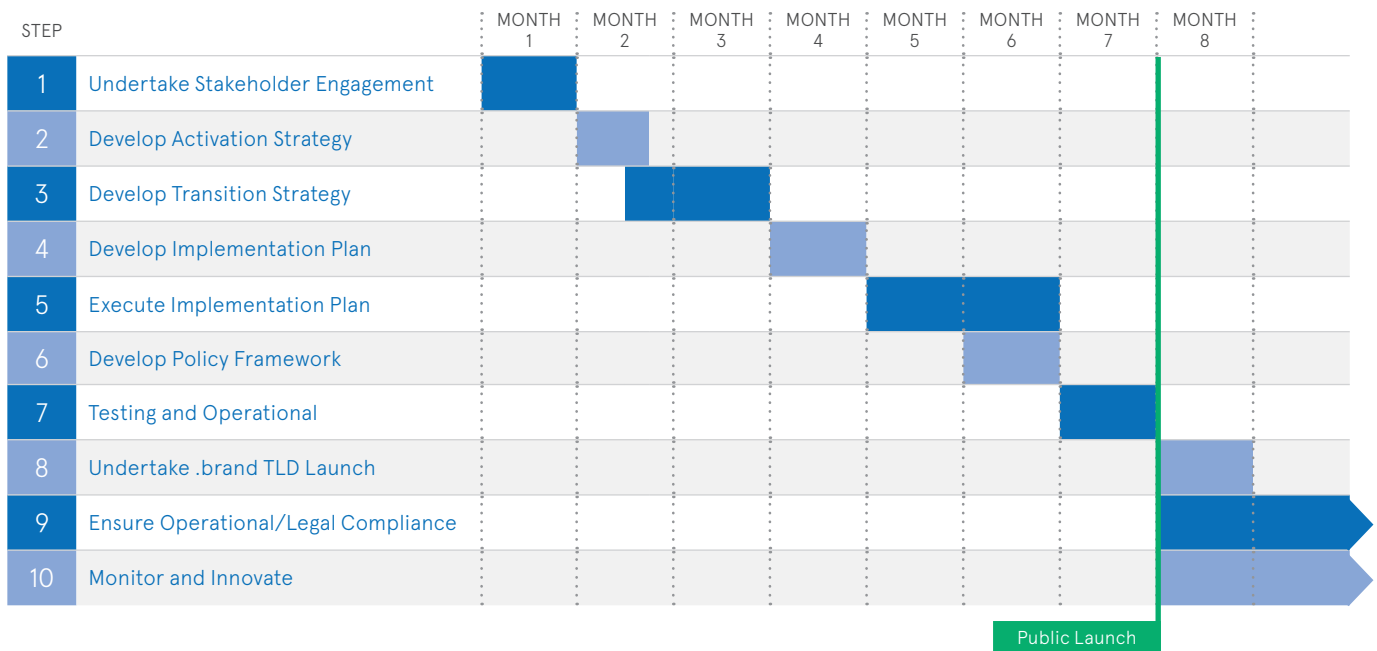


## Representation in the ICANN/TLD regulatory environment

- Similar to any industry, actively monitoring and participating in the regulatory and governance environment of that sector is advantageous in order to protect and grow commercial interests.
- Monitor policy and governance changes to ensure TLD risks are being managed.
- Utilise your vote within ICANN's Registry Stakeholder Group to influence policy and industry. Expert external assistance in this area is highly recommended.



# Step 10



## Monitor and Innovate

Launching a .brand TLD is much more than just a single launch date. Most strategies will include a gradual rollout, but even beyond the planned activity is the opportunity for ongoing innovation.

Metrics will confirm or deny assumptions, which in turn will lead to insights. Other .brand TLDs will succeed with initiatives your organisation didn't think of, which may be replicable without infringing intellectual property. Cost savings and revenue opportunities will present themselves.

All of these outcomes point to the need to actively focus on continuous evaluation and evolution in an ongoing manner. Given the significant effort required to execute the rollout of the strategy, it will take discipline and planning to step back and assess what opportunities there are for modifying the original approach.

