

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

LPL Financial LLC v. Nwonye Emeka, Ewt design/Mekshosting
Case No. D2024-0366

1. The Parties

The Complainant is LPL Financial LLC, United States of America (“United States”), represented by Hogan Lovells (Paris) LLP, France.

The Respondent is Nwonye Emeka, Ewt design/Mekshosting, Nigeria.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <lplproinvestfin.com> is registered with NameSilo, LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on January 26, 2024. On January 29, 2024, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On January 30, 2024, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (REDACTED FOR PRIVACY, PrivacyGuardian.org llc) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on January 31, 2024, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on February 5, 2024.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on February 9, 2024. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 29, 2024. The Respondent did not submit any response. The Respondent sent an email communication to the Center on February 9, 2024, requesting: “Hello, what is the issues? Do you want to pay me money to leave the domain or what?”. Accordingly, the Center notified Commencement of Panel Appointment Process on March 1, 2024.

The Center appointed Tobias Zuberbühler as the sole panelist in this matter on March 11, 2024. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant operates in the retail financial advice market and is considered one of the largest independent broker-dealers in the United States.

The Complainant owns trademark registrations in various jurisdictions, including the United States Trademark LPL (Reg. No. 1801076, registered on October 26, 1993) and the European Union Trade Mark LPL (Reg. No. 018653022, registered on May 26, 2022).

The Complainant further holds the domain name <lpl.com> under which the official website of the Complainant is available and further domain names such as <lpl.net>, <lpl-financial.com> and <lplaccountview.com>.

The disputed domain name was registered on December 15, 2023, and currently resolves to an inactive web page. The disputed domain name previously redirected to the Complainant's official website at <lpl.com>. It has also been used by the Respondent in connection with a phishing email scheme.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

B. Respondent

Apart from a short email to the Center on February 9, 2024 (as quoted above), the Respondent has not submitted any official reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition, ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.2.1.

Although the addition of other terms (here, "proinvestfin") may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant’s prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

Under the circumstances of this case, including the composition of the disputed domain name and reputation of the Complainant’s trademark, it can be inferred that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant’s trademark when registering the disputed domain name.

Moreover, it appears from the case file that the disputed domain name has been used by the Respondent in connection with a phishing email scheme.

The evidence and allegations submitted by the Complainant support a finding that the Respondent was engaged in an attempt to pass itself off as the Complainant by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s trademark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of its website and to attract Internet users to its website for its own commercial gain. The Respondent therefore used the disputed domain name in bad faith (see *Claudie Pierlot v. Yinglong Ma*, WIPO Case No. [D2018-2466](#)).

Further, Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity (here, claimed phishing, impersonation) constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.4. Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent’s registration and use of the disputed domain name constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <|plprojinvestfin.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Tobias Zuberbühler/

Tobias Zuberbühler

Sole Panelist

Date: March 25, 2024