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## [Thoughts on the God Squad Matter](#)

Posted on August 20, 2010 by [Dan Kelly](#)

By now, I assume that our readership is familiar with the "God Squad" story of this week's news cycle. If not, the executive summary is that Best Buy recently sent a cease-and-desist letter to a priest in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin requesting that he cease using a logo on his black Volkswagen Beetle that says "GOD SQUAD" and is similar in design to Best Buy's GEEK SQUAD logo.

Here is Best Buy's registered trademark:



And you can see a decent photo of Father Luke Strand's car [here](#).

There has been much ink spilled in the past week about this story. (A good current report is [here](#).) I have seen and heard some commentary with an undercurrent of disdain for the mere fact that Best Buy sent a nasty lawyer letter to a priest. I haven't seen the letter, but have a couple of general thoughts.

First, as someone who is regularly called upon to send demand letters on behalf of brand owners, such letters can come to feel a bit routine, and there is a danger that both lawyers and brand owners can become numb to how shocking these letters can be to receive--especially to non-lawyers. Lawyers who handle enforcement issues are immersed in conflict on a daily basis. Most other people are not--at least not in so formal a manner. There is always a risk that a demand letter will kick up some dust, and perhaps some negative publicity. In my opinion, an assessment of this risk should be a part of the calculus in sending such a letter.



With all of that said, I understand completely the need for Best Buy to address the situation, as low-level a threat as it might seem to the average viewer. (See, for instance, [my post from last week](#).)

Second, and this may be stating the obvious, there *are* alternatives to a cease-and-desist letter. Like picking up the phone. I freely admit to being in the position of a Monday-morning quarterback on this one, but a call in this situation would have probably been the best decision, at least if Best Buy wanted to take the lowest-risk path for stirring up negative publicity.

On the other hand, "there is no such thing as bad publicity." Best Buy and Father Strand have both made the news, probably to the ultimate benefit of both of them or their brands, difficult as this may be to quantify.

I would be interested in hearing the thoughts of others on the question of how best to approach a potentially sensitive enforcement situation like this.

