

Facebook to Offer Options to Trademark Owners

June 12, 2009

As has been broadly reported, the popular social networking website Facebook announced this week that at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, June 13, it will begin allowing users to register new, “personalized” Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) to point to Facebook pages. Currently, Facebook user-profile URLs combine the facebook.com domain name with a nine-digit numeric code. The new URLs will allow users to personalize Facebook page URLs with a trade name or trademark (e.g., www.facebook.com/MorganLewis). As Facebook now claims to have more than 200 million registered users, these personalized URLs may represent new and valuable avenues for companies to reach consumers. Unfortunately, they may also represent new tools for infringers or cybersquatters.

According to Facebook, these new usernames (and the corresponding personalized URLs) will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis starting at 12:01 a.m. June 13 (for users who have been on Facebook prior to June 9). Newer Facebook users may register a personal username beginning on June 28, 2009.

Additional information regarding these new personalized Facebook URLs may be found at <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=896>. If you are interested in registering a Facebook username, please visit <http://www.facebook.com/username/>.

Facebook has also established a mechanism for brand owners to prevent the registration of a username and personalized URL that corresponds to their registered trademarks. Facebook’s information about this mechanism and a simple form that brand owners can complete to block their trademarks from being registered as usernames can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=899>. Although Facebook has “takedown” procedures in place, it is not clear how those procedures will work, so there may be a benefit to using this mechanism before the initial influx of requests for new personal URLs commences.

If you have any questions or concerns about these new personalized Facebook URLs, or if you would like general assistance in protecting your marks on the Internet, please contact either of the following Morgan Lewis attorneys:

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