

Registrar and User Consultative Committee Meetings

Minutes of the plenary meeting

23/03/2017

afnic

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1. Attendees

Registrars: 15 (out of 44 members)

Tristan Colombet	DOMRAIDER
Sylvie Destenave	ORDIPAT
Bernard Dulac	DATAXY Remote
Philippe Franck	DOMAINIUM
Elisabeth Gomes	GIP RENATER
Frédéric Guillemaut	SAFEBRANDS
Sébastien Hirel	SAFEBRANDS
Sophie Jean-Gilles	ORANGE
Soraya Kara	GANDI
Jennifer Korn	ORDIPAT
Eric Lantonnet	NAMEBAY
Rémi Loiseau	OVH Remote
Jean-Claude Michot	ONLINE SAS
Vanessa Minet	EURODNS Remote
Sophie Pacave	CLARANET
Serge Ribeiro	SFR
Jean-Benoît Richard	CONNECTION SAS

Users, individuals and corporate entities: 6 (out of 42 members)

Individuals	
Sébastien Bachollet	Individual user
Agnès Frapy	Individual user
Clément Genty	Individual user
Benjamin Louis	Individual user
Elisabeth Porteneuve	Individual user
David-Irving Tayer	Individual user

Afnic

Lotfi Benyelles, Marketing Innovation Manager
Pierre Bonis, Deputy CEO
Sophie Canac, Member Services
Loïc Damilaville, Studies & Business Intelligence
Clémence Davoust, Event Communication
Régis Masse, Director, Information Systems
Lucile Ravasse, Marketing Manager
Emilie Turbat, Marketing and Commercial Director
Mickael Vigreux, Sales Manager
Mathieu Weill, CEO

2. Agenda

09:00 *Welcome*

09:30 News update

09:45 Presentation of items for discussion in the committees:

- ✓ Review of the Réussir-en.fr promotion campaign and business operations of registrars
- ✓ Feedback and outlooks after the Registrar Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Feedback report from the operational working group (OWG) on the Holder study

11:15 *Coffee break*

11:30 Separate Consultative Committees

13:15 *Lunch*

14:00 Feedback reports from the Consultative Committees

15:00 Presentation of information updates and discussions with members

- ✓ Information on the Afnic 2016 balance sheet
- ✓ Presentation of new Afnic products and services (Succeeding with the web, character string monitoring)
- ✓ Overall assessment of the 2017 Membership Campaign
- ✓ Main market trends for domain names

17:00 *End of meeting*

3. Minutes

3.1. Welcome

Mathieu Weill opened the session by introducing Sophie Canac, in charge of relations with the members following Virginie Navailles' change in position.

He recalled the three points that had been submitted to discussion for both registrars and users, the priorities and feedback from registrars after the satisfaction survey also being of use to users.

Concerning the Operational Working Group (OWG) on the holder survey, Mathieu Weill thanked the members who had taken part in this OWG and indicated that Afnic needed the feedback from the members attending the Consultative Committees before launching the survey and selecting the service provider.

Lastly, concerning Succeeding with the web, a digital maturity self-assessment tool, there had been little feedback after sending the e-mail to members to test the beta version. Lotfi Benyelles would give a presentation during the lunch break. The tests and comments were useful for modifying and validate the questionnaire before it was sent out.

As usual, at the end of the day, Loïc Damilaville would discuss the current market trends.

In addition to the items on the agenda, the users wished to have feedback from the registrars after the price changes by certain registries.

The registrars' representatives to the Board of Trustees indicated that 56% of the portfolio of Domain Names were represented in this committee.

3.2. Discussion items

NB The answers to questions from members on discussion items are not included in this report. They will be subject to a separate report after analysis by Afnic teams.

3.2.1. Review of the Registrars' Réussir en .fr promotion campaign and business operations

Lucile Ravasse, Emilie Turbat and Mickael Vigreux presented the results of the Réussir en .fr campaign in 2016.

The first steps had been used to adjust the campaign to expand it to cover "online presence" and not just domain names. Online content and the associated added value had made it possible to expand the platform and set up partnerships.

Concerning registrars' commercial operations, those that had been launched (10 operations for 900 domain names created) mainly concerned the co-financing of domain names under the .fr TLD if the ultimate use of the domain name was ensured.

