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Trademark and Domain Name Scams: Scammers Still Be Scamming

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Based on the volume of scam letters and email sent to us by our clients, trademark and domain name scams continue unabated in 2014. In fact, if anything, these scams have increased in volume and creativity. Remember to look with a critical eye at any official-looking notices that claim to originate from governmental trademark offices or "registries," claiming that you must pay fees in order to obtain or maintain trademark rights in various jurisdictions. These notices from third parties are almost always scams seeking payment for unnecessary services.

Another common scam involves an email communication or notice from an Asian-based consulting company that purports to notify a trademark holder that another entity is seeking to register the client's trademark or business name as a domain name in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Asia (e.g., clientbrand.cn, clientbrand.hk, clientbrand.tw, etc.). The email gives the brand owner a short period of time in which to secure the domain name for their own. These notifications are virtually all scams or, at best, solicitations to purchase unnecessary domain names.

Because the trademark records of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the European Community's OHIM are available online, and easily accessed by the public, owners of trademark registrations and applications seem to be most often targeted in these scams. Clients should keep in mind that rarely will any patent or trademark office communicate directly with a client if there is counsel of record in the particular patent or trademark matter. If you receive any correspondence relating to your trademarks or domain names, please send it to us for review - particularly before paying any requested fees!

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