

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
Trademark Trial and Appeal Board
P.O. Box 1451
Alexandria, VA 22313-1451

Mailed: September 23, 2006

Opposition No. 91170390
Cancellation No. 92044611

Sigma Relocation Group, LLC
d/b/a UMOVEFREE.COM

v.

MOVEFORFREE.COM

Cheryl Butler, Attorney, Trademark Trial and Appeal Board:

The proceedings referenced above were consolidated in an order dated June 13, 2006. This case now comes up on defendant's fully-briefed motion, filed June 9, 2006 in Cancellation No. 92044611 only, to compel more complete responses to its interrogatories Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9 and document requests nos. 5-9 and to deem admitted its requests for admissions nos. 2, 4, 6, and 7.¹

In support of its motion, defendant argues that its interrogatory nos. 1, 2 and 5 and document request nos. 5 and 6 seek clearly discoverable information and documents concerning searches and market research studies undertaken by plaintiff about defendant's mark; that its interrogatory no. 4 and document

¹ Defendant's request for discovery sanctions is premature and will be given no consideration. See Trademark Rule 2.120(g).

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request no. 7 seek information and documents concerning the genus of defendant's goods and are relevant, specific requests going to the issue of genericness in this proceeding; that interrogatory no. 7 requests an explanation of plaintiff's seemingly inconsistent position that defendant's mark is generic while plaintiff's mark is not generic; that interrogatory no. 8 seeks identifying facts in support of plaintiff's claim of genericness; that interrogatory no. 9 seeks an explanation for any admission denial made by plaintiff; and that document requests nos. 8-9 concern the public's understanding of defendant's mark.

Defendant contends that plaintiff's objections based on privilege are not applicable under discovery guidelines for Board cases or based on the nature of the claim presented. Defendant agrees that plaintiff's objections to the admissions requests nos. 2 and 6 based on specified meaning of certain phrases should be overruled because advances in technology have made the referenced phrases, concerning the Internet, understood by the general public.

Defendant contends that plaintiff's objection, based on the response requiring a legal opinion, to admission request no. 4 should be overruled because the issue of genericness is factual one; and that plaintiff's qualified responses to admission request no. 7 is improper because there is no reason for the response to be qualified.

In response, plaintiff argues that defendant's motion to compel is moot insofar as plaintiff has now served supplementary

interrogatory and document responses. Plaintiff, while not bringing a cross-motion to compel, comments that it is disingenuous for defendant to complain about plaintiff's discovery responses when defendant acted in a dilatory manner with respect to discovery matters, including serving discovery responses consisting largely of objections. Plaintiff argues that its responses to the requests for admissions in question are sufficient.

In view of plaintiff's supplementary responses, defendant's motion to compel is deemed moot with respect to its first set of interrogatories nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and first requests for documents nos. 5-9. (The Board observes that plaintiff, in its supplemental response, addressed the substance of interrogatory no. 7.) No further consideration will be given thereto.

Plaintiff's objection to interrogatory no. 9 is sustained.

Unlike interrogatories, admissions requests do not have a numerical limit because the function of such requests is limited and directed. The information sought by interrogatory no. 9 cannot be obtained directly through the requests for admissions process and is improper as asked by an all inclusive and broad interrogatory. After all, requests for admission do not (or should not for the sake of efficiency) require explanation or qualification. Thus, to permit the interrogatory as presently results in an expansion of the minimum required response for a request for admission. In addition, a party, in advance of

trial, need not specify in detail the evidence it intends to present. See TBMP §414(7) (2d ed. rev. 2004). Accordingly, defendant's motion to compel with respect to interrogatory no. 9 is denied.²

The Board has reviewed plaintiff's responses to defendant's admissions requests at issue and finds the responses to nos. 2, 6 and 7 to be sufficient. Plaintiff's objection to admission request no. 4 is overruled. A request for discovery is not necessarily objectionable merely because it requires a party or a witness to give an opinion or contention that relates to fact or the application of law to fact. See TBMP §414(21) (2d ed. rev. 2004). Accordingly, petitioner is allowed until **forty days** from the mailing date of this order in which to amend its response to admission request no. 4, failing which, the admission is deemed admitted.