An example of a successful operation: the registrars had launched an operation involving the reimbursement of the cost of a domain name at the holder's request by challenging the customer about their use of the domain name (with proof of the creation of an email address associated with the domain name). The offers resulted in a superb communications operations resulting in only a small percentage of requests for reimbursement, and was therefore very profitable. Successful operations were those that benefited from a genuine communication plan.

The efforts would continue in 2017, taking into account the lessons learnt the previous year.

There was still some pedagogical work to be done to explain that the .fr was simple and above all was as simple as the others. Messages in this sense had to be adapted to each phase of the customer experience.

It was necessary to set up events around online presence and have the association's members act as information relays.

The users believed that a sale should involve more than just a domain name; which was what many registrars were already doing by selling packages with hosting. Although the .fr was a trusted brand among young people, a marketing guide was needed to sell the .fr TLD rather than .coms. The difficulty laid in knowing who was being targeted: an association, individuals, small companies, etc. because the sales pitch was not the same for every target.

Concerning the lack of promotion on the renewal of domain names, a fact that was deplored by some registrars, Emilie Turbat recalled that the renewal rate was essential for the TLD and that that type of operation would be possible in 2018. Other registrars were not convinced about the promotion of renewals, the argument being that if a domain name was used, it would be renewed; renewal was linked to use and not to the price.

Registrars' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the registrars indicated:

Registrars would like Afnic to formalize a co-marketing program.

Afnic could thus co-finance individual marketing operations, promoting the .fr, carried out at the initiative of registrars who wanted to do so.

The budget allocated would depend on the size of each registrar's portfolio, but would be determined by:

- a ceiling (to be determined), to avoid too large a share of the budget being taken up by a single large registrar;
- a threshold (to be determined) so that even a small registrar could have a sufficiently large budget to justify a marketing operation

The registrars expected a comprehensive proposal from the Afnic with transparent rules for all.

The registrars were open-minded about the introduction of incentive systems to promote the real use of domain names and improve the renewal rates of the portfolios.

An incentive could, for example, take the form of an improvement in the co-marketing budget (except perhaps for the registrars that had already reached the ceiling)

In addition, the registrars were open-minded about proposals from Afnic concerning the implementation of specific promotion campaigns, possibly linked to the results of the forthcoming study.

The registrars also suggested that Afnic consider a communication operation more specifically targeting trademark applicants.

Users' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the users indicated:

The campaigns ought be more aggressive on the pages where the domain names were registered.

Furthermore, Afnic's messages were very professorial and strict, but for end-users other than companies, the messages should be more joyful or offbeat in tone. The campaigns should also address students and high school pupils to make them aware of the value of domain names and that there was more to the Internet than just Facebook and Snapchat. To attract that target to become members of the Afnic and get involved in it, a lower-cost membership should be made available.

3.2.2.Registrars Satisfaction Survey

Lucille Ravasse presented the results of the registrars satisfaction survey with new questions this year. The Afnic team was available to present the new products or discuss any other issues direct with the registrars who wanted to do so.

Mathieu Weill asked if there were questions to clarify anything.

Registrars report a third of non-positive returns on promotional campaigns. The registrars were reluctant to launch promotional campaigns. Afnic took this feedback into account in order to provide better support for the registrars who want to launch campaigns. Hence the importance of the communication plan to be shared and coordinated by and between Afnic and the registrars.

Mickael Vigreux recalled the date of the Afnic forum on 18 May in Paris and invited the members to enrol.

Registrars' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the registrars indicated:

A large majority were satisfied.

2 individual problems remained corresponding to specific cases. The registrars concerned expressed a desire for greater individual support.

Users' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the users indicated:

The users were pleased that the registrars were satisfied.

3.2.3.OWG Feedback report on the Holder Study

Presentation by Lofti Benyelles of the feedback report by the 11-member Working Group on the Holder study.

The study was to be carried out by an external provider, and would concern online presence and domain names.

For Afnic the aim of the study was to find levers to reach new audiences that were not in the usual channels, based on factual data, with regular start points and possibly reentry points (2-3 years)

Registrars' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the registrars indicated:

The registrars expressed the wish that the study on online presence be supplemented by a complementary study on the correlation between brands and domain names.

The registrars expressed the wish to limit the scope of the publication of the full study to paid-up members of the association. They would like a summary and redacted version of the detailed figures to be made public. They also expressed the wish that the OWG related to this study could also approve the contents of this synthetic version before its publication.

Users' position:

After meeting in a separate session, the users indicated:

The users congratulated the working group because the study was important for understanding the current backdrop. The users would be happy to be interviewed.

