

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION**

HIGHLEVEL Inc. v. Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, Ghost Management Group, Inc

Case No. D2025-2991

### **1. The Parties**

The Complainant is HIGHLEVEL Inc., United States of America (“United States”), represented internally.

The Respondents are Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, and Ghost Management Group, LLC, United States, represented by Friedland Cianfrani LLP, United States.

### **2. The Domain Name and Registrar**

The disputed domain name <highlevel.com> 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 July 26, 2025. On July 28, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On July 29, 2025, 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 (Brandsight Privacy) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on July 29, 2025, 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 1, 2025.

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 Respondents of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on August 5, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was August 25, 2025. The Response was filed with the Center on August 25, 2025.

The Center appointed Phillip V. Marano, Christopher K. Larus, and Kimberley Chen Nobles as panelists in this matter on October 10, 2025. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. Each member of 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.

On October 22, 2025, the Panel issued a Procedural Order that requested “further evidence and information with respect to the date the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name.” Specifically, the Panel requested, “any additional evidence regarding the date of registration of the disputed domain name, including any additional evidence pertaining to the chain of registration of the disputed domain name and evidence of the relationship of the purported registrant...” as well as “any further evidence pertaining to the timing of the registration of the disputed domain name” including “archived registration data, sales contracts, or correspondence from the Registrar, a domain broker, or auction marketplace.” Per the reply deadlines set by the Panel, the Respondents submitted their reply to the Procedural Order on October 31, 2025, and the Complainant submitted its reply to the Procedural Order on November 6, 2025.

#### **4. Factual Background**

The Complainant is a customer relationship management computer software developer based in Dallas, Texas. The Complainant offers information about its services on its official “gohighlevel.com” website. The Complainant owns a valid and subsisting registration for the HIGHLEVEL trademark in the United States (US Reg. No. 7,751,611), registered on April 8, 2025, with earliest claimed first use priority on July 3, 2018.

Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, is a technology company that provides cannabis-related product information and delivery services. Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, is an affiliate of Ghost Management Group, LLC, a venture capital company focused on cannabis. Both entities are based in Irvine, California. These two entities are referred to collectively herein as the Respondent. The Parties dispute the specific date on which the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name. At the time of filing the Complaint, the disputed domain name resolved to a GoDaddy.com parking page that read, “[t]his domain is registered, but may still be available” and hyperlinks to the GoDaddy.com domain broker services.

#### **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.

The Complainant asserts ownership of the HIGHLEVEL trademark and has adduced evidence of trademark registration, dated back to April 8, 2025, with earliest claimed first use priority on July 3, 2018. The disputed domain name is identical to the Complainant’s HIGHLEVEL trademark, according to the Complainant, because it “incorporates the entirety of Complainant’s registered mark ... with no alterations or additions.”

The Complainant further asserts that the Respondent lacks any rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name based on: (i) the lack of any affiliation or authorization between the Complainant and the Respondent; (ii) the Respondent’s inactive or passive holding of the disputed domain name “originally displaying a message from the years 2000 through 2001 that state a corporate website would be live with ‘a couple weeks’, then [as of May 30, 2025] eventually resolving to a landing page having only a banner advertising that the domain name is for sale”; (iii) the allegedly distinctive nature of the HIGHLEVEL mark, which is not a dictionary word; (iv) the Respondent’s failure to respond to the Complainant’s offer to purchase the disputed domain name for USD 200,000 through a GoDaddy.com domain broker; and (v) the lack of any trademark application or registration for HIGHLEVEL belonging to the Respondent despite the Respondent’s status as “a sophisticated, publicly-traded corporation ... presumed to possess a clear understanding of the value of trademarks.”

