# ICANN Board minutes

## An overview from 2007 to 2010

**Methodology:**

Reviewed the minutes of each meeting trying to assess the quality and level of depth provided by each and to note any patterns over time.

The length and style of minutes were reviewed to get a sense of quality.


**Conclusions:**

The quality of Board meeting minutes, assessed in terms of depth of understanding of events that can be picked up from reading the minutes, is inconsistent and has jumped between two very different styles since 2007.

There was a marked increase in the depth, quality and consistency of minutes from August 2007 through to October 2008.

From October 2008, the quality of minutes has become increasingly inconsistent, with some meeting minutes providing in-depth reviews; others, short summaries with little context.

Minutes have become significantly shorter – between 40 and 50 percent on average in the past 18 months. The number of agenda items has stayed broadly the same over time.

Recording of meeting attendees has been inconsistent, particular with respect to staff. Several sets of minutes are also still listed as "preliminary" with full minutes requiring approval.

In April 2009, the Board changed its approach to meetings, incorporating a "Consent agenda" to start of the meeting. This was accompanied by an increasingly legalistic approach to minutes in which names of individual speakers were removed, few discursive details provided and the minutes comprise mostly approved resolutions.

The previous style reappeared between December 2009 and February 2010, with extensive notes on individuals' points and some in-depth consideration of issues.

From February 2010 to the present day, the more in-depth approach was again replaced with a shorter, more legalistic form, containing minimal discursive points

and comprising largely of approved resolutions (this trend is noticeable by the number of time the term "whereas" appears in the text).

**Best example of minutes:**

March 2008: http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/minutes-27mar08.htm

An extensive and complex agenda is well presented, with complex argument and discussion neatly summarized; the keys points in discussion drawn out; and individuals attributed with comments.

In particular, a 1,500-word description of discussions surrounding the modification of the Add Grace Period is illuminating and helpful to understand the issue, its different exponents' points of view and the useful clarifying and questioning role that the Board plays.

**Worst example of minutes:**

By way of contrast are the May 2009 minutes:
http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/minutes-21may09.htm

Several significant decisions were made at the meeting, including: the approval of RAA amendments, approval of changes to part of the ICANN structure; the provision of a Board seat for the ALAC, and the introduction of document deadlines for the organisation.

The minutes comprise solely of factual resolutions, with no coverage of discussion or review. The Board is represented as a single entity with a singular voice. No attendee list is appended.

**Most recent good example of minutes:**

February 2010: http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/minutes-19feb10-en.htm

An extensive rundown of discussion surrounding security concerns about the upcoming meeting in Nigeria.

**Most recent bad example of minutes:**

August 2010: http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/prelim-report-05aug10-en.htm

A number of significant decisions, including remuneration of the Chair; discussing an international expansion of ICANN; changes to a registry contract; the dot-xxx dispute; and updates on new gTLDs.

As with May 2009, the minutes comprise factual resolutions, with no coverage of discussion or review. The Board is represented as a single entity with a singular voice. Some examples:

*Internationalisation*

The creation of a new Board Committee to look at "internationalizing" ICANN – which in the past has been allied to the creation of a new legal entity outside of the United States was given a single sentence: "The Board discussed the proposed formation of a Global Relationships Committee to form a holistic approach to guiding ICANN's internationalization, including impact to staff resources."

*Dot-jobs*

The approval of a change to the contract for dot-jobs – which had been the subject of a heated and unusually large public comment period - one which saw Board members receive lengthy considerations from an affected party, and which immediately saw the introduction of a Board Reconsideration Request when it was approved - was also given a single line.

"The Board discussed with staff the process taken for the proposed amendment in the .JOBS sTLD, and raised questions regarding the scope of change this amendment would have on the charter of the sTLD."

*Dot-xxx*

No discussion at all is recorded with respect to the dot-xxx ongoing dispute that has been running for five years and which recently saw the Board face strong criticism from its Independent Review Process.