In its responses to plaintiff's discovery requests, defendant posed some objections based on the confidential or proprietary nature of the information and document sought. The Board notes that the parties have not entered into a stipulated protective agreement addressing such concerns. Consequently, in

² In its reply brief, defendant for the first time argues that plaintiff's response to interrogatory no. 3 is also deficient. Insofar as the matter was not before the Board initially, no order overruling plaintiff's objections is being issued. However, the Board believes that the information sought is discoverable and relevant potentially at the very least to affirmative defenses. Consequently, as a scheduling matter only, plaintiff is allowed until **forty days** from the mailing date of this order in which to supplement its response to interrogatory no. 3, if appropriate. See, for example,

order to keep this case on track, the Board hereby imposes its standardized protective order for the exchange of confidential information, a copy of which is enclosed for each party.³ The protective order is entered into the record and binding on the parties for purposes of this proceeding.⁴ Each party is allowed until **twenty days** from the mailing date of this order in which to submit a signed copy of the attached acknowledgement of the standardized protective order.

In view of the imposition of the standardized protective order, defendant's objections based on the confidential and proprietary nature of the information and documents sought are now resolved.⁵ Defendant is allowed until **forty days** from the mailing date of this order to supplement its responses, as appropriate.⁶

Teledyne Technologies Inc. v. Western Skyways Inc., 78 USPQ2d 1203 (TTAB 2006).

³ The document is electronically available on the USPTO's website [www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/ttab/tbmp/stndagmnt.htm]. The parties are also referred to TBMP §412 (2nd ed. rev. 2004). (The TBMP is available electronically on the USPTO's website.)

⁴ The parties may mutually agree to substitute a different protective agreement. If they choose to do so, any such agreement must be signed by both parties and filed within **twenty days** of the mailing date of this order. The Board will not become involved in any dispute over the inclusion or exclusion of terms because of the existence of the standardized order. However, absent the submission of any mutually agreed upon substitute protective agreement, the Board's standardized order will govern this proceeding.

⁵ The parties are not required to produce privileged documents or provide privileged information, as their right to claim privilege has not been waived. See e.g., *American Standard, Inc. v. Pfizer*, 3 USPQ2d 1817 (CAFC 1987). However, where a claim of privilege is invoked, a party must make the claim expressly and provide a description or privilege log, unless the parties otherwise agree.

⁶ This is simply a scheduling order, not an order compelling discovery.

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Proceedings are now resumed. Discovery and trial dates are reset as follows:

THE PERIOD FOR DISCOVERY TO CLOSE:	February 1, 2007
30-day testimony period for party in position of plaintiff to close	May 2, 2007
30-day testimony period for party in position of defendant to close:	July 1, 2007
15-day rebuttal testimony period to close:	August 15, 2007

In each instance, a copy of the transcript of testimony together with copies of documentary exhibits, must be served on the adverse party within thirty days after completion of the taking of testimony. Trademark Rule 2.125.

Briefs shall be filed in accordance with Rule 2.128(a) and (b). An oral hearing will be set only upon request filed as provided by Trademark Rule 2.129.

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**PROVISIONS FOR PROTECTING
CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION
REVEALED DURING BOARD PROCEEDING**

Information disclosed by any party or non-party witness during this proceeding may be considered confidential, a trade secret, or commercially sensitive by a party or witness. To preserve the confidentiality of the information so disclosed, **either** the parties have agreed to be bound by the terms of this order, in its standard form or as modified by agreement, and by any additional provisions to which they may have agreed and attached to this order, **or** the Board has ordered that the parties be bound by the provisions within. As used in this order, the term "information" covers both oral testimony and documentary material.