# Section 2

## ICANN Process Requirements

**This section details the process which must be followed to ensure that your .brand TLD can be accessed on the Internet. While you might have already signed an agreement for your .brand TLD with ICANN, a technical process must still be followed. This process is detailed below.**

### ICANN Registry Agreement

The Registry Agreement must be signed by a company officer. ICANN will jointly execute and return the Registry Agreement.

### Data Escrow Agreement

At the same time as signing the Registry Agreement, a data escrow agreement must be signed before Pre-Delegation Testing can be completed. This mandatory agreement enables a third-party data escrow provider to back-up the TLD data and for ICANN to access it in the event of an emergency to ensure the TLD continues to function.

### Pre-Delegation Testing

Prior to your .brand TLD becoming live on the internet, testing is required to ensure the technical aspects of your TLD comply with relevant requirements. Pre-Delegation Testing involves the organisation's back-end Registry Services Provider and ICANN's technical testing partner. Pre-Delegation Testing is typically conducted by the Registry Services Provider, although input from you may be required. At its conclusion, ICANN will provide notification of the Pre-Delegation Testing outcome.

### Delegation

The delegation process is the step where the .brand TLD is added to the internet. The organisation must submit 21 process-related contacts to ICANN and formally request delegation from the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA - ICANN's technical arm), which requires accompanying documentation. As with Pre-Delegation Testing, the Registry Services Provider typically performs this activity.

### Name Collision Period

This is a technical hold period lasting 90 days where no domain names may be activated. It is intended to provide advance warning to those with potentially conflicting networking settings about the impending launch of the .brand TLD. The only domain name which may be active during this period is www.nic.tld (see following section for more detail).

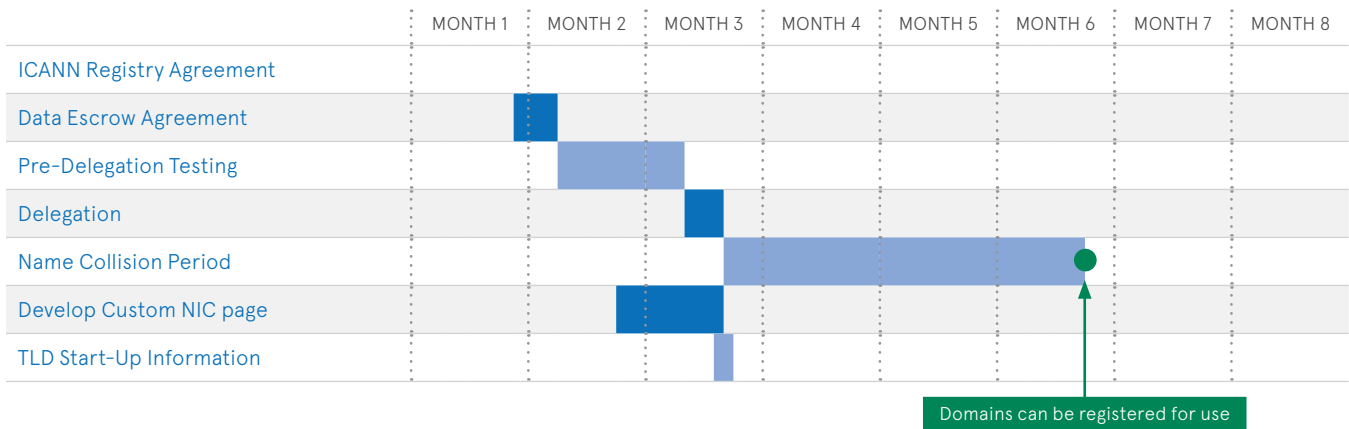
### Develop Custom NIC Page

The Network Information Centre (NIC) page is an ICANN mandated site (www.nic.tld) with defined requirements. In addition to meeting the mandated ICANN requirements, it is recommended that this site include corporate branding, as it will be the only site publicly visible for the first 90 days. The nic site must be developed such that it is complete and available immediately once the delegation process is completed.

### TLD Start-Up Information

TLD Start-Up information must be submitted to ICANN for approval following the delegation of your .brand TLD and include TLD policy and key launch dates.





