

# Trademark Alert: UPDATE: Reserving, Registering, and Challenging Personalized Usernames on Facebook

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Think that you missed your opportunity to register your company's trademark or trade name as a username on Facebook? Learned that someone else has registered your company's trademark or trade name as a Facebook username?

## Facebook's Personalized Username Policy

At 3 p.m. EDT on June 9, 2009, Facebook publicly announced a new policy that allowed existing users to create custom usernames (such as [facebook.com/\[companyname\]](http://facebook.com/[companyname])). In order to prevent what it called "name squatting," Facebook allowed owners of registered trademarks that had a live Facebook page prior the public announcement to reserve their trademarks as usernames. As of 12:01 a.m. EDT on June 13, 2009, all Facebook users (including non-trademark owners) with registered pages prior to the June 9th public announcement were eligible to register personalized Facebook URLs on a first-come, first-served basis. Those usernames that were reserved by brand owners, however, were removed from the pool of eligible usernames. Verified users who created Facebook pages after the June 9th cutoff became eligible to create personalized (or branded) Facebook usernames as of June 28, 2009 at 11:59 p.m. EDT. Today, custom usernames can be registered at [www.facebook.com/username](http://www.facebook.com/username). If your company took advantage of Facebook's advanced reservation process for trademark owners, you may register the trademark as a username [here](#).

Branded usernames allow businesses to promote their presence on Facebook with a short URL that is easy for consumers to find and remember.

Previously, the Facebook URL for a user profile was a randomly assigned number, such as: **<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=12345678>**

The new URL would be something like: **<http://www.facebook.com/mintzlevin>**

Thus, the personalized username policy makes it easier for potential consumers to find your business on Facebook, either by searching for your company name or trademark on Facebook or on a search engine.

## Challenges to Usernames that Conflict with Trademark Rights

If you are concerned that someone's username infringes your trademark rights, Facebook has provided a form through which brand owners can "Report an Infringing Username." This form can be found [here](#). Facebook will investigate each report of infringement and determine whether to remove and/or reclaim a particular username. As a result of Facebook's investigation, the infringing username may be transferred to the trademark owner's Facebook page upon request. Facebook also reserves the right to remove and/or reclaim any username at any time, for any reason.

Facebook has taken steps to reduce the likelihood of trademark infringement through the personalized URL process. To prevent "name squatting," a username, once created, cannot be transferred or edited. Only one username is allowed per Facebook page. If the account associated with the Facebook page is removed, the username will not become available to a new user. It is not possible to copy a username that someone else has already claimed. These measures may help to reduce the likelihood of Facebook "name squatting."

If you have any questions or need assistance in this matter, please contact Mintz Levin.

**Coming next month:** Social Networking and Trademarks

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*For more information on or assistance with this or any other trademark matter, please contact one of the trademark attorneys listed below or the Mintz Levin attorney who ordinarily handles your legal affairs.*

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