

Sunrise periods for several new gTLDs officially open

The sunrise periods for a number of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) have officially opened.

On November 26 the sunrise periods for '.bike', '.holdings', '.plumbing', '.clothing', '.singles', '.guru' and '.ventures' started. These strings are the first Latin scripts to be open for registration in the new gTLD programme. On December 3 the sunrises for seven more new gTLDs – '.equipment', '.photography', '.graphics', '.lighting', '.camera', '.estate' and '.gallery' – opened, followed on December 10 by the sunrises for '.kitchen', '.land', '.directory', '.today', '.contractors', '.technology' and '.construction'. All of these new gTLDs are operated by Donuts Inc, the largest investor applicant in new gTLDs.

During the 60-day sunrise period, trademark owners can exclusively secure the relevant registration before general availability. The three sunrise periods will close on January 24 2014, January 31 2014 and

February 7 2014, respectively.

Commenting on the introduction of the sunrises for the first seven gTLDs, Jan Corstens, project director of the Trademark Clearinghouse, stated: "From fashion brands and dating agencies, to spiritual healers and cycle advocates, the launch of these new domains means consumers can easily find specific content within each extension, while businesses will benefit from a stronger and more relevant online proposition. For these reasons, we anticipate significant demand for these TLDs when they become publicly available in January 2014. However, IP owners need to decide now if they want to participate in each of these sunrise periods."

In order to participate in the sunrises, trademark owners must record their trademarks in the Trademark Clearinghouse (according to figures obtained by *WTR* on November 28, the number of marks registered as of that date stood at 17,500).

Brand owners still have time to register their marks in the clearinghouse, but the clearinghouse validation process takes 21 days to complete.

As new gTLDs are officially delegated, trademark owners must be aware not only of the sunrise period, but also of the claims period. The claims period lasts for at least the first 90 days of general registration. During this time, notices of trademark rights will be sent to any third party attempting to register a domain that matches a record in the Trademark Clearinghouse. If the notified party goes ahead and registers the domain name, the Trademark Clearinghouse will send a notice to those trademark holders with matching records in the clearinghouse, informing them that a party has registered the domain name. For the first seven gTLDs, the claims period opens on January 27 2014 and closes on April 28 2014; for the second batch of seven gTLDs, it

opens on February 3 2014 and closes on May 5 2014; while for the third batch, it opens on February 10 2014 and closes on May 12 2014.

In addition, Donuts has launched its Domain Protected Marks List, designed to enable mark owners to block trademarks across multiple strings for a single fee, with a five-year block costing around \$3,000.

Charlie Abrahams, vice president and general manager EMEA at MarkMonitor, believes that the situation has reached a "tipping point", and thus urges brand owners which have not yet turned their attention to the gTLDs to do so now. "If you look at the number of new strings coming and make a rough calculation based on there being around 200 working days a year, you would be looking at more than one string launching every working day," he explains. "In reality, they will come in batches; but you need to consider now where you register and where you don't. Otherwise, you could have to make a separate decision every single day. If you plan now, you can make sensible strategic decisions."