



## Fixing ICANN: Step 1

[Alex Tajirian](#)

August 21, 2010

How can ICANN get back in shape? To start with, it can rewrite its mantra/mission statement in easy-to-understand language and develop transparent measures to monitor the group's success.

On [its Web site](#), the organization tells us this: “ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world ... dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers.”

The statement says nothing about appropriate and measurable accountability, a crucial topic. Worse, the statement is gibberish. What aspects of the identifiers/addresses does the organization coordinate? And what does keeping the Internet secure mean? Secure from phishing, from spam, from cyberwars?

Come to think of it, what does a “stable” Internet mean? Apple Inc., for example, has designed the iPad to be used in unstable positions to enhance the game-playing experience. Probably the most stable system would be zero addresses! As for “interoperable,” I give up. Whatever it means, how do you measure it?

Is the coordination of addresses the only responsibility ICANN should have? A number of industry observers and experts have suggested that the group has already established a de facto influence over the Internet beyond address coordination. I have argued that it's [ICANN that has created the trademark mess](#). Organizations grow over time, as do their product lines and responsibilities. Rejecting an expanded scope for ICANN is like saying that Apple should never have developed iTunes, iPod, or iPhone because they aren't computers.

Fix the gibberish, decide on the mission's scope, and set up some way of measuring success, of gauging whether or not the group is getting results or needs to adjust its performance. Then ICANN can start making itself useful. ■