Parties may use this standard form order as the entirety of their agreement or may use it as a template from which they may fashion a modified agreement. If the Board orders that the parties abide by the terms of this order, they may subsequently agree to modifications or additions, subject to Board approval.

Agreement of the parties is indicated by the signatures of the parties' attorneys and/or the parties themselves at the conclusion of the order. Imposition of the terms by the Board is indicated by signature of a Board attorney or Administrative Trademark Judge at the conclusion of the order. If the parties have signed the order, they may have created a contract.⁷ The terms are binding from the date the parties or their attorneys sign the order, in standard form or as modified or supplemented, or from the date of imposition by a Board attorney or judge.

⁷ There may be a remedy at court for any breach of contract that occurs after the conclusion of this Board proceeding. See *Fort Howard Paper Co. v. C.V. Gambina Inc.*, 4 USPQ2d 1552, 1555 (TTAB 1987). See *also*, *Alltrade Inc. v. Uniweld Products Inc.*, 20 USPQ2d 1698 (9th Cir. 1991).

TERMS OF ORDER

1) **Classes of Protected Information.**

The Rules of Practice in Trademark Cases provide that all inter partes proceeding files, as well as the involved registration and application files, are open to public inspection. The terms of this order are not to be used to undermine public access to files. When appropriate, however, a party or witness, on its own or through its attorney, may seek to protect the confidentiality of information by employing one of the following designations.

Confidential—Material to be shielded by the Board from public access.

Highly Confidential—Material to be shielded by the Board from public access and subject to agreed restrictions on access even as to the parties and/or their attorneys.

Trade Secret/Commercially Sensitive—Material to be shielded by the Board from public access, restricted from any access by the parties, and available for review by outside counsel for the parties and, subject to the provisions of paragraph 4 and 5, by independent experts or consultants for the parties.

2) **Information Not to Be Designated as Protected.**

Information may not be designated as subject to any form of protection if it (a) is, or becomes, public knowledge, as shown by publicly available writings, other than through violation of the terms of this document; (b) is acquired by a non-designating party or non-party witness from a third party lawfully possessing such information and having no obligation to the owner of the information; (c) was lawfully possessed by a non-designating party or non-party witness prior to the opening of discovery in this proceeding, and for which there is written evidence of the lawful possession; (d) is disclosed by a non-designating party or non-party witness legally compelled to disclose the information; or (e) is disclosed by a non-designating party with the approval of the designating party.

3) **Access to Protected Information.**

The provisions of this order regarding access to protected information are subject to modification by written agreement of the parties or their attorneys, or by motion filed with and approved by the Board.

Judges, attorneys, and other employees of the Board are bound to honor the parties' designations of information as protected but are not required to sign forms acknowledging the terms and existence of this order. Court reporters, stenographers, video technicians or others who may be employed by the parties or their attorneys to perform services incidental to this proceeding will be bound only to the extent that the parties or their attorneys make it a condition of employment or

obtain agreements from such individuals, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4.

- **Parties** are defined as including individuals, officers of corporations, partners of partnerships, and management employees of any type of business organization.
- **Attorneys** for parties are defined as including **in-house counsel** and **outside counsel**, including support staff operating under counsel's direction, such as paralegals or legal assistants, secretaries, and any other employees or independent contractors operating under counsel's instruction.
- **Independent experts or consultants** include individuals retained by a party for purposes related to prosecution or defense of the proceeding but who are not otherwise employees of either the party or its attorneys.
- **Non-party witnesses** include any individuals to be deposed during discovery or trial, whether willingly or under subpoena issued by a court of competent jurisdiction over the witness.

Parties and their **attorneys** shall have access to information designated as **confidential** or **highly confidential**, subject to any agreed exceptions.

Outside counsel, but not in-house counsel, shall have access to information designated as **trade secret/commercially sensitive**.

