

*A Winthrop & Weinstine blog dedicated to bridging the gap between legal & marketing types.*

## [Unintended Consequences](#)

Posted on December 23, 2010 by [Brent Lorentz](#)

As I was perusing [ESPN.com](http://ESPN.com), I came across an interesting installment on their [Page 2 Power Rankings](#). For the uninitiated, Page 2 Power Rankings is a light-hearted ranking of the top sports-related stories grabbing headlines over the previous week (or two, or three, I'm not sure of the frequency). As a Minnesotan and an NFL fan, my interest was piqued by this week's #1: Stone Cold Vikings. The author noted the following:

The show biz axiom is that 'The show must go on.' And sailing this flaming Vikings ship past the point of no return into a Monday night showdown with the Chicago Bears can only end in glorious disaster. Talk about the law of unintended consequences for the sponsor of Minnesota's college football park of TCF Bank Stadium. It's not their fault that the cold weather will chill their image in a place never designed to hold games under such frigid circumstances. Right now, the best idea for keeping the field from freezing once the heated tarps come off is to have a halftime show in which they burn their customers' life savings at midfield. You think we're joking, but do you really doubt there isn't some bank in America in which the fine print of its customer service agreement says it's entitled to loot your holdings so it won't lose its shirt on staging an ill-conceived desperation spectacle? Hope you at least got a free toaster out of the deal to keep you warm in retirement.

For those of you who are longtime readers of our blog, you might recall an earlier piece I did on [building naming rights](#). I'm also a huge proponent of evaluating "unintended consequences" when making branding decisions. For example, I previously noted the unintended consequences of hitching your brand to a [tarnished star](#), promoting [rabid fan bases](#), [suing a poor college kid](#), and [holiday creep](#). So, I was elated to see an overlap in building naming rights and unintended consequences!

The author above apparently thinks that TCF Bank is responsible for actually running the stadium and making event decisions. While I suppose this is a possibility, building name deals are typically a glorified billboard, where the "sponsor" simply pays a lump sum fee to attach its name. I would find it highly unlikely that TCF Bank has any significant control over the stadium itself. Nonetheless, TCF Bank is now the victim of potentially negative brand associations. In my mind, situations like this further undermine the already sketchy value proposition associated with building naming rights.



WINTHROP WEINSTINE

ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

Capella Tower | Suite 3500 | 225 South Sixth Street | Minneapolis, MN 55402  
Main: (612) 604-6400 | Fax: (612) 604-6800 | [www.winthrop.com](http://www.winthrop.com) | *A Professional Association*