

[Alerts and Updates]

Facebook's New Vanity URLs: Trademark Owners May Need to Protect Their Brands from Infringement

June 12, 2009

On June 13, 2009, at 12:01 a.m. EDT, existing Facebook users will be able to claim a personalized vanity Uniform Resource Locator (URL) pointing to their regular existing profile page. Facebook will not charge for this service.

Currently, Facebook URLs for user profiles are presented as individual user ID numbers. For example, "www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?sid=84a47522b8209d4f19524977e2abcc68" is the current URL for the American Intellectual Property Law Association's (AIPLA) Facebook page. On June 13, AIPLA could attempt to register for a vanity URL, so its Facebook page could then be found at "www.facebook.com/AIPLA."

Facebook vanity URLs will be distributed via a "landrush" method of registration. Therefore, existing users will be able to choose a vanity URL on a first-come, first-served basis at "www.facebook.com/username." Facebook will suggest vanity URL options based on the name associated with the profile, but users will also be able to select custom vanity names.

According to Facebook, ". . . Usernames will be available in basic text forms, and you can only choose a single username for your profile and for each of the Pages that you administer. Your username must be at least five characters in length and only include alphanumeric characters (A-Z, 0-9), or a period or full stop ("."). While usernames are currently available only for Romanized text, we're looking at how we might support non-Romanized characters in the future."

Once selected, users will not be able to change or transfer their vanity URLs. Those users who signed up for a Facebook page after May 31, 2009, or who signed up for a user profile after June 10, 2009, at 3 p.m. EDT may not be able to sign up for a vanity URL immediately because of steps Facebook has taken to prevent potential abuse.

Facebook also provides trademark owners with a tool to notify it of existing registered trademarks, to prevent users from "squatting" on URLs. Rights holders interested in protecting the use of their existing registered trademarks may visit www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=username_rights and submit an online form.

For Further Information

If you would like more information on this topic, please contact any of the [attorneys](#) in our [Intellectual Property Practice Group](#) or the attorney in the firm with whom you are regularly in contact.