Universal Acceptance Capacity Building

Emerging Themes from ICANN84 Discussions

The Big Picture: Multiple Entry Points

Looking at both the whiteboard sketches and scribe notes from the ICANN84 Universal Acceptance discussions, there's something really interesting happening here. The group isn't putting all their eggs in one basket. They're essentially saying "we need to reach people from every angle" — government, academia, culture, security, and language communities. The reasoning? Different stakeholders respond to different motivations.

Key Arguments & Strategies

1. The "Top-Down + Bottom-Up" Pincer Movement

The group is advocating for hitting this from both directions. Go to legislators and government officials (top-down) BUT also engage academia and universities (bottom-up). Why? Because academics often influence government policy with better-informed perspectives. It's like surrounding a problem from both sides.

The rationale here is simple but smart: government officials make the decisions and move the needle, but they're often not as technically informed as academic researchers. By engaging both simultaneously, you get policy action backed by solid technical understanding.

2. The "National Pride" Card

This is smart — they're saying don't just make it technical, make it emotional. Frame Universal Acceptance as a matter of cultural heritage and national identity. The concrete example they mention is brilliant:

The .cat domain for Catalan language, which restricts registration to Catalan language use only.

It's not just a technical feature; it's digital preservation of cultural identity. When you frame UA as "protecting your language and culture in the digital age," you tap into something far more powerful than technical specifications. Social advertising through government and ministries can leverage this cultural angle effectively.

3. The Incentive Game

They recognize that people need carrots, not just sticks. Their solution?

Use ICANN training certificates as incentives for academics and engineers to learn about IDNs (Internationalized Domain Names).

Give professors and coding engineers something tangible that helps their career while spreading UA knowledge. The discussions highlighted that professors sometimes face issues with IDN identity themselves, so providing them with formal training and credentials helps both their understanding and their credibility.

The curriculum would train coding engineers on IDNs and can be integrated into computer science programs. Government language departments could partner with ICANN technical experts to deliver this training.

4. Security as the Hook

Rather than overwhelming people, they suggest starting with IDN security at the display level — something concrete and immediately relevant. You lead with "here's how this affects security" because that gets attention fast.

There's also recognition that informing end-users about the security implications of registering IDN emails is crucial. Training by registrars and registries to talk to governments about security can be limited, so there's a need for better technical support channels.

5. Show, Don't Just Tell

The call for compiling best practices from China and Russia is about having proof points. It's easier to convince skeptics when you can say "look, these countries are already doing this successfully." Case studies matter — they turn abstract concepts into concrete evidence.

The Through-Line

The emerging consensus seems to be:

Universal Acceptance isn't just a technical problem requiring technical solutions — it's a social, cultural, and political challenge that needs education, incentives, and emotional appeal to move forward.

The flowchart captures seven key capacity building areas — government education, academia/schools, cultural initiatives, language use, benefits documentation, security understanding, and value addition with technical support — all working together as an interconnected system rather than isolated efforts.

What makes this approach compelling is its pragmatism. Instead of just preaching technical standards, it meets different audiences where they are: legislators who care about policy, academics who care about research, communities who care about cultural preservation, and end-users who care about security and usability.