

Surprise Challenger To VeriSign .net Emerges

ICANN's announcement of five bidders for the operation of .net has been upstaged by the unexpected appearance of a global consortium, called CORE++.

By W. David Gardner, TechWeb.com, Jan. 20, 2005

ICANN's announcement of five bidders for the operation of .net has been upstaged by the unexpected appearance of a global consortium called CORE++, which is likely to present stiff competition to VeriSign, which currently manages the .net Top Level Domain (TLD).

In addition to VeriSign and CORE++, the other bidders announced Thursday by ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) included NeuStar, manager of .BIZ TLD. NeuStar has teamed up with the Japan Registry Services Co. The other two bidders, as expected, were Germany's Denic eG, and Afilias, which administers the .info TLD.

CORE++ blindsided the competition, as it had not telegraphed its intention widely enough to file a bid. Based in Barcelona, CORE++ boasts an international roster, including telecommunications firm Telefonica Group, and Internet registration organizations from Korea, Brazil, and South Africa among others. CORE++ said the California-based Internet Systems Consortium, a non-profit organization, is supporting its bid.

"We intend to develop the .net domain by adding value to registrars and users," said Eva Froelich, CORE++ chief coordinator, in a statement. "By operating in a far more efficient mode than the current domain registry we can reduce the cost of registering and owning .net domains while offering better protection against unintended, accidental, and fraudulent changes to domain names."

Other bidders supported the idea that Web administration needs a more international and non-profit flavor. Denic, which manages Germany's 8 million registered Web users, is a non-profit group. The NeuStar bid was filed through Sentan Registry Services, which is a private for-profit joint venture of Japan Registry Service and NeuLevel Inc. Sentan noted that it is incorporated in the U.S., but will be headquartered in Tokyo.

VeriSign is a for-profit company and its management of the Internet's TLDs has been very profitable. In addition, to .net, VeriSign manages .com, which is by far the largest TLD.

The company is betting that its longtime administration of 18 domain sites around the world and its longtime record of keeping its TLDs up and running, will help it retain management of .net. VeriSign is supported in its bid by many major high technology firms including Microsoft, MCI and Sun Microsystems.