The users thought that a communication plan should be set up around the study, targeting the general public, the community (e.g. CENTR, etc.); there was to be no major event organized by Afnic when the results were published, but it might be useful to combine it with an event organized by a member for timetable reasons.

Pierre Bonis said that the CENTR was going to launch a joint marketing study. Part of the Afnic questionnaire could be used to increment the European study and enable benchmarking.

3.2.4. Additional subjects addressed by Registrars and Users in the committee meetings

The registrars indicated the additional points that had been discussed during the separate consultative committees.

Wishes concerning technical features

Several registrars highlighted the recurring problem of not being able to delete a domain name when it has been declared as a DNS server by another domain name.

While the occurrences were few, they were regular and required the systematic use of Afnic support.

The registrars concerned indicated that other registers usually solved this problem by using HOST objects

The registrars wanted to be able to perform real-time search queries in their domain name portfolio. For example, being able to identify all HANDLE NICs using a particular email address.

Otherwise, they wanted to have a solution allowing them to download a detailed dump on request. At present, the CSV file of the portfolio to be uploaded by FTP was unsatisfactory because it did not contain detailed information and was updated only once a day.

Training

The registrars would like the Afnic to offer training courses, in a form to be defined (webinars, etc.), to support newcomers and enhance the knowledge of existing registrars.

The registrars advised checking the documentation was satisfactory on the feature making individual holders of domain names visible in the WHOIS with their agreement.

Visits of registrars

Several registrars expressed their expectation that the Afnic sales teams would offer to visit them. The approach was unanimously welcomed, provided that it remained optional for the registrars who did not wish to be visited.

Restricted domain names

The registrars expressed their difficulty in manually managing reservations of "restricted" domain names (fundamental terms, common terms, etc.) because of the cumbersome nature of the process.

They wanted to know whether it would be feasible to reduce the scope of the list and/or adapt the process in order to automate it

The users indicated the additional points that had been discussed during the separate consultative committees.

The users raised the question about the possibility of Afnic lobbying in order to integrate the Internet and its governance in the mandatory training courses of the B2I and C2I type.

Although member services had already considerably developed, they might need to be improved or include better communication in order to attract new members. In addition it was necessary to simplify the online membership system and online payment, and perhaps add the possibility of multi-year membership.

Mathieu Weill replied that Afnic was open to new ideas in order to improve its services.

Finally the users asked whether, since the next General Assembly would be the only one without an election, and it was the only period when the international college would be present in Paris, it would be possible to hold a meeting of the 3 colleges on that day. For the time being, the important thing was to break the over-formal format of the GA to encourage discussions.

Finally, would it be possible to put on the agenda of the next consultative committee meetings the issue of the user college? It included many different types of public (users, Afnic employees, gTLDs managed by Afnic, etc.) which might need to be separated because the discussions were complicated.

Mathieu Weill summarized the expectations after the exchanges:

- The consultative committees agreed that Afnic should make headway on the survey.
- As follow-up to the various expectations of the registrars, the Afnic departments would get back to them within 3 weeks.
- With regard to the promotion of the .fr and the commercial operations with the registrars, Afnic would get back to the registrars requesting them, taking into account the feedback from the 2016 promotion campaign.
- It would also be necessary to find out how to adapt the promotion campaign for specifiers and trademark applicants.
- Concerning the General Assembly and the organization of a meeting of the 3 colleges, the result would be visible in the notice sent out.

Mathieu Weill thanked all the members for the quality of the feedback.

3.3. Information updates

3.3.1. Information on the Afnic 2016 Report and current affairs

Mathieu Weill recalled that the major item for Afnic in 2016 was passing the 3 million milestone for the .fr TLD and Afnic thanked the registrars who had participated in this success by promoting the .fr.

Following the consultation in June, the association was still waiting for further information on the signing of the extension of the agreement between the State and Afnic.

At the ICANN Community Forum in Copenhagen, Afnic had organized the French Night, which was once again a success and a great opportunity to come together with French-speaking and other communities.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The European regulation, which would complement the Data Protection Act, would be applicable in May 2018. There was an awareness among all the market players that the regulation would apply. It was an opportunity because it strengthened the trust in domain names compared with other platforms. In-house, the project to align with the regulation had already been launched. In particular, the regulation introduced an amendment on accountability, which implied that in the event of a data incident, it had to be notified to every customer.