### Develop Custom NIC Page

The Network Information Centre (NIC) page is an ICANN mandated site ([www.nic.tld](http://www.nic.tld)) with defined requirements. In addition to meeting the mandated ICANN requirements, it is recommended that this site include corporate branding, as it will be the only site publicly visible for the first 90 days. The nic site must be developed such that it is complete and available immediately once the delegation process is completed.

### TLD Start-Up Information

TLD Start-Up information must be submitted to ICANN for approval following the delegation of your .brand TLD and include TLD policy and key launch dates.



# Section 3

## Internal Requirements for the Implementation Plan

This section includes areas that must be considered when planning the strategy, launch, and ongoing operation of the .brand TLD and serves as a significantly expanded version of Step 4 – Develop Implementation Plan of the 10 Step Process outlined in Section 1 of this document.

The elements from the Implementation Plan are explained in greater detail in order to convey the variation in the tasks required to be undertaken. While the examples shown are included only to convey the type of tasks required, they are by no means a comprehensive list and should be tailored to suit the specific strategy developed for the .brand TLD.

### Executive Committee – Strategy Integration

The long-term impact of the .brand TLD on all aspects of the organisation should not be underestimated and senior level approvals and insight is strongly recommended to ensure compliance with organisational strategy and to expedite approval and budget allocation processes.

Examples:

- Review existing and proposed vision/mission/ corporate goals against proposed strategy
- Executive champion to gain buy-in from executive committee
- Submit approval request for launch funding

### Marketing – Brand

The custodians of the corporate brand need to consider the impact of the .brand TLD on all aspects of the brand.

Examples:

- Review existing brand roadmaps and highlight areas of change/risk the .brand TLD introduces
- Create brief for nic.tld site (first 90 days this is the only site visible)

### Marketing – Internal Communications

Internal awareness must be high across the organisation. Some departments will need higher levels of exposure than others.

For example, if a public-facing customer service representative receives a question about your .brand TLD and suggests that the legacy TLD be used instead, then promotional effort has been wasted.

Examples:

- Develop educational training material for internal rollout
- Create a plan for training sessions
- Consider tools available for internal participation (e.g. suggestions)

### Marketing – External Communications

External communication of the initial launch stages of the .brand TLD transition will require elements of education and evangelism of the new TLD program. Accuracy with language, acronyms and program facts are critical to building credibility.

Examples:

- Develop a master guide of key phrases, terminology, and associated language for all external communications

- Create data analytics strategy
- Build and test digital properties for launch (new or existing content, as required)

### Marketing – Public Relations

PR will be a major component of most .brand TLD launches. While there are many ways to promote the reasons and benefits of the launch, a consistent factor will be the fact your .brand TLD is a newsworthy item for the organisation and its brand.

#### Examples:

- Publicly traded organisations – prepare a strategy for addressing analyst reactions
- Develop PR monitoring plan (target media may stretch beyond the standard contacts, e.g. technology or digital brand specialist media)

### Marketing – Domain Administration

Internally, once awareness of the .brand TLD launch becomes widespread, there will be an influx of requests for domain names and it is recommended that a strategy is in place to cope with demand and adequately process requests.

#### Examples:

- Develop a process to support the policy for internal domain requests
- Assign persons/team to make decisions on policy edge cases
- Develop an intranet-based tool for internal domain requests

### Marketing – External Agency

The external agency that assists with corporate and campaign marketing will need to be heavily involved from an early stage. Despite being experts in digital marketing, it is almost certain that they have never launched a .brand TLD. Both the external agency and their internal handler will need to acknowledge that new ground is being covered by all involved.

#### Examples:

- Update the digital properties content map to show the transition of domains and content
- Create a testing plan for user behaviour with new domains
- Review and update SEO strategy based on .brand TLD strategy

### Marketing – Registrar

If the current corporate registrar is to administer domain transactions, then associated processes and the role of the registrar must be defined. It's important to note that the registrar may also be navigating a .brand TLD launch for the first time.

#### Examples:

- Review and update processes for domain requests
- Develop or modify processes for internal transfer of domain names
- Procure supplemental domain names (from other TLDs) to support strategy

### Legal – ICANN Compliance

The ICANN Registry Agreement has many direct and implied compliance elements which must be considered against all potential launch approaches.

