Governing the Internet: A New Era Begins

The US Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced its intent to transition key Internet domain name functions to the global multi-stakeholder community.

A new report by two of the world's leading thinkers about the Internet discusses the background, logic, and implications of this momentous development and lays out some new directions for the next era of the Net.

BOSTON, TORONTO - In a newly released research report, Lynn St. Amour, prominent Internet advocate and former Chief Executive Officer and President of the Internet Society (ISOC), and Don Tapscott, best-selling author and Executive Director of the *Global Solution Networks* program, describe the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance, why it works remarkably well and what needs to be done to ensure a robust, global, accessible and effectively governed Internet for future generations.
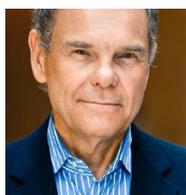
St. Amour and Tapscott applaud the NTIA decision as a natural step forward and a significant confirmation that the multi-stakeholder model is effective and legitimate. They explain that evolving the global multi-stakeholder ecosystem is not only right and timely, but also the best way to address some of the thornier policy issues global society faces. These issues range from privacy, security and Net neutrality, to access and intellectual property.

"Those who have characterized the NTIA announcement as 'the Obama equivalent of Carter's decision to give away the Panama Canal—only with possibly much worse consequences' are deeply uninformed and badly mistaken," say St. Amour and Tapscott, citing such recent comments as these by former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin: "[This] is nothing more than a gift to authoritarian regimes who seek to stifle the freedom the Internet gives to voices around the world fighting for basic human rights. No amount of Obama/liberal media spin can justify this."

"The Internet governance network has shown time and again its value and its ability to innovate in matters of global Internet governance as well as policy solutions," they say. Multi-stakeholder governance has come of age and is now fully independent from control by any government, or governmental organizations like the UN. It is the very embodiment of the vision of a free enterprise system that is managed by its participants. At the same time, they recognize the need to continually evolve and increase engagement from all sectors and all

parts of the world as the Net becomes an essential part of the everyday life of the billions of people online and still to come online around the world.

This substantial two part report is a product of the global research program *Global Solution Networks* (GSN) based at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. GSN is investigating multi-stakeholder approaches to global problem solving, co-operation and governance. The report will be helpful for governments and organizations that need to better understand the Internet governance network and how to help it succeed.

Don Tapscott is Executive Director of the *GSN* program and one of the world's leading authorities on innovation, media and the economic and social impact of technology. He is CEO of the think tank *The Tapscott Group* and has authored 14 widely read books. In 2013, the Thinkers50 organization named him the 4th most important living business thinker. He is Adjunct Professor of Management for the Rotman School of Management and the Inaugural Fellow of the Martin Prosperity Institute, both at the University of Toronto. He is also Chancellor at Trent University.

Lynn St. Amour is President and CEO of Internet Matters, an Internet consulting company. She served for 13 years as President and CEO of the Internet Society (ISOC), a global non-profit dedicated to the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet. She joined ISOC in 1998 as Executive Director of its Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) division, following senior positions in Europe and the US with AT&T and Digital Equipment Corp. She was appointed ISOC President and CEO in 2001.

Special thanks to principal researcher **Steve Caswell**. An early pioneer of the digital age, he was the founding editor of the *Electronic Mail and Message Systems* (EMMS) newsletter in 1977 and the author of the seminal book *Email* in 1988. He also was a pioneer in ecommerce as one of the principal architects of the AutoSkill Parts Locating Network. Steve follows the high tech industry closely and teaches business and technology at Simi Valley High School in Simi Valley, CA.

Global Solution Networks (GSN) is a landmark study of the potential of global web-based networks for cooperation, problem solving and governance. Through a series of major research projects led by global experts, it is identifying and explaining key issues, strategies and approaches for engaging via the Internet to do good, helping new multi-stakeholder platforms thrive, scale and become material on the global scene. The GSN Program, led by Don Tapscott and the Martin Prosperity Institute, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, is *creating a definitive resource of expert insights, cases and field tools.* GSN sponsors from government, business and civil society include The Rockefeller Foundation, Accenture, Google, MasterCard, HP, Ontario, LGI, Qualcomm, RBC, Seagate and others.

The Martin Prosperity Institute is a world-class research institute concerned with new models of economic prosperity. With leading thinkers Roger Martin, Richard Florida and Don Tapscott at the helm, the MPI explores the facets of capitalism for the 21st century.

