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What Does the Death of Net Neutrality Mean for Blogs?

Dan Matthews · Thursday, January 18th, 2018

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Blogs are the cultural heart of the internet. When someone publishes their own blog with no guaranteed return for doing so, they're like someone who writes poetry for the sake of writing poetry.

A blog from an unknown voice with little to gain and nothing to lose is about as pure as it gets. True, they might monetize their blog after they begin posting, just as a poet might decide she wants to sell her poems to a literary journal. But at the outset, many people begin blogs for the sake of self-expression.

Witness [Mary E. Lohan's poetry blog](#).



Regardless of your opinion about her work, this is the type of blog that makes the internet special. She's out there on her own, projecting her voice amidst the clamor of millions. She even seems to be a veiled Trump supporter by the looks of it. Regardless of what you or I think of her political opinion, I think this blog is a fine example of self-expression and art not beholden to the icy grip of capitalism. Publishing this type of blog is free because of the platform it's on, which is called Blogger.

Would it be ironic if Ms. Lohan, whose blog links to Donald Trump's website, ends up having to pay so that people can access her site because of a [decision the FCC made](#) under Trump? It's doubtful this will happen. Let me explain.

When the FCC made its now-notorious decision, entrepreneurs like Steve Benjamins were convinced [ending net neutrality would hurt entrepreneurs](#). Benjamins makes his living testing website building apps and making recommendations, but he's also a musician with a website through which he promotes his band's music. An independent band like Benjamins' is entrepreneurial about their music—they have to market their work to the world, acting as their own record label in order to get any sort of attention.

Benjamins' [site for his band](#), Bamboo, is different than Ms. Lohan's poetry blog. Like a business, Bamboo pays a web host for the rights to its name and web address (which is called a domain).

That way, Bamboo's domain is "listentobamboo.com" instead of "listentobamboo.blogspot.com."



Because of the repeal on net neutrality, Bamboo could end up having to pay an internet service provider (ISP) such as Comcast more money so that people can access the site and stream its content quickly. A band, small business, or nonprofit needs people to be able to access their content quickly, because in order [for a website to really work](#) for a business, it needs to load in less than a second. People are impatient and expect sites to load fast.

Meanwhile, Ms. Lohan probably won't have to worry. Google owns the Blogger platform, and it's hard to imagine an ISP charging Google more so that Blogger blogs will be accessible without maddening wait times. Or, if an ISP does charge Google more, it will be mere pennies compared to Google's massive fortune.

Yet, Ms. Lohan's blog doesn't represent all. There are a lot of blogs like the one you're reading right now. A great number of blogs are invested in retaining the rights to their domain name. They don't want to operate on a limited freebie platform such as Blogger or WordPress because there's a lack of professionalism that comes with hanging out on someone else's domain. Not that there aren't incredible and highly relevant blogs on WordPress or Blogger domains, but a professional, independent blog shows its professionalism by maintaining its own unique name and format.

The repeal of net neutrality could cause independent blogs with their own domains to slow down over time unless those blogs can afford to fork out more cash to ISPs. For the internet to remain a democratic place for all voices, we can't afford to lose independent blogs because too much capitalist nonsense hurts their operating costs.

Here's how I put it to my congressman: when I'm walking down the street I don't want a third party (the ISP) to make me wait longer in line to go into a certain store (a website) because that store hasn't paid the third party extra cash to maintain the sidewalk (the internet). I already pay the third party for access to the sidewalk to begin with. No wonder [net neutrality advocates are fighting hard](#) against the FCC's ruling as we move into 2018. This is an issue that won't go away anytime soon.

Image via Ken Lee/Flickr

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