The Complainant argues that the Respondent has registered and used the disputed domain name in bad faith based on the assertions that: (i) the Respondent has no “credible explanation for the choice of the domain name or lack of interest in selling it for [USD] 200,000”; (ii) the Respondent “is more likely than not to be a domainer with a large corporate domain portfolio, who has concealed its identity behind the Registrar’s Brandsight Privacy Protection wall” and has “an affirmative obligation to avoid the registration of trademark-abusive domain names”; (iii) the Respondent is passively holding the disputed domain name; (iv) the Respondent’s failure to respond or add a disclaimer to its website in response to “noti[ce] of Complainant’s rights in the HIGHLEVEL trademark through communication with Respondent’s domain broker”; and (v) the Respondent’s unresponsiveness to the Complainant’s offer to buy the disputed domain name “even for the high price of [USD] 200,000” demonstrates that the “Respondent is holding out for an even larger offer from Complainant.”

Finally, in response to the Panel’s Procedural Order, the Complainant asserted that the “inconsistent” evidence submitted by the Respondent does “not clearly establish the chain of registration or the relationship of the purported registrant, as requested by the Panel.” Specifically, the Complainant argued that, “Respondent ‘Ghost Management Group, LLC was formed in 2012’—not 2008”, “[Mr.] Hartfield—not Respondent *personally* acquired the domain ... on July 18, 2012, in a transaction paid for with his personal PayPal account”, “Mr. Hartfield allegedly intended to use the domain name in connection with a *different* entity—again, not Respondent—called High Level, LLC”, and “Mr. Hartfield allegedly transferred the domain name to Respondent *sometime* between 2012 and 2023.” To the contrary, the Complainant asserts that publicly available records confirm: “[t]he Delaware entity Ghost Management Group, LLC, the named Respondent, was not formed in 2008 (as per the original response) or in 2012 (as in the new response)”; “[p]ublic records show that it was not formed until September 19, 2014, two years after the originally alleged 2012 acquisition and the newly revealed personal acquisition by Mr. Hartfield”; “the domain history report for highlevel.com shows that it was held by either privacy services or brokers between 2012 and 2023, with no verifiable connection to [Respondent]”; and “even today, although Respondent claims to own the domain, [registration data] only lists the originally named Respondent—Weedmaps—not, as Respondent now claims, Ghost Management Group, LLC.” The Complainant further argues that, “[t]here is no direct evidence linking the domain to the currently named Respondent.” In summary, according to the Complainant, “all verifiable records show that the domain was personally registered by [Mr.] Hartfield in 2012 and first corporately controlled under Weedmaps’ Brandsight portfolio in August 2023.” And “[n]othing in the record connects any ‘Ghost Management Group’ entity to the domain before that date,” which the Respondent unilaterally amended to add to the case caption.

In support of its arguments regarding the date the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name, the Complainant submitted: (i) an undated Delaware Corporate Formation Information for Ghost Management Group, LLC, and (ii) a DomainIQ Domain Report for <highlevel.com> dated October 31, 2025, which contained its archived Whois data for the disputed domain name.

## **B. Respondent**

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied the second and third elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Foremost, the Respondent asserts that “the domain name was acquired by the Respondent six years before the Complainant was even formed in 2018” with “plans to use it in connection with [Respondent’s] business.” The Respondent argues it could not have acquired the disputed domain name to trade off the Complainant’s alleged trademark rights since such rights did not exist at the time the Respondent acquired the disputed domain name. According to the Respondent, the “Complainant incorrectly asserts that Respondent did not acquire the domain name until 2024”, whereas the “Respondent acquired the disputed domain name on July 18, 2012.”

The Respondent further asserts that “‘high level’ is a commonly used and dictionary-defined phrase” which means “occurring, done, or placed at a high level” or “being of high importance or rank.” The Respondent “believed that the domain name <highlevel.com> would be a good fit for its business” in a manner consistent with its dictionary or descriptive meaning. Furthermore, the “Respondent’s lack of interest in selling the

domain name clearly evidences that Respondent did not purchase the domain name for the purpose of selling it, even for a large amount of money.” And, according to the Respondent, the “Complainant’s discussion of Respondent, its sophisticated business, and trademark portfolio supports that Respondent registered the domain name with the intention of using it for legitimate business purposes.” The Respondent asserts it “is not a cyber-squatter, and it does not have any history of purchasing domain names for the purpose of selling them.”