For more information or to schedule interviews with St. Amour or Tapscott contact Carley Williamson carley@gsnetworks.org or call 416-863-8809.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The new report on Internet governance has two parts plus an appendix:

- **The Remarkable Internet Governance Network – Part I**
  Understanding a Global Multi-Stakeholder Ecosystem

  Part I includes the Appendix:
  Key Players in the Internet Governance Network

- **The Remarkable Internet Governance Network – Part II**
  Moving to the Next Era

The reports are available at the [Global Solution Networks website](#).

Part II of "The Remarkable Internet Governance Network," released today, also presents a perspective on what the Internet governance network needs to do in order to move into a new era of complete independence and of tackling the broader policy issues of effective governance of the Net.

Included with the two volume report is a [package of additional materials](#) including transcripts of interviews with Internet pioneers Tim Berners-Lee (Inventor of the World Wide Web), Fadi Chehadé (CEO of ICANN), Vint Cerf (co-father of the Internet and Chief Internet Evangelist at Google), Bertrand de La Chapelle (Formerly France's Thematic Ambassador and Special Envoy for the Information Society) and Jonathan Zittrain (Harvard Professor, author and faculty co-director of Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society).

Lynn St. Amour, who was Chief Executive Officer and President of ISOC from 2001 to 2014 and is a co-author of the two-part report on the Internet governance network, explained that the Department of Commerce has always anticipated ending the contract with ICANN in line with the privatization of the DNS as outlined by the US Government in 1997. Their role was always to be temporary.

"It makes sense for ICANN to become an independent organization as the Internet continues its global spread," she said. "It's also important to emphasize that the US government is not giving away the Internet by taking this step. Instead, it is recognizing the success and strength of the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance, and specifically the efforts and accomplishments of all the institutions that have managed it so well for decades. In addition to ICANN, I am referring to the Internet Engineering Task Force and the Internet Architecture Board, the Internet Society, Regional Internet Registries, the TLD operators and their regional bodies, the World Wide Web Consortium and many other Internet related fora such as the Internet Governance Forums. The institutions, processes and forums are largely in place and functioning well, and it is great that this is now so clearly recognized."

St. Amour explained that the next step outlined by the US National Telecommunications and Information Administration is for ICANN to convene global stakeholders to develop a proposal to transition NTIA's current roles. NTIA also set some clear requirements stating they will not accept a proposal that replaces the NTIA role with a government-led or an inter-governmental organization solution.

Tapscott, an internationally-recognized expert in information technology and co-author of the two-part report on the Internet governance network, is leading the Global Solution Networks program. The program has identified 10 types of these Global Solution Networks of which Governance Networks (such as the ecosystem that governs the Internet) are one. "The rise of the private sector and civil society as important forces on the global scene along with the growth of the Internet itself as a global platform for collaboration is enabling multi-stakeholder solutions to a growing number of the world's challenges," he said. "These networks engage tens of thousands of organizations and tens of millions of people on a daily basis, so it's critical that we understand them and take the right steps to ensure their potential can be realized."

"The success of this multi-stakeholder Internet governance network has been spectacular," said Tapscott. "Not only has the Internet become the world's communication network, but it also has become a model of how other global resources can be governed."

Tapscott explained that the Internet Society works with all stakeholders involved in the Internet's operation and design to support an open, user-centric, and independent multi-stakeholder ecosystem to govern the Internet worldwide. "The ecosystem," he said, "consists of governments, commercial organizations, citizens' organizations, other non-government organizations (NGOs) and individuals spanning the globe. All told, there are many hundreds of thousands of people involved in the many parts of Internet governance."

Tapscott explained that the idea that the US government has given up control of the Internet comes from a recent announcement that the US Department of Commerce is not going to renew a contract signed with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which was set up in 1998. The contract charges ICANN with coordinating the implementation of the naming and addressing functions associated with the Internet.

He said that ICANN, ISOC and all the other Internet organizations work together collaboratively to carry out many of the key functions associated with managing the critical resources for the Internet's successful growth. In addition to ICANN's role above, the Regional Internet Registries (RIR), Internet Engineering Task Force, ISOC and W3C all play leading roles in the governance of the Internet and in educating the public about the Internet. ISOC is also the administrative home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), which is responsible for developing the Internet's operating protocols.

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