

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Archer-Daniels-Midland Company v. Elaine Watson
Case No. D2024-3219

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Archer-Daniels-Midland Company, United States of America (“United States”), represented by Innis Law Group LLC, United States.

The Respondent is Elaine Watson, United States.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <us-adm.com> (the “Domain Name”) is registered with GoDaddy.com, LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on August 6, 2024. On August 7, 2024, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Domain Name. On August 7, 2024, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the Domain Name which differed from the named Respondent (Unknown, Registration Private, Domains By Proxy, LLC) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on August 9, 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 August 15, 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 August 16, 2024. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 5, 2024. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on September 7, 2024.

The Center appointed Michelle Brownlee as the sole panelist in this matter on September 12, 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, Archer-Daniels-Midland Company was founded in 1902 and is an agribusiness that serves consumers in 200 countries, owns more than 800 facilities worldwide and employs over 38,000 people. The Complainant is known by its initials as ADM. The Complainant operates multiple web sites, including its main web site at the domain name <adm.com>.

The Complainant owns numerous registrations for the ADM trademark in jurisdictions throughout the world, including the following:

United States Registration Number 1386430, registered March 18, 1986;

United States Registration Number 2,766,613, registered September 23, 2003; and

United States Registration Number 2,301,968, registered December 21, 1999.

The Domain Name was registered on July 11, 2024. The Domain Name is associated with a web site that states "Launching Soon" and includes a "sign up" prompt where visitors to the site can provide their email address to receive updates (Annex 11 of the Complaint). The Domain Name was used in an email address that requested a quote for the purchase of goods from another company under the pretense that the email belonged to one of the Complainant's employees.

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 Domain Name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's well-known ADM trademark, that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name and that the Respondent registered and is using the Domain Name in bad faith by sending fraudulent communications that misrepresent that the communications originate from the Complainant.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not 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 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.

The entirety of the mark is reproduced within the Domain Name. Accordingly, the Domain Name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

Although the addition of other terms here, “us-”, may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such term does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the 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 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 Domain Name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, here, claimed impersonation of one of the Complainant’s employees, can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.13.1.

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.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent used the Domain Name in an email address designed to deceive the receiver of communications from this address into believing that the communication originated from an employee of the Complainant. This constitutes bad faith registration and use of the Domain Name under paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, here, claimed impersonation of an employee of the Complainant, 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 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 Domain Name <us-adm.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Michelle Brownlee/

Michelle Brownlee

Sole Panelist

Date: September 26, 2024