#### Examples:

- Establish a framework to address time-sensitive obligations prior to, and beyond, delegation of the .brand TLD
- Review .brand TLD strategy against existing positions on regulatory matters – e.g. privacy
- Develop a process for escalation of issues related to ICANN compliance

### Legal – Policy

A policy framework must be developed which deals not only with ICANN Registry Agreement obligations, but more importantly protects the organisation legally and from unnecessary administration due to complaints, challenges, etc.

#### Examples:

- Investigate trademark implications for new digital assets
- Audit existing policies relating to trademarks to determine changes required

### Legal – Governance

ICANN and the domain industry is a complex, bureaucratic entity. With approximately 1,300 new TLDs entering the Internet, the existing regulatory environment is quickly being challenged and modified by opportunistic TLD registry operators. A strategy must be devised to monitor and influence this environment to ensure the long-term interests of your organisation are protected.

**Examples:**

- Establish governance processes to monitor changes to the ICANN regulatory environment
- Develop a timeline for internal reporting on risks to the .brand TLD asset from activity in the regulatory environment

**Legal – Contracts**

In addition to navigating the ICANN Registry Agreement, the .brand TLD project will require the legal department to address contract needs for new vendors and changed contracts for existing vendors.

**Examples:**

- Review existing corporate registrar contract
- Assess contract for external assistance with .brand TLD strategy
- Assess contract for regulatory environment monitoring and representation

**IT – Infrastructure**

IT infrastructure will need to be considered for all proposed strategies and long term efficiencies.

**Examples:**

- Review web hosting (internal or provider) capability against .brand TLD strategy
- Assess second-level DNS requirements for new .brand TLD domains
- Assess content management system ability to support launch phases

**IT – Security**

Transitioning to new domains and infrastructure requires consideration of IT security risks.

**Examples:**

- Educate .brand TLD project team on areas of potential security impacts
- Test DNS/DNSSEC implementation
- Engage third-party security vendors to review potential issues in supporting .brand TLD

**IT – Compliance**

Operating a .brand TLD has many technical obligations and reporting requirements. Compliance by IT with these requirements is required, along with a thorough understanding of new vendor roles.

**Examples:**

- Meet with Registry Services Provider to understand user accessibility and report generation
- Develop processes to escalate and manage incidences of non-compliance
- Review how the TLD affects existing data security and privacy policies of the organisation

**IT – Testing**

Online and offline test environments will be required to test for user experience, desktop and mobile browser support, re-directs, and more.

**Examples:**

- Audit target audience for required platforms and browsers to be supported
- Create offline/quarantined test environment for marketing/digital agency to conduct user experience testing
- Create a plan to automate testing of re-direct links (if utilized in strategy)

**Project Management – Launch**

The launch of the .brand TLD will require careful project management. The project management person(s) may be from the department owning the project (e.g. marketing/legal/IT), or they might be from a central project management team. Regardless of their origins, project management execution for the .brand TLD project requires extensive cross-functional interaction and likely engagement of external parties.

**Examples:**

- Identify internal resource availability
- Develop detailed Gantt chart for first launch phase
- Hold period project launch meetings to ensure project plan adherence

**Project Management – Internal Processes**

Internal processes must be created for the launch of the .brand TLD to reduce the chance of misinterpretation by the broad range of stakeholders and participants. The more activities that are documented and clearly communicated, the greater the chance of a clean, successful launch.

**Examples:**

- Implement process for accrediting partners for domain eligibility

- Define acceptance criteria for a promotion to qualify for a domain
- Define Law Enforcement Agency accountability standards

#### **Project Management – Operations and Administration**

Beyond the launch of the .brand TLD, the broad range of stakeholders will largely return to their regular roles. The lessons learned and knowledge gained during launch should be captured by those required to operate and administer the .brand TLD on an ongoing basis.

#### **Examples:**

- Develop process to enable names to be requested for future use
- Develop process to automate the approval and registration of domains
- Establish periodic content review process

#### **Finance – Project**

The .brand TLD project will likely involve financial transactions across multiple internal and external stakeholders. Responsibility and accountability should be identified and communicated early.

#### **Examples:**

- Arrange payment of Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) fees to ICANN
- Determine internal allocation of costs

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