

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Benchling, Inc. v. Shawn Arora, The Arora Group Inc.
Case No. DAI2025-0037

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Benchling, Inc., United States of America (“United States”), represented by Coates IP LLP, United States.

The Respondent is Shawn Arora, The Arora Group Inc., Canada, self-represented.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <benchling.ai> is registered with NameCheap, Inc. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on July 29, 2025. On July 29, 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 (Redacted for Privacy) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on August 4, 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 4, 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 Respondent 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 23, 2025. On August 27, 2025, the Complainant filed a Supplemental Filing by email and the Respondent replied to the Complainant’s Supplemental Filing on August 28, 2025.

The Center appointed John Swinson as the sole panelist in this matter on September 9, 2025. 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 is a Delaware corporation based in San Francisco, United States, that provides a cloud-based platform for biotechnology research and development. The Complainant's customers are biotechnology innovators. Over 200,000 scientists use the Benchling platform. These customers include some of the biggest biotech companies including Gilead, Syngenta, Sanofi, and Moderna.

The Complainant has a portfolio of trademark registrations, including U.S. Registration No. 4,552,975 for BENCHLING that was filed on April 24, 2013, and registered on June 17, 2014. This registration claims a date of first use of November 16, 2013.

The Complainant states that it has offered its products and services under the BENCHLING trademark since at least November 16, 2013, and has offered them via its website at <benchling.com> since that time.

The disputed domain name was registered on March 16, 2024, and it resolves to an inactive website.

The Respondent is a Canadian entrepreneur based in Ontario, Canada. The Respondent operates TK Labs, an incubator for SaaS and micro-SaaS ventures.

The Respondent launched an online marketplace for connecting early-stage startups with fractional executives in April 2024 under the name "Erli" at <erli.co>.

Sometime thereafter, and before November 2024, the Respondent claims that it changed its business strategy and decided to pivot the fractional executive marketplace from Erli to Benchling, reflecting a pivot away from early-stage startups and towards an emphasis on bench learning for companies at all stages. The Respondent states that he selected "Benchling" as the name for this platform because "The name 'Benchling' was derived from 'bench learning,' a recognized management concept meaning the adoption of best-in-class practices from other organizations and their integration internally."

In January 2025, the Complainant contacted the Respondent to purchase the disputed domain name. Negotiations ensued, but no deal was reached.

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.

In summary, the Complainant made the following submissions:

The BENCHLING mark is a coined term with no defined meaning in any language. Coined terms are deemed to be fanciful marks on the Spectrum of Trademark Distinctiveness and are afforded the highest level of protection. The only meaning and purpose the "benchling" term has is to refer to the Complainant and its products and services. Any reasonable person, when viewing the disputed domain name would conclude that it leads to a website or email connected to the Complainant.

“Benchling” is not a dictionary term and is only used and known for the Complainant’s goods and services. “The only reason why [Respondent] would incorporate that term in the disputed domain name is to capitalize on the goodwill of the Complainant’s BENCHLING mark.”

The website associated with the disputed domain name is inactive, being passively held, and therefore the disputed domain name has not been used in connection with bona fide offerings of goods or services. Further, the disputed domain name has been registered to exploit the fame of the mark in a bid to attract Internet users to the Respondent’s website.

Panels have consistently found that the mere registration of a domain name that is identical or confusingly similar (particularly domain names comprising typos or incorporating the mark plus a descriptive term) to a famous or widely known trademark by an unaffiliated entity can by itself create a presumption of bad faith.

The Complainant attempted to acquire the disputed domain name directly from the Respondent for an offer of USD 7,500, a price well beyond the Respondent’s reasonable costs in registering the disputed domain name. The Respondent responded with a price of USD 300,000 to USD 1,000,000. This correspondence forms as evidence of the Respondent’s bad faith intent to profit from the Complainant’s fanciful trademark rights in far excess of the costs to register the disputed domain name. Further, the Respondent indicates that they are considering multiple offers from other parties with the intent of selling to the highest bidder.

B. Respondent

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied all three of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name. In summary, the Respondent made the following arguments:

The Complainant has not established any registered trademark rights in Canada, where the Respondent resides and conducts business.

The Erli platform was built, launched, and populated via outreach, and the project was transitioning to the disputed domain name in line with the bench learning concept.

The Respondent’s acquisition of <microsaas.ai> and other descriptive or brandable “.ai” domain names reflects a consistent product-incubation strategy rather than opportunistic targeting.

