topDNS Best Practice Series Part 1: How to reduce Abuse through Quality

The topDNS Best Practice Series webinar titled "How to Reduce Abuse through Quality" was held on 6 June 2023. The aim of the webinar was to address DNS abuse and implement quality measures to enhance the security of the domain name system. This report provides an overview of the key points discussed during the webinar.

This webinar was hosted by:

- **Brian Cimbolic**, Vice President, General Counsel, Public Interest Registry (.ORG)
- **Theo Geurts**, CIPP/E Privacy & GRC Officer, Realtime Register

Lars Steffen commenced the webinar by welcoming the participants and introducing the speakers. He also provided information about the topDNS initiative, invited interested parties and individuals to join the steering committee, and announced upcoming webinars in the series.

Brian Cimbolic, Vice President and General Counsel of Public Interest Registry (PIR), began his presentation by discussing PIR's mission to empower non-profit organisations and improve the DNS. He highlighted PIR's involvement in industry initiatives and collaboration with topDNS. Brian explained the reactive and proactive components of PIR's anti-abuse programme, including its partnership with CleanDNS for abuse identification and domain suspension. He highlighted the role of the Quality Performance Index (QPI) as an incentive programme for registrars to reduce DNS abuse and promoting responsible growth. Brian presented data showing a significant reduction in abuse since the introduction of the QPI, supported by external sources.

The presentation also addressed the proposed contractual amendments with gTLD registries and registrars, highlighting the importance of proactive systems such as QPI. Testimonials from industry professionals were shared highlighting the success of QPI in reducing abuse. Brian invited feedback and ideas on how to further improve the programme, while encouraging other registries to adopt similar incentives.

Theo Geurts, Certified Information Privacy Professional at Realtime Register, discussed the benefits of the QPI programme from a registrar's perspective and stressed the need to maintain low levels of DNS abuse to qualify for discounts. He highlighted the growing threat of cybercrime and urged registrars to actively combat abuse to avoid losing discounts. Theo recommended using resources such as OTX and Abuse.IO to monitor and detect DNS abuse and implementing tools such as IP address blockers and email address verification at registration to prevent abuse. He highlighted the importance of using information from cybersecurity researchers and shared insights from a group of criminals in Vietnam who hacked reseller accounts to re-register previously owned domain names. Theo explained their strategy of setting up catch-all email addresses to collect data from these domains. He advised registrars to review their processes, proactively remove abusive domain names, and take prompt action against phishing and fraudulent activity.

During the Q&A session, Carsten Schiefner asked about the purpose of re-registering domain names without setting up websites or email services. Theo clarified that criminals collect data from emails sent to these domains, even if they have been inactive for a long time.

Lars Steffen closed the webinar by thanking the participants and speakers. He announced that the next webinar in the series will focus on evidencing abuse online and will feature Jeff Bedser from CleanDNS.

Overall, the webinar provided valuable insights into reducing DNS abuse through quality measures. Speakers highlighted the success of the QPI programme and shared strategies for fighting abuse. The discussion underlined the importance of collaboration between registries, registrars, and industry stakeholders to create a safer and more secure domain name system.