*New gTLD work*

This crucial work product of the organisation, which has taken up much of ICANN's time for the past three years was given a single sentence.

"Staff provided an update to the Board on the ongoing work on the New gTLD program, including the status of public comment periods on the fourth version of the Draft Applicant Guidebook and the work underway to prepare for the Board's September retreat focusing on the New gTLD program."
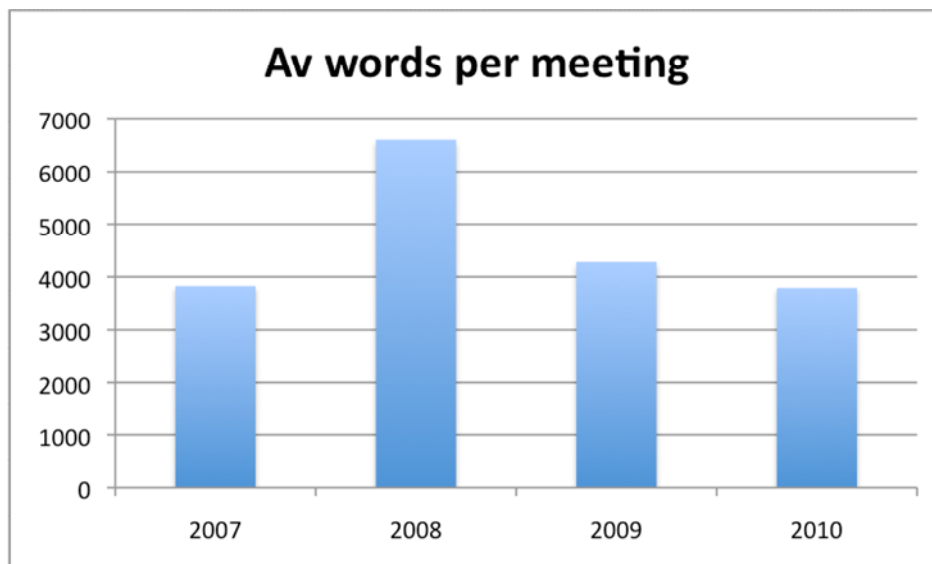
One month later, the Board made a series of resolutions on some contentious points regarding the new gTLD process.
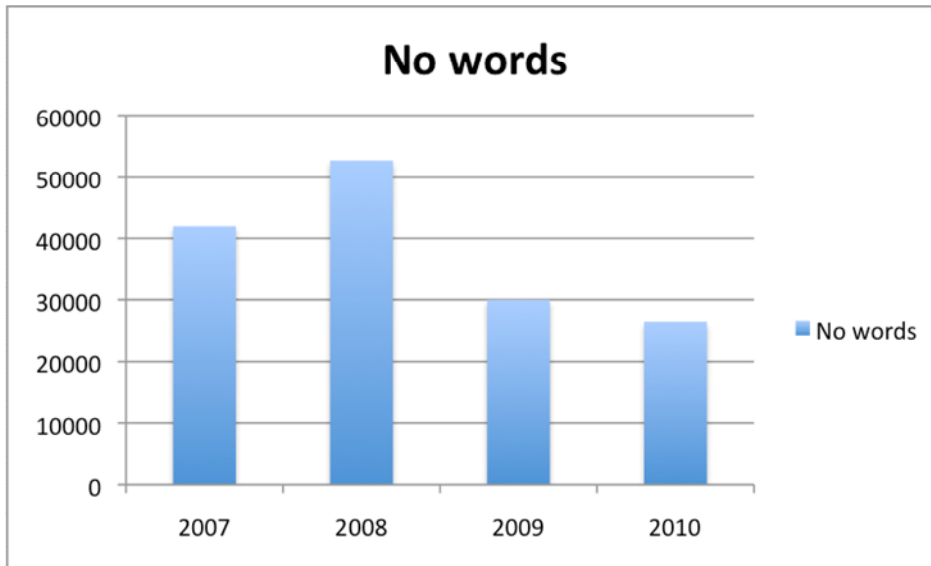
**Graphics**

