



## Intellectual Property Advisory:

### Facebook Policy Change May Detrimentially Affect Online Search Result Rankings

By [Richard S. Stockton](#)<sup>1</sup>

On June 9, 2009, Facebook announced that it will allow its users to select personalized usernames for Facebook profiles and certain fan pages beginning on Friday, June 12, 2009, at 11:01 pm CDT.

Among other things, Facebook will incorporate the username into the URL of the user's page, which will considerably elevate the search results ranking of the user's page when the username is searched within Facebook or externally (*e.g.*, on Google). Correspondingly, another user's selection of, *e.g.*, "**YOUR BRAND NAME**" as a username may detrimentally affect **your** search results ranking (especially within Facebook).

#### **Protect Your Trademark**

To curtail abuse, Facebook suggests that registered trademark holders complete the online form at the URL below. Facebook hopes to prevent registered trademarks from improperly being selected as usernames by third parties:

[http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show\\_form=username\\_rights](http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=username_rights)

We see no downside to completing the no-cost form for "**YOUR BRAND NAME**" and each of your other registered trademarks of interest (in order of importance, since there appears to be a limit), and strongly suggest that you do so prior to the deadline.

Moreover, if your corporation has a Facebook fan page of more than 1,000 fans as of May 31, 2009, this page qualifies for a personalized username. Although it is unclear whether anyone, will be able to select the personalized usernames they request on Friday evening (assuming they completed the form), we still suggest having the administrator of the fan page attempt to do so.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Stockton is a shareholder of Banner & Witcoff, Ltd. in the Chicago office, where he practices intellectual property law with a concentration in trademarks, litigation and counseling in patent and copyright matters. Banner & Witcoff, Ltd. is dedicated to excellence in the specialized practice of intellectual property law, including patent, trademark, copyright, trade secret, computer, franchise and unfair competition law. The firm has over 90 attorneys and agents in its Chicago, Washington, DC, Boston and Portland, OR offices.

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this Intellectual Property Advisory,  
please send a message to Chris Hummel at [chummel@bannerwitcoff.com](mailto:chummel@bannerwitcoff.com)



© Copyright 2009 Banner & Witcoff, Ltd. All Rights Reserved. No distribution or reproduction of this issue or any portion thereof is allowed without written permission of the publisher except by recipient for internal use only within recipient's own organization. The opinions expressed in this publication are for the purpose of fostering productive discussions of legal issues and do not constitute the rendering of legal counseling or other professional services. No attorney-client relationship is created, nor is there any offer to provide legal services, by the publication and distribution of this advisory. This publication is designed to provide reasonably accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is provided with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, counseling, accounting or other professional services. If legal advice or other professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person in the relevant area should be sought.