The Respondent further argues that its passive holding does not constitute bad faith use of the disputed domain name because: (i) “the alleged mark HIGHLEVEL is not distinctive or well-known”; (ii) “‘high level’ is a dictionary defined phrase”; (iii) the “Respondent has submitted a response to this Complaint and provided evidence of contemplated good-faith use”; (iv) the “Respondent did not provide false contact details and only uses a privacy shield for business reasons”; (v) “it is clear that Respondent acquired and plans to use the domain name in good faith since it acquired the domain name six years before the formation of Complainant”; (vi) “the fact that Respondent renewed the domain name after the Complainant’s alleged establishment of trademark rights does not support bad faith”; and (vii) the “Respondent owns domain names for its legitimate business purposes, and the fact that Respondent is a sophisticated publicly traded company with a corporate domain portfolio supports that it acquired the domain name in good faith.”

Finally, in response to the Panel’s Procedural Order, the Respondent explained the following (citations omitted):

At least as early as July 18, 2012, more than five years before the formation of Complainant, [Mr.] Hartfield owned the domain name. [Mr.] Hartfield is the co-founder of Weedmaps, LLC, the predecessor of Ghost Management Group, LLC. ... Mr. Hartfield began working on the Weedmaps business in 2008. Weedmaps, LLC was formed in July 2009, and Ghost Management Group, LLC was formed in 2012. Mr. Hartfield acquired the <highlevel.com> domain name for the purpose of using it in connection with the Weedmaps business. In fact, in 2013, Mr. Hartfield formed Highlevel, LLC, an entity he intended to use for the Weedmaps business ... Mr. Hartfield served as a member of Weedmaps’ board of managers since its inception and served as chairman of the board from February 2016 to March 2019. Mr. Hartfield also served as Weedmaps’ Chief Executive Officer until February 2016. Mr. Hartfield served as a member of the board of directors of WM Technology Inc., the parent company of Ghost Management Group, Inc. from June 2021 to 2023 ... Mr. Hartfield transferred the domain name to Ghost Management Group, LLC sometime between 2012 and 2023.

In support of its arguments regarding the date the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name, the Respondent submitted: (i) a receipt dated July 18, 2012, showing Mr. Hartfield’s (the co-founder, former Board member, and former CEO, of the Respondent) payment for an inbound transfer of the disputed domain name; (ii) Articles of Incorporation for High Level, LLC dated November 3, 2013; (iii) Securities and Exchange Commission Form S-1 for WM Technology, Inc. (the parent of Ghost Management Group, Inc) dated December 2, 2021; and (iv) an undated GoDaddy.com transactions audit log for the disputed domain name.

## **6. Discussion and Findings**

### **A. Identity of the Respondent**

Before a finding of the substantive issues arising from paragraph 4(a) of the Policy can be made, the Panel must determine whether the proper party has been identified as the Respondent by the Complainant. The Complainant has named, and the Registrar has verified, Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, as the Respondent. However, on August 25, 2025, Ghost Management Group, Inc. filed a Response that removed Domain Administrator, Weedmaps, and inserted itself into the case caption. The Response did not address the relationship between these two entities, but in reply to the Panel’s Procedural Order, the Respondent explained that they are affiliates that share a common parent, named WM Technology Inc., and have shared leadership personnel as well.

Based on the evidence provided by the Respondent, the Panel finds that the proper Respondent in this case are both Weedmaps, LLC (because it is the entity listed on the Whois record and verified by the Registrar) and Ghost Management Group, Inc. (because it is the affiliated entity that filed the formal Response and asserted rights to the disputed domain name). As discussed above, both entities are collectively referred to herein as the “Respondent.”