2016 was also the first active year of the Afnic Foundation. The results were very encouraging: out of 227 files submitted, 35 had been given support. It was important to remember that for each domain name purchased under the .fr TLD, 7 to 8% of the amount was transferred to the Afnic Foundation for Digital Solidarity. It was important that everyone could relay the call for applications in their networks. Each member could contact the Foundation directly.

Following a request to clarify organizational changes within Afnic, Mathieu Weill recalled that Virginie Navailles had changed position in 2016 to take charge of the communication department and that Sophie Canac had joined the Afnic at the end of January to resume her former functions, namely services to members and associative life as well as acting as assistant to Mathieu Weill and Pierre Bonis

Following the departure of Matthieu Crédou, Marketing Director, at the end of February, the organization had been adjusted by merging the marketing and sales departments. The scope of Emilie Turbat's duties had therefore been extended. This would allow marketing and sales to be properly aligned to drive growth and serve customers.

Marianne Georgelin, who handled registry policies, had kept the same function but would report directly to the Deputy CEO.

3.3.2. Succeeding with the web

Each participant had received by e-mail the items allowing them to test the beta phase of the questionnaire. The Afnic team needed everyone to take the test and provide feedback in order to improve all of the items involved, be it the visuals, the writing of the questions, the user experience according to the answers given, the feedback report on the results, etc.

The platform was intended for targets such as SMEs or craft workers and not for mainstream users. Its purpose was to get entrepreneurs to wonder about their online presence and obtain sectoral data. It would be deployed through partnerships with professional federations. Respondents, on the other hand, would receive a result with advice to improve their online presence and comparisons with their market sector. The site also contained value-added articles, encrypted data.

The team in charge of the project also remained attentive to the ideas and suggestions of partnerships from members.

User and registrars members had already provided feedback during the sessions:

- The photo of the home page was not eye-catching.
- The feedback report was in the form of a 15-page pdf file which contained a result - which was not visible enough - as well as the answers and recommendations for each action.
- At the outset, what was needed was a summary page containing the results (in general terms) and the 2 or 3 main recommendations (avoiding having to re-read the entire questionnaire)

3.3.3.Character string monitoring -> FR WATCH

FR WATCH is the name given to the domain name monitoring and prospecting tool.

The character string monitoring tool was designed specifically for registrars and only concerned the ccTLDs managed by Afnic.

It would cost 9 € per month and per string of characters whether the request was made once a month or every day.

The monitoring service could only be requested by holders or prospective holders with rights, and if requested, the registrars would have to ensure and be able to provide evidence of these rights.

The tool provided information that was not available elsewhere: traffic and usage data.

3.3.4.Overall assessment of the 2017 Membership Campaign

Payments were "late" compared with last year, perhaps because there were no elections this year.

It therefore seemed important to recall that 6 months' effective membership were required in order to vote, so in order to vote in June 2018, it was necessary to join in 2017.

3.3.5.Main market trends for domain names

The users wanted to know the reactions of the registrars - and the customers - following the price increase of Uniregistry.

The registrars found that the changes were bothersome mainly because it was up to them to explain them to customers. Price changes, whether upward or downward, ridiculed industry professionals alike. The registrars' policy to the price increase in any case would not be to propose multi-year registration before the increase but rather to refer their customers to the long-standing extensions that were more stable and more reliable.

Some registrars regretted that market trends were not disseminated to members because it would be useful for passing on information to registrar teams.

Mathieu Weill recalled that this decision had been taken by the members to encourage participation in the consultative committees. However, a large number of data would be available in the the Afnic Industry Report on Domain Names to be published in April.

3.4. Conclusion

The users' and registrars' consultative committee meetings ended at 17:00.

The schedule for upcoming meetings of the association was announced, as indicated below:

- ✓ Thursday, April 13 - Board Meeting
- ✓ Thursday, May 18 - Afnic Forum
- ✓ Wednesday, June 7 & Thursday, June 8 - International College Annual Days
- ✓ Friday, June 9 - Ordinary General Meeting + Board Meeting + Annual Dinner
- ✓ Thursday, July 6 - Afnic Scientific Council Day
- ✓ Wednesday, September 27 - Board Meeting
- ✓ Thursday, September 28 - Strategic Annual Seminar of the Board
- ✓ Thursday, October 12 - Users' and Registrars' Consultative Committee meetings
- ✓ Thursday, November 16 - Board Meeting

Sébastien Bachollet, the elected representative of the users, thanked the members for their participation and suggested that everyone should find a new member and have them participate in the next consultative committee meetings.