Independent experts or consultants, non-party witnesses, and any other individual not otherwise specifically covered by the terms of this order may be afforded access to **confidential** or **highly confidential** information in accordance with the terms that follow in paragraph 4. Further, **independent experts or consultants** may have access to **trade secret/commercially sensitive** information if such access is agreed to by the parties or ordered by the Board, in accordance with the terms that follow in paragraph 4 and 5.

4) Disclosure to Any Individual.

Prior to disclosure of protected information by any party or its attorney to any individual not already provided access to such information by the terms of this order, the individual shall be informed of the existence of this order and provided with a copy to read. The individual will then be required to certify in writing that the order has been read and understood and that the terms shall be binding on the individual. No individual shall receive any protected information until the party or attorney proposing to disclose the information has received the signed certification from the individual. A form for such certification is attached to this order. The party or attorney receiving the completed form shall retain the original.

5) Disclosure to Independent Experts or Consultants.

In addition to meeting the requirements of paragraph 4, any party or attorney proposing to share disclosed information with an independent expert or consultant must also notify the party which designated the information as protected. Notification must be personally served or forwarded by certified mail, return receipt requested, and shall provide notice of the name, address, occupation and professional background of the expert or independent consultant.

The party or its attorney receiving the notice shall have ten (10) business days to object to disclosure to the expert or independent consultant. If objection is made, then the parties must negotiate the issue before raising the issue before the Board. If the parties are unable to settle their dispute, then it shall be the obligation of the party or attorney proposing disclosure to bring the matter before the Board with an explanation of the need for disclosure and a report on the efforts the parties have made to settle their dispute. The party objecting to disclosure will be expected to respond with its arguments against disclosure or its objections will be deemed waived.

6) Responses to Written Discovery.

Responses to interrogatories under Federal Rule 33 and requests for admissions under Federal Rule 36, and which the responding party reasonably believes to contain protected information shall be prominently stamped or marked with the appropriate designation from paragraph 1. Any inadvertent disclosure without appropriate designation shall be remedied as soon as the disclosing party learns of its error, by informing all adverse parties, in writing, of the error. The parties should inform the Board only if necessary because of the filing of protected information not in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 12.

7) Production of Documents.

If a party responds to requests for production under Federal Rule 34 by making copies and forwarding the copies to the inquiring party, then the copies shall be prominently stamped or marked, as necessary, with the appropriate designation from paragraph 1. If the responding party makes documents available for inspection and copying by the inquiring party, all documents shall be considered protected during the course of inspection. After the inquiring party informs the responding party what documents are to be copied, the responding party will be responsible for prominently stamping or marking the copies with the appropriate designation from paragraph 1. Any inadvertent disclosure without appropriate designation shall be remedied as soon as the disclosing party learns of its error, by informing all adverse parties, in writing, of the error. The parties should inform the Board only if necessary because of the filing of protected information not in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 12.

8) Depositions.

Protected documents produced during a discovery deposition, or offered into evidence during a testimony deposition shall be orally noted as such by the producing or offering party at the outset of any discussion of the document or

information contained in the document. In addition, the documents must be prominently stamped or marked with the appropriate designation.

During discussion of any non-documentary protected information, the interested party shall make oral note of the protected nature of the information.

The transcript of any deposition and all exhibits or attachments shall be considered protected for 30 days following the date of service of the transcript by the party that took the deposition. During that 30-day period, either party may designate the portions of the transcript, and any specific exhibits or attachments, that are to be treated as protected, by electing the appropriate designation from paragraph 1. Appropriate stampings or markings should be made during this time. If no such designations are made, then the entire transcript and exhibits will be considered unprotected.

9) Filing Notices of Reliance.

When a party or its attorney files a notice of reliance during the party's testimony period, the party or attorney is bound to honor designations made by the adverse party or attorney, or non-party witness, who disclosed the information, so as to maintain the protected status of the information.

10) Briefs.

When filing briefs, memoranda, or declarations in support of a motion, or briefs at final hearing, the portions of these filings that discuss protected information, whether information of the filing party, or any adverse party, or any non-party witness, should be redacted. The rule of reasonableness for redaction is discussed in paragraph 12 of this order.