## **B. Registered and Used in Bad Faith**

The determinative issue in this case is the date on which the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name. Under section 3.8.1 of the WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition (“[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)”), when a domain name is registered before the complainant’s trademark rights accrue, panels generally do not find bad faith registration.<sup>1</sup>

It is undisputed that the earliest date on which the Complainant acquired rights in its HIGHLEVEL trademark was July 3, 2018. It is also undisputed that an individual named Mr. Hartfield acquired the disputed domain name on July 18, 2012.

Moreover, the Respondent has submitted credible, uncontroverted evidence that Mr. Hartfield was the co-founder of Weedmaps, LLC, when it was formed in July 2009, that he was formerly on its board, and that he has served as its CEO. The Respondent also submitted credible, uncontroverted evidence that Mr. Hartfield served on the board of directors for VM Technology, Inc., as well as evidence that VM Technology, Inc. is the Respondent’s common corporate parent.

It is well settled that a domain transfer from one entity to an unrelated entity is considered a new registration. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#) at section 3.9. However, while a transfer could result in a new registrant being listed, panels have recognized that where a respondent can provide satisfactory evidence of an unbroken chain of possession of the disputed domain name, such “formal” changes or updates to registrant contact information will not be treated as a new registration. This is often the case when a transfer is between entities within the same corporate control group for a legitimate business reason and not simply for purposes of evading the Policy. In determining the legitimacy of a transfer by a respondent claiming an unbroken chain of possession, panels look not only for proof that the transfer has been done for a legitimate business purpose, but panels have also considered the strength of a complainant’s mark and whether the transfer has resulted in a change of use specifically to take advantage of a complainant’s mark in bad faith. Although no prior panel decisions appear to share precisely the same facts as this case, the Panel notes several analogous decisions that are instructive on what circumstances and evidence can establish an unbroken chain of possession.

In *Skillful Communications, Inc. v. Redacted for Privacy, Aquent / Aquent Aquent, Aquent*, WIPO Case No. [D2022-0910](#), an unbroken chain of possession was established where “the disputed domain name was [transferred] to a controlled subsidiary of [the respondent]”, to “hold the disputed domain name, much in the same way that companies often move the ownership of their trademarks between holding companies and operating companies within the same corporate control group.” The respondent has also subsequently licensed use of the domain name to “a sister company of [r]espondent [owned by their common parent company].”

In *Field Pty Ltd v. Jessica Duarte*, WIPO Case No. [D2022-4980](#), an unbroken chain of possession was established where “the contact information [for the domain name] remained unchanged”, “there [was] no allegation ... that a formal transfer of rights took place”, “the conduct of [c]omplainant demonstrate[d] that [c]omplainant at all times knew and believed [r]espondent to have been in control”, and “[c]omplainant ha[d] not brought forth evidence that there was any break in the ownership continually held” by the respondent.

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<sup>1</sup>The record in this case does not reflect evidence or arguments that the case falls within the type of exception set out in section 3.8.2 of the [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), which allows for a finding of bad faith if the respondent registers a domain name based on nascent trademark rights or in anticipation of trademark rights.

In addition, in *Certipost NV v. Virtual Point Inc.*, WIPO Case No. [D2008-1183](#), the respondent also failed to establish an unbroken chain of possession where the respondent did not provide any evidence to support purported common law trademark rights that predated the rights of the complainant. The *Certipost NV* panel observed that, “[n]o documentation evidencing the transfer of the mark has been produced, and while the [r]espondent has sought to portray the transfer of the domain name to the [r]espondent as no more than a minor internal rearrangement of [a sole proprietor’s] business affairs, the fact remains that the respondent, as a corporation, is a different legal entity.” “[P]rudent business practice would call for some documentation of any significant transfer of assets from the individual to the corporation,” the panel concluded. However, most notably, this decision was driven by the respondent’s bad faith use of the domain name and clear targeting of the complainant and the complainant’s services.

