

Big Room's Vision for Dot Eco: Let the Consumer Decide Who Is Green

By Jim Witkin | August 10th, 2009 | 7 Comments

Next year, ICANN, the group that coordinates the Internet's system of unique identifiers, will expand the list of top level domain (TLD) names. Anyone can apply, but only one deserving applicant will be awarded the registry rights for the .eco domain. Triple Pundit has provided much coverage lately (here and here) on the efforts of Dot Eco LLC, an LA-based group, endorsed by eco-luminaries like Al Gore, to win the registry rights. But Dot Eco LLC is not the only game in town.

Enter Big Room, a Canadian company, with a different vision on how to make the .eco domain relevant. They have already created the largest, global database of eco labeling information available on the web, and they plan to expand this

capability through their Dot Eco initiative if they are awarded the registry rights. In their approach, companies that apply for the .eco domain name will be required to provide comprehensive eco-information about their operations. Big Room will build a system to make this information available to anyone who wants it. Their emphasis is on transparency and disclosure, not deciding who is green and who isn't.

I recently spoke with Trevor Bowden, a Big Room co-founder, about their Dot Eco initiative, who explained, "We are not going to take the position that we can judge who is green, especially as standards are constantly changing. We will let the consumer decide."

And they want to do more than just sell domain names. Instead their model is to provide a tool for companies to disclose their eco credentials and then serve up this information as structured data on a platform that anyone can access. They are also working on an application programming interface (API) that will allow developers to build useful applications on top of this structured data. Sounds perfect for the next iPhone app.



Have Your Say

Big Room has launched a global policy development process to help build consensus for how the .eco top level domain should be administered and maintained. Leading international organizations, companies and experts have been invited to participate in this open process, and the company is also welcoming input from anyone in the global eco community. They have been holding in-person, regional meetings to gather direct input, and starting today, you can join the online community and participate in the online feedback process.

Like Dot Eco LLC, Big Room has plans to donate a portion of their revenues to worthy initiatives. But consistent with their guiding principles of openness and transparency, they will open up this process to user input to help them decide how to direct these funds.

A stakeholder advisory board will oversee the group's activities. The board includes heavy hitters like the David Suzuki Foundation, WWF, Green Cross International, and TerraChoice, among others.

The ICANN process of evaluating registry applicants is expected to start the first quarter of 2010, although this process has been pushed out several times already. Big Room and Dot Eco LLC are two of the high-profile applicants for the .eco top level domain, but applicants are not required to go public with their intentions, so the competition could get thicker. Triple Pundit will keep you posted on the latest developments, but in the meantime, make sure to visit Big Room's policy development forum to have your say.