Graphics below:

1. The average number of words per meeting contained in minutes over the course of a year
2. The total number of words in minutes for a given year
3. The number of words in the minutes for each meeting since January 2007 (not including public Board meetings)
4. The number of agenda items and incidence of the word "whereas" for each meeting since January 2007
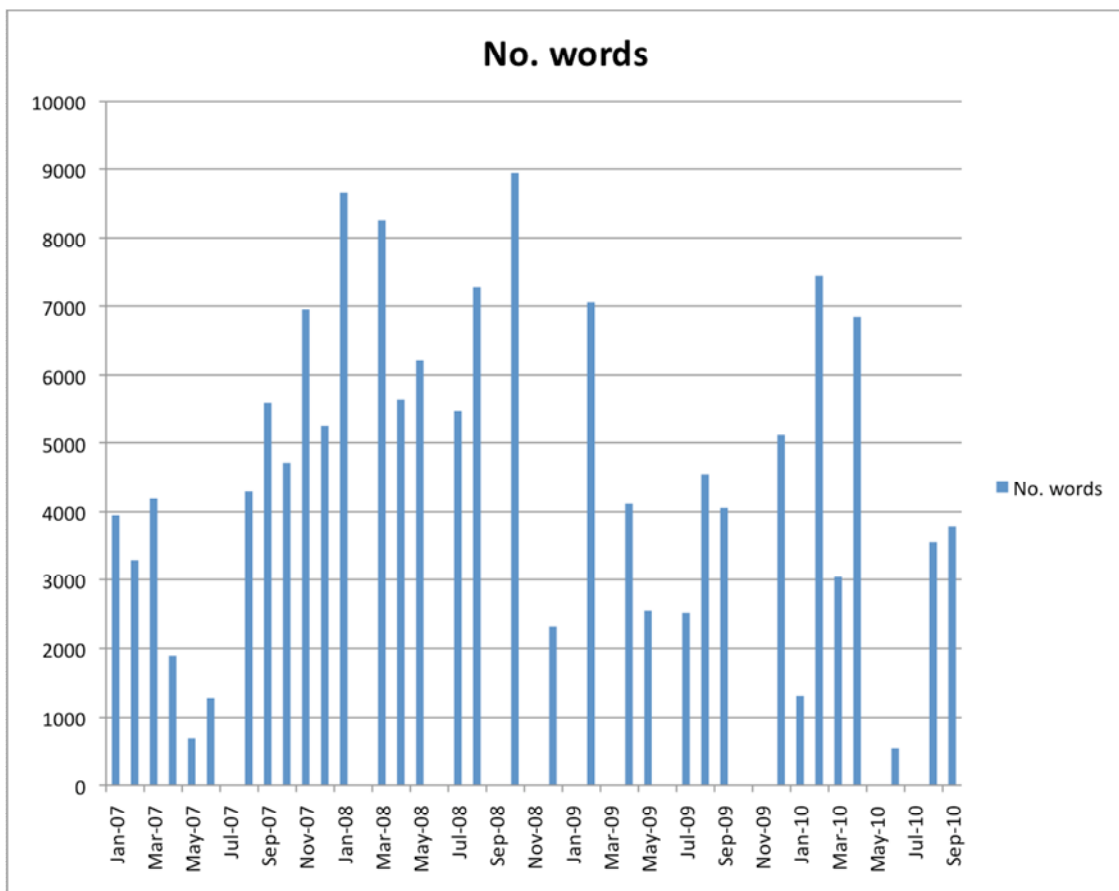
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1. The average number of words per meeting contained in minutes over the course of a year



2. The total number of words in minutes for a given year

**No words**

3. The number of words in the minutes for each meeting since January 2007 (not including public Board meetings)



**No. words**

4. The number of agenda items as well as incidence of the word "whereas" for each meeting since January 2007