Peering Policies

Every operator needs to decide that their “Peering Policy” is.

This section looks at what is meant by “Peering Policy”, and how an operator goes about deciding what their policy should be.

The three types of peering policy will be looked at in turn:

- Open Peering
- Selective Peering
- Restrictive Peering

The Peering Toolbox recommends that a newcomer to the Peering ecosystem determines what their peering policy should be - newcomers generally start with **Open** policy, and as they gain more experience, move to **Selective**, and once they are a very significant player in the global internet, they move to **Restrictive**.

Open Peering

Open Peering is where a Network Operator publicly states that they will peer with all parties who approach them for peering. This is commonly found at Internet Exchange Points where the Network Operator participates via the IXP's Route Server.

What this means is that the Network Operator does not have any relationship with any of their peers. They simply connect to the IXP's Route Server, peer with that device, and accept all routes it sends from all parties participating. Likewise, the routes originated by the Network Operator are distributed to all participants at the Route Server.

The downside of this is that the Network Operator has no control over who they peer with. Hence the tag of “Open Peering” meaning that they are willing to peer with anyone.

The typical operator who might have an open peering policy could include:

- Access Providers
- Content Providers
- Content Distribution Networks
- Infrastructure operators (eg Root, ccTLD, gTLD name servers)

Note that many Content Providers and Content Distribution Networks prefer to have a technical/operational relationship with the Network Operator they are peering with, hence most noted in PeeringDB will list a Selective Peering Policy.

Selective Peering

Selective Peering is the next step on from Open Peering where a Network Operator will almost always happily peer with allcomers, but want to “talk to them first”.

This usually means a peering request is submitted by other party, who has already got up to date PeeringDB entries, IRR entries, and signed ROAs. The operator with the Selective Peering policy will discuss the peering, the locations, assess the traffic levels, before then proceeding with the technical set up.

What this means is that the Network Operator will not peer with the Route Server at an Internet Exchange Point (unless the IXP uses a facility supporting such selective peering), but instead will willingly discuss peering with all other members of the IXP, even those with an Open Peering policy.

The typical operator who might have a selective peering policy could include:

- Access Providers
- Content Providers
- Content Distribution Networks
- Infrastructure operators (eg Root, ccTLD, gTLD name servers)
- Regional Providers

Note that many Content Providers and Content Distribution Networks prefer to have a technical/operational relationship with the Network Operator they are peering with, hence most noted in PeeringDB will list a Selective Peering Policy.

Restrictive Peering

Restrictive Peering, as the name suggests, means that the Network Operator is not open to any discussion about peering.

Typically today this means “don't contact us, we'll contact you”. These operators rarely if ever turn up at Internet Exchange Points and are more likely to be present in Private Peering facilities such as datacentres or their own data housing facilities.

Typical operators with Restrictive Peering policies include:

- Regional Transit Providers
- Global Providers
- “Tier-1s”

These have very specific business needs about peering, and will reach out to ask about peering if their Peering Coordinator feels that there is an advantage for them.

They are usually present in dozens of locations around their region or the globe, and are responsible for traffic levels in multiple Gigabits if not Terabits.

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