

Jonathan M Robinson

Candidate Statement regarding ICANN Board Seat 13

Current professional affiliation with RySG / RrSG Member: **Identity Digital**

Proposed professional affiliation with RySG / RrSG Member: **None / Neutral**
(If elected, I will formally and completely step away from any affiliation with a CPH member)

Relevant experience, skills and background

Overview

My professional career comprises extensive operational, executive management and director roles. Having served on numerous boards and board sub-committees in various jurisdictions, I am familiar with all key aspects of board work and corporate governance. During my career, I have enjoyed considerable success and had to deal with numerous challenges, including changes of key personnel, downsizing, contentious legal and numerous other issues. I am familiar with the business models and operation of both registries and registrars, as well as the ICANN organisation. Therefore, I am well-equipped to make a substantial contribution to the ICANN board's work, especially in so far as it relates to the board's understanding of issues facing ICANN's contracted parties.

My career can be partitioned into three key phases. A ten-year research career was followed by a more than twenty-year period within the internet naming sector and most recently, various more diverse director and investor roles. Within each phase, I have continuously listened, learned, and evolved. Wherever appropriate, I have developed and applied leadership skills to drive innovative and relevant development. I am thorough, considered and decisive, so have a critical combination of skills and experience to offer the ICANN board and the Contracted Parties House.

Registrar Experience

At ICANN accredited registrar NetBenefit (renamed Group NBT), I was a co-founder in 1997 and CEO from 1998. I led the company to a stock market listing in 1999 and continued to serve on the board of directors for 10 years. I worked with a range of board members and became very familiar with all board, business and operational matters, including financial accounting and reporting, corporate governance, and compliance.

NetBenefit was in the first ever full batch of ICANN accredited registrars and ultimately acquired numerous registrar and related businesses including Ascio, Easily, NetNames and Speednames. We operated internationally through overseas subsidiaries, and so I became familiar with the broader international environment, including all aspects of the domain name business and related internet governance issues.

Registry Experience

At .uk ccTLD registry operator, Nominet UK, I served separate, distinct terms as member elected board director. For the second term, I was specifically asked by the then chair to re-join the board to assist with navigating uniquely challenging circumstances at the time. During my tenures, I worked with two CEOs as well as two different board chairs and a variety of other directors. I served on the Audit Committee; the Investment Committee and chaired the Remuneration Committee. I also served on a small appointment committee to select an incoming board chair who subsequently served successfully for many years.

At Registry Operator Afilias, I was appointed a director in 2001 and became Chair of the board in 2014, remaining in that position until 2020, when the company was sold and then merged with Donuts (now Identity Digital). For many years, I worked closely with the Afilias CEO and senior management team on all key aspects of strategy, business development and financial management. I served as a member of the Board Audit and Compensation Committees. Afilias operated and managed a diverse range of TLDs, including .info from conception. We later added .mobi, .pro and many other TLDs to our registry operation business, including multiple 2012 round “new” gTLDs. Afilias also had a well-developed registry service provision “backend” business, providing RSP services for .org as well as numerous .brand and ccTLDs throughout the world. Within the same group of companies, we also operated a registrar business (101Domain) as a subsidiary.

ICANN Community Experience

From 2010 on, I substantially increased my involvement within the ICANN community, including taking on a variety of key policy and related positions. I served as GNSO Councillor from the Registries SG and from there, was elected to GNSO Council Chair. I held the Chair position for three consecutive terms, and this provided me with a substantial understanding of the diversity of interests and requirements within the broader community. My work led to several effective improvements in operation and performance within the GNSO, most of which remain in place to date. This was recognised with an ICANN Leadership Award in 2014.

In 2015, I agreed to take on the critical leadership role of Co-Chair of the Cross-Community WG on the IANA Transition. This was a uniquely challenging role for a variety of reasons, and one which required phenomenal commitment and focus. Sensitive handling of diverse interests was required, and my work produced numerous specific innovations. It culminated in a successful stewardship transition and was recognised through a second ICANN Leadership Award in 2016.

ICANN Organisation Experience

Following the IANA Stewardship Transition, I assumed the role of Director on the board of ICANN’s affiliate, the IANA PTI. My work on the PTI Board gave me further insight into the workings of IANA, the ICANN organisation and the ICANN board.

Broader Experience

Prior to ICANN’s inception, I worked with diverse participants on prospective introduction of new gTLDs as well as the formation of ICANN itself.

Most recently, I have chaired the board of a public “DeepTech” investment business and am now actively involved in early-stage technology company investment across a range of sectors including engineering, life-science and computing.

Summary

My professional journey has taken me through diverse commercial, and non-commercial experiences in multiple geographies. I relish challenge and thrive on working towards creative, practical solutions to complex problems, in conjunction with others.

I will welcome the opportunity to serve on the ICANN Board and will relish the opportunity to fully understand, represent and advocate for responsive recognition of the challenges and specific issues faced by Contracted Party participants in ICANN’s multi-stakeholder model.

Thank-you for reviewing and considering this statement.

Overview of Professional Achievements or awards

Substantial *International* Research Career – 1988 to 1998

- University of Cape Town, **South Africa**
Doctoral Research
- National Center for Electron Microscopy, University of California, Berkeley, **USA**
Doctoral Research
- Imperial College, London, **UK** (1993 – 1994)
Postdoctoral Research
- Groningen University, Groningen, **Netherlands**
Postdoctoral Research
- University of Cambridge, Cambridge, **UK** (1995 – 1996)
Postdoctoral Research
(Rolls Royce University Technology Centre, Department of Materials)

Extensive Entrepreneurial and Business Leadership Career – 1997 to Present

Co-Founder / CEO / COO NetBenefit UK (1997 – 2009)

- Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year semi-finalist 2000
- Three times Deloitte Fast 50 Award to NetBenefit plc (with myself as CEO)

Member Elected Board Director, Nominet UK

- Two non-consecutive 2-year terms
- Second term followed recruitment by Chair to assist with uniquely difficult circumstances
- Audit Committee member, Remuneration Committee Chair
- Dealt with board-level appointments and terminations

Director and Chair of the Board – Afilias Ltd (2001 – 2020)

- Founder investor (through NetBenefit UK)
- Board Director for over 10 years, Board Chair for 6 years
- Member Audit Committee and Compensation Committee

Founder & Board Director – IPRota Ltd (2010 – 2012)

- Trademark validation services business
- Supported new TLD sunrise registrations
- Pre-cursor business to Trademark Clearing House

Board Director – Ipracon Ltd (2010 – 2020)

- Consultancy Business
- International client base

Board Director – Internet Computer Bureau (2018 to Present)

- ccTLD registry service provider / registry operator

Board Director – NetScientific plc (2023 - Present)

- Senior Independent Non-Executive Director
- Interim Chair (Jan to June 2023)
- Chair Audit Committee, Chair Remuneration Committee

Extensive Leadership Contribution to the ICANN Community - 2010 to present

Including:

- Chair GNSO Council (3 x 1-year terms)
- Co-Chair IANA Stewardship Transition CWG
- PTI Board Director
- Co-chair CWG ICANN Auction Proceeds

ICANN Leadership Awards – The only 2-time recipient

- 2014 – For broader community leadership while GNSO Council Chair
- 2016 – For leadership work on IANA Stewardship Transition