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Cyberlaw 101

By June Campbell

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You've already discovered that the Internet is a great medium for promoting your business. But just as you can use the Net's various components like the web, email, chat and newsgroups to network, to make new contacts and to generate leads, you can easily find yourself in hot water over legal disputes and legal challenges.

Doing business on the Net can be fraught with legal perils for those who act unthinkingly or unknowingly. In some situations, laws governing cyber activities are clearly defined and reflect the laws that govern our activities in the real world. In other cases, the Internet is still a "gray area", and laws will be established through the outcomes of court cases.

Although situations differ, as do laws in various jurisdictions, the following tips might help you stay clear of trouble:

1. Registering a domain name doesn't prevent legal challenges to your right to use that domain name. Many a web site owner has been dismayed to hear from a company claiming his or her domain name is a trademark violation. To avoid problems in this area, conduct appropriate searches before registering, and consider registering your own domain name as a trademark. Businesses that register domain names can help you assess your options.

2. You risk copyright violation if you copy the content, graphics, layout, name, look or feel of another web site without express permission. Several countries of the world, including Canada, and the US, have signed an international copyright convention that protects copyright in member countries. If discovered in violation of copyright, your penalty could be as small as being asked to remove the offending material to as large a penalty as a court might see fit to award.

3. If your web site contains bulletin boards or chat rooms, you can be held liable for material posted by visitors to your site. To reduce the potential for problems, check your forums and chats regularly and remove any content that could create trouble. Material to watch for includes anything that could be considered libelous, promotes hate, could be considered adult content (and you do not have an adult site), could be perceived as threatening or harassing to others, or promotes an illegal activity, etc.

4. Avoid advertising statements that would be illegal or prohibited in other media. Be particularly cautious if your site advertises alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, financial services, gambling, contests or adult entertainment.

5. If linking to another web site, avoid deep linking and avoid capturing the other site in your frames. Most web site owners welcome links to their site because links generate traffic and increase their ranking with some search engines. Rarely will an owner complain if you link without permission. However, you are not entirely safe. Legal battles have been fought regarding unauthorized linking. To minimize your chances of running into trouble, make sure you link to the home page instead of to an inner page and code the site to open in a new window instead of within your frames.

6. Create an Internet and email policy for your employees. If your employees are charged with sending harassing emails or distributing copyright MP3 files while at work, for example, you can be held responsible. Having a short email policy stating that your employees must use email in a legally responsible manner can go a long way to

protecting you in case of problems.

7. If purchasing packaged content for distribution and publication, be sure you are dealing with a reputable company. There have been instances of companies selling packaged content without the permission or knowledge of the content creators. This is copyright violation, and you could be putting yourself at risk if you use these materials.

Finally, please remember that these tips should not be construed as legal advice. Consult with legal counsel for matters specific to your own situation.

Money Savvy 101

By News Canada

(NC)—Life is full of transitions, from high school to university, from first job to the next. Each of these changes brings with it a financial 'first': How much will it cost to go to college or university? What are my rights when I lease an apartment? Can I afford a car? Do I need insurance? What kind of financial services should I have? Where should I invest my money?

Until now it has not been easy to get objective answers to all of these questions in one place. Now you can visit Consumer Connection's Web site at <http://consumer.ic.gc.ca> that has been created by Industry Canada's Office of Consumer Affairs. It has been creatively produced to give Canadian consumers great information without sacrificing a fun and interactive setting.

Money Savvy 101 is a product that provides answers to all your personal finance questions. The answers are simple and straightforward, containing in-depth information, entertaining animation and links to other great Web sites. Money Savvy 101 allows consumers to see how much things actually cost, how to deal with landlords that are giving you a hard time, and all other types of questions or situations.

Consumer Connection (

) is an award-winning Web site. It provides rapid

access to consumer information, powerful tools to cut research time, and many useful links to consumer and other organizations. Canadians can access Consumer Connection from home, the public library, community access points or from Government of Canada, provincial and territorial service outlets. For a variety of information on everything from bank fees, to privacy rights, to the latest scams or frauds, this is the place to go.

provides a wide selection of current, ready-to-use copyright free news stories and ideas

for Television, Print, Radio, and the Web.

is a niche service in public relations, offering access to print, radio, television, and now

the Internet media, with ready-to-use, editorial "fill" items. Monitoring and analysis are two more of our primary services. The service supplies access to the national media for marketers in the private, the public, and the not-for-profit sectors. Your corporate and product news, consumer tips and information are packaged in a variety of ready-to-use formats and are made available to every Canadian media organization including weekly and daily newspapers, cable and commercial television stations, radio stations, as well as the Web sites Canadians visit most often. Visit

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Money Savvy 101

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