11) Handling of Protected Information.

Disclosure of information protected under the terms of this order is intended only to facilitate the prosecution or defense of this case. The recipient of any protected information disclosed in accordance with the terms of this order is obligated to maintain the confidentiality of the information and shall exercise reasonable care in handling, storing, using or disseminating the information.

12) Redaction; Filing Material With the Board.

When a party or attorney must file protected information with the Board, or a brief that discusses such information, the protected information or portion of the brief discussing the same should be redacted from the remainder. A rule of reasonableness should dictate how redaction is effected.

Redaction can entail merely covering a portion of a page of material when it is copied in anticipation of filing but can also entail the more extreme measure of simply filing the entire page under seal as one that contains primarily confidential material. If only a sentence or short paragraph of a page of material is confidential, covering that material when the page is copied would be appropriate. In contrast, if

most of the material on the page is confidential, then filing the entire page under seal would be more reasonable, even if some small quantity of non-confidential material is then withheld from the public record. Likewise, when a multi-page document is in issue, reasonableness would dictate that redaction of the portions or pages containing confidential material be effected when only some small number of pages contain such material. In contrast, if almost every page of the document contains some confidential material, it may be more reasonable to simply submit the entire document under seal. **Occasions when a whole document or brief must be submitted under seal should be very rare.**

Protected information, and pleadings, briefs or memoranda that reproduce, discuss or paraphrase such information, shall be filed with the Board under seal. The envelopes or containers shall be prominently stamped or marked with a legend in substantially the following form:

CONFIDENTIAL

This envelope contains documents or information that are subject to a protective order or agreement. The confidentiality of the material is to be maintained and the envelope is not to be opened, or the contents revealed to any individual, except by order of the Board.

13) Acceptance of Information; Inadvertent Disclosure.

Acceptance by a party or its attorney of information disclosed under designation as protected shall not constitute an admission that the information is, in fact, entitled to protection. Inadvertent disclosure of information which the disclosing party intended to designate as protected shall not constitute waiver of any right to claim the information as protected upon discovery of the error.

14) Challenges to Designations of Information as Protected.

If the parties or their attorneys disagree as to whether certain information should be protected, they are obligated to negotiate in good faith regarding the designation by the disclosing party. If the parties are unable to resolve their differences, the party challenging the designation may make a motion before the Board seeking a determination of the status of the information.

A challenge to the designation of information as protected must be made substantially contemporaneous with the designation, or as soon as practicable after the basis for challenge is known. When a challenge is made long after a designation of information as protected, the challenging party will be expected to show why it could not have made the challenge at an earlier time.

The party designating information as protected will, when its designation is timely challenged, bear the ultimate burden of proving that the information should be protected.

15) Board's Jurisdiction; Handling of Materials After Termination.

The Board's jurisdiction over the parties and their attorneys ends when this proceeding is terminated. A proceeding is terminated only after a final order is entered and either all appellate proceedings have been resolved or the time for filing an appeal has passed without filing of any appeal.

The parties may agree that archival copies of evidence and briefs may be retained, subject to compliance with agreed safeguards. Otherwise, within 30 days after the final termination of this proceeding, the parties and their attorneys shall return to each disclosing party the protected information disclosed during the proceeding, and shall include any briefs, memoranda, summaries, and the like, which discuss or in any way refer to such information. In the alternative, the disclosing party or its attorney may make a written request that such materials be destroyed rather than returned.

16) Other Rights of the Parties and Attorneys.

This order shall not preclude the parties or their attorneys from making any applicable claims of privilege during discovery or at trial. Nor shall the order preclude the filing of any motion with the Board for relief from a particular provision of this order or for additional protections not provided by this order.

By Order of the Board, effective September 18, 2006.

/Cheryl A. Butler/
Interlocutory Attorney, Trademark Trial and Appeal Board

