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Sun sets on Sunrise B as AdultBlock rises to the occasion

International - [Hogan Lovells](#)

- **With Sunrise B set to come to an end, the '.xxx' Registry is introducing two levels of protection: AdultBlock and AdultBlock+**
- **AdultBlock and AdultBlock+ will block all available domain names across the four adult-themed TLDs that the registry covers**
- **Brand owners need to weigh up the costs and benefits of blocking their brands across the four TLDs**

Sunrise B, the programme that originally enabled trademark holders to block their brands for a period of 10 years in the adult-themed '.xxx' top-level domain (TLD) when it launched back in 2011, is set to come to an end on 1 December 2021. In its place, MMX, which runs the '.xxx' Registry, is introducing two levels of protection that will cover not just the '.xxx' TLD, but also its other adult-focussed TLDs '.sex', '.adult' and '.porn'.

The '.xxx' TLD was launched in 2011 as one of a handful of 'sTLDs' (sponsored top-level domains) that counted among its ranks '.asia', '.jobs', '.tel' and '.travel', and which preceded ICANN's new gTLD programme. The first adult-themed TLD ever to be launched, '.xxx', was sponsored by the International Foundation for Online Responsibility, a "not-for-profit organisation that specialises in developing policies and educational materials around online sexual content", ostensibly with the aim of providing a focal point for sexually explicit material on the Internet within a specialised TLD, where it could easily be blocked or restricted.

In order to assuage the concerns of trademark holders when faced with a TLD specialised in adult content, the ICM Registry, which ran the registry at the time, implemented the Sunrise B blocking programme to allow brand owners to protect their trademarks as non-resolving, reserved domain names for a period of 10 years. Since its launch, around 70,000 trademarks have been blocked under the Sunrise B programme.

MMX's new blocking service is divided into two service levels: AdultBlock and AdultBlock+. Both AdultBlock and AdultBlock+ will block all available domain names across the four adult-themed TLDs it covers, and will automatically block any additional dropped names while the block is in place without the need for any action on behalf of the block holder.

The AdultBlock+ service also enables rights holders to block all lookalike variations such as typos, homoglyphs and internationalised domain names (it covers over 20 languages and scripts including Chinese (simplified and traditional), French, German, Italian, Korean, Portuguese and Russian). The service not only blocks characters available today, but will also include any language character sets that become available in the future for the specific TLD.

In terms of eligibility, '.xxx' Sunrise B holders will be able to block their brands in the new AdultBlock service, as will trademark holders with a Signed Mark Data file from the Trademark Clearing House.

Additionally, the registry has recently opened up the AdultBlock service to unregistered rights holders, as well as to celebrities and politicians. When '.xxx' originally launched, thousands of celebrity names, as well as the names of the world's capital cities and culturally sensitive strings put forward by a handful of governments, were blocked by ICM Registry free of charge. However, under the new service, celebrities and politicians will now have to provide evidence to prove their fame and buy their AdultBlocks along with everyone else.

The AdultBlock service allows for one, three, five and 10-year registration periods, with a maximum registration period of 10 years.

In common with the original Sunrise B Blocks, the WHOIS data for the AdultBlock and AdultBlock+ service will simply state that the blocked domains are protected with no other information provided.

Brand owners will need to weigh up the costs and benefits of blocking their brands across the four TLDs, taking into account the extensive protection that the AdultBlock service offers across four separate adult-themed TLDs, against the fact that there have actually been relatively few UDRP cases in the '.xxx' TLD since 2012.

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