



June 12, 2009

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
ALERT**Protect Your Trademark(s) From Facebook® Cybersquatting**

On June 9, Facebook announced that it will offer dedicated personal URLs for its users, meaning that a company like McDonald's will be able to own a customized username, e.g., www.facebook.com/mcdonalds.

This new feature raises intellectual property concerns for trademark owners because selected usernames may correspond to third-party trademarks. Facebook users might, therefore, register URLs that include the unauthorized use of trademarks of third parties with the intent of trying to sell those usernames to the trademark owner, misleading the public into believing that the trademark owner is in some way associated with that Facebook page or preventing the trademark owner from securing its own username on Facebook.

Starting on June 13, anyone with an active Facebook account that was established prior to the June 9 announcement can sign up for the dedicated URL. According to Facebook, if users created accounts after the June 9 announcement, they cannot sign up for the dedicated personal URL until June 28. The "blackout" period was created to prevent "squatters" from reserving numerous dedicated URLs that may include third-party trademarks.

For those that own trademark rights, Facebook has created a process for trademark owners to apply to have their trademarks reserved in their name. To access the trademark registration form, [click here](#). While the application process will continue after June 13, the most prudent approach would be to file applications ahead of the deadline, as it is expected that many usernames will be applied for on June 13.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on intellectual property issues related to Facebook vanity URLs, please contact your Thompson Hine professional.

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