

Future of ccNSO Dinners

Background

The tradition of having a ccNSO dinner at every ccNSO meeting was first initiated at the meeting in Los Angeles (October/November 2007). During the meeting, community members suggested that it would be good to meet at the end of the meeting in a relaxed atmosphere. Spontaneous dinner arrangements were made and a few sponsors found.

It was felt that this was a suitable format to allow ccNSO members to socialise outside the ccNSO meetings and that it also helps the ccTLD community to bond beyond any formal structures.

Therefore, the ccNSO Secretariat was tasked to look into arranging planned ccNSO members dinners at future meetings.

As the following meeting was held in Delhi, but the ccNSO did not have any contact with the .in registry, the first pre-planned dinner took place at the subsequent meeting in Paris (June 2008), where 100 ccNSO members were invited. With only one exception (Cairo, November 2008 – due to lack of contact with the .eg registry), every meeting then hosted a ccNSO member's dinner.

As the dinners evolved to a standing event, the invitations were extended to include ICANN staff with key functions in dealing with ccTLDs (such as from IANA, Global Partnerships), to increase the networking benefit. In some cases, non-ccNSO members were also invited. The main target group, however, remained ccNSO members.

Dinner Arrangements

The dinners are always co-arranged by the host registry and the ccNSO Secretariat. The registry is arranging the actual venue and transportation (if needed) and is printing the dinner tickets. The ccNSO Secretariat is arranging sponsors, liaises regarding logos, tickets and invoicing and is taking care of the dinner participant list and reserve list. It is also responsible for distributing the dinner tickets and is assisting in any other arrangements that might be needed.

Problems in Keeping Current Dinner Format

Whilst the dinner become increasingly popular, they have also become a bigger burden to handle. With a growing ccNSO membership, the amount of people interested in participating in the dinners is also increasing.

At the Prague meeting, about 160 people participated in the dinner, with around 20 people left on the reserve list.

As there is a limit to the costs and seating, not all community members can be invited. Therefore, a participant list needs to be kept and handled, which causes several problems:

- Being "on" the list versus not making it on the list, creates division and frustration

in the community;

- The frustration on being left out of a dinner is often taken out on the Secretariat, which makes the handling of the dinner participants list increasingly unpleasant;
- The administrative handling of the invitations is taking up an unproportional amount of time for the Secretariat - both before and during the meeting;
- There are normally far more people registering for the dinner, than actually attending the ccNSO meeting. This means that people often are brought along that may have links to the registries (such as GAC members), but that in fact are not the primary target group for the invitation;
- People assume they have the "right" to three tickets, so they bring along random friends;

Further problems are:

- Many dinners have become increasingly expensive (mainly due to the increased need for additional seating) which makes it hard to find enough sponsors;
- It is sometimes hard for the hosts finding a venue that takes as many people as required and the venues suggested are very often far away from the meeting venue;
- The logistics of an increasingly large group of people is causing more work both on the registry and Secretariat side.

Conclusion:

The success of the ccNSO dinners demonstrates that the community appreciates the opportunity to socialise beyond the meetings. However, as a result, those who cannot attend are getting frustrated. Furthermore, the arrangements of the dinners are becoming increasingly hard to handle both for the hosts and the Secretariat.

Suggested Change of Format

To maintain the networking opportunities, it is worth considering other formats:

Suggestion 1: Cocktails and snacks with Entire ccTLD Community Invited

- The hassle with participation/reserve lists is avoided
- No community member feels excluded
- Easier to socialise (not stuck to dinner table)
- Can most likely be held in the meeting venue
- Easier arrangements for hosts
- Low administrative burden for the Secretariat
- Keeps the costs down
- Easier to leave for other arrangements, if needed

Sponsors for the cocktail events would still be needed, however, the costs for

approximately 200 people would most likely be lower than for a dinner.

Suggestion 2: Standing Buffet for Limited Amount of People

- Easier to socialise
- Can most likely be held in the meeting venue
- Keeps the costs down, but only marginally
- Easier to leave for other arrangements

Having a standing buffet would most likely still involve keeping a list, which is today's biggest burden in arranging the dinners.

Considering the facts, the Secretariat would be very grateful if the Council would agree on changing the current Dinner format to a Cocktail reception, where the the entire ccTLD community is invited, starting from the Beijing meeting.