In view of these prior decisions, clearly a fact-driven analysis is required to establish an unbroken chain of possession. That will typically require both legitimate business purposes to support any ownership changes, the absence of bad faith use of the disputed domain name, and a lack of evidence suggesting that transfers between related persons or entities were motivated by bad faith. The Policy must not be construed to reward those who decide to use registration details which do not properly reflect (i.e., disguise) the true owner a domain name in order to hide transfers and fraudulently obtain the benefit of earlier domain name registration dates.

The Panel concludes that the evidence on record is sufficient to consider the original July 18, 2012, transfer date of the disputed domain name to Mr. Hartfield as the date on which the Respondent came to own the disputed domain name. And, moreover, the Panel concludes that the Respondent has established an unbroken chain of possession of the disputed domain name, and that the transfer date from Mr. Hartfield to Ghost Management Group, LLC “sometime between 2012 and 2023” is not a ruse to hide a material change. Therefore, the Panel finds that the Respondent did not register the disputed domain name in bad faith. The Panel notes that all relevant Respondent corporate formation dates, whether or not they are contradicted by evidence submitted by the Complainant, occurred prior to July 3, 2018, on which the Complainant acquired rights to its HIGHLEVEL trademark. To that end, the Respondent has also proffered Articles of Incorporation for High Level, LLC, dated November 8, 2013, which are uncontroverted and therefore support the Respondent’s claim of prior legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. Thus, the Panel finds the third element of the Policy has not been established.

In the opinion of the Panel, and contrary to the Complainant’s arguments, it is immaterial in the particular circumstances of this case to the assessment of bad faith that Mr. Hartfield used a personal registrar account to acquire the disputed domain name on July 18, 2012. There is no evidence that the change from a personal to a corporate holding was done to either in an attempt to distance the Respondent from the bad-faith acts of Mr. Hartfield, to mask a true change in the underlying control, or to obfuscate any attempt by the Respondent to take advantage of the Complainant’s rights. Instead, in reply to the Panel’s Procedural Order, the Respondent has provided evidence sufficient for the Panel to determine the transfer from Mr. Hartfield to Ghost Management Group, LLC occurred within the same corporate control group for a legitimate business reason and not simply for purposes of evading the Policy.

## **B. Reverse Domain Name Hijacking**

Paragraph 15(e) of the Rules provides that, if after considering the submissions, the Panel finds that the Complaint was brought in bad faith, for example in an attempt at Reverse Domain Name Hijacking or to harass the domain-name holder, the Panel shall declare in its decision that the Complaint was brought in bad faith and constitutes an abuse of the administrative proceeding. The mere lack of success in the complaint is not, on its own, sufficient to constitute reverse domain name hijacking. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 4.16.

Based on the evidence on record, the Panel finds that the Complaint has not been brought in bad faith and does not constitute an attempt at Reverse Domain Name Hijacking. Rather, the Panel acknowledges many of the evidentiary inconsistencies observed by the Complainant and recognizes that the Complainant would have no way to know about the Respondent’s initial registration date or the steps the Respondent made towards bona fide legitimate commercial use, without an affirmative reply from the Respondent to a cease-and-desist letter or the Complainant’s purchase offer. That is why the Panel issued its Procedural Order.

And even upon review of all evidence submitted by both parties in reply to that Procedural Order, the Panel further acknowledges that some evidentiary inconsistencies remain unresolved. For example, the Respondent did not provide an explanation as to why the archived registration data for the disputed domain name reflects longstanding ownership by Sedo GmbH, from June 6, 2013, to presumably as recent as July 24, 2025. Nevertheless, that unaltered (albeit proxy) registration data further supports the existence of an unbroken chain of possession, and as explained above, the evidence ultimately submitted by the Respondent was sufficient to establish the Respondent's earlier registration of, and independent legitimate interests in, the disputed domain name.

## **7. Decision**

For the foregoing reasons, the Complaint is denied.

*/Phillip V. Marano/*

**Phillip V. Marano**

Presiding Panelist

*/Christopher K. Larus/*

**Christopher K. Larus**

Panelist

*/Kimberley Chen Nobles /*

**Kimberley Chen Nobles**

Panelist

Date: November 13, 2025