The disputed domain name has never displayed ads, parking pages, or content trading on the Complainant’s goodwill, supporting legitimate interests under the Policy.

The Respondent did not register the disputed domain name with intent to sell to the Complainant; to the contrary, the Complainant initiated purchase discussions on January 29, 2025. Any valuation discussion arose solely in response to the Complainant’s overtures and does not evidence a primary intent to sell at the time of registration.

The *Telstra* “passive holding” doctrine applies where a respondent provides no evidence of bona fide use. Here, the Respondent’s extensive evidence of development and outreach renders *Telstra* inapposite.

6. Discussion and Findings

To succeed, the Complainant must demonstrate that all of the elements enumerated in paragraph 4(a) of the Policy have been satisfied, namely:

(i) the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights;

- (ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name; and
- (iii) the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

The onus of proving these elements is on the Complainant.

Paragraph 15(a) of the Rules directs the Panel to decide the Complaint on the basis of the statements and documents submitted and in accordance with the Policy, these Rules and any rules and principles of law that it deems applicable.

Procedural Issue – Complainant’s supplemental filing

The Complainant filed an unsolicited supplemental submission. The Respondent objected to this filing.

Paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Rules grant the Panel sole discretion to determine the admissibility of unsolicited supplemental filings. While paragraph 10(d) of the Rules states that: “The Panel shall determine the admissibility, relevance, materiality and weight of the evidence”, paragraph 12 provides that: “In addition to the complaint and the response, the Panel may request, in its sole discretion, further statements or documents from either of the Parties”. As a general matter, unsolicited supplemental filings are generally discouraged, unless specifically requested by the panel.

The Complainant has not shown reasons that convince the Panel that a supplemental submission is warranted or that there are exceptional circumstances in this case.

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.

The entirety of the mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is identical to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

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 Respondent is not commonly known by the disputed domain name.

The Respondent has provided evidence of preparations to use, and of use of domain name in relation to, "Erli" which by all accounts looks to be an actual undertaking, but has not provided such evidence relating to BENCHLING – this is a fatal flaw in the Respondent's arguments and do not support a claim to the disputed domain name (rather to Erli).

At the time that the Complaint was filed, and at the time of this Decision, the disputed domain name does not resolve to an active website.

In the present case, there is no evidence before the Panel to show preparations to use, or use of, the name "Benchling" by the Respondent.

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.

Generally speaking, a finding that a domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith requires an inference to be drawn that the respondent in question has registered and is using the disputed domain name to take advantage of its significance as a trademark (usually) owned by the complainant.

The Panel considers that "benchling" is a coined term, and not a dictionary word. There is no general meaning of such term. The Respondent states that he selected the term "benchling" because it means "bench learning". The Respondent does not provide evidence for that explanation; rather, the Respondent's evidence provides dictionary entries for "bench learning" as a term, and does not show (let alone support) the asserted derivation.

The Respondent's assertions that he is rebranding his Erli platform are not supported by the evidence before the Panel. The Erli platform has been taken down, but the replacement platform never appeared. There is no documentation before the Panel to support a rebranding from Erli to Benchling – such as messages to Erli users announcing the new brand. Moreover, by at least July 2025, the Respondent had abandoned his intention to use the disputed domain name for its platform and was actively selling the disputed domain name. For example, in emails that the Respondent sent to the Complainant (provided by the Respondent), the Respondent states to the Complainant:

"Here's where we are at with this sale: - we have three interested parties in this domain - the other parties have already gone through multiple rounds of offers[...] The other parties are currently preparing their final offers. [...] What I can tell you is that the other parties are very serious about acquiring this domain and have provided strong offers; if this is not a strategic acquisition that Benchling is very serious about, no problem, but it is best I move forward with one of the other parties."

The Complainant attempted to acquire the disputed domain name directly from the Respondent and made an offer of USD 7,500. The Respondent proposed a higher price, in the USD 300,000 to USD 1,000,000

range. To be clear, the Respondent's conduct in responding to the Complainant's offer with a higher price is not of itself evidence of bad faith. However, the evidence discussed above suggests that the Respondent acquired the disputed domain name other than for the purposes of using it to rebrand his Erli platform, i.e., possibly to sell to the Complainant.

The Complainant provided evidence of its use and reputation of its BENCHLING trademark in the United States and on a worldwide basis, including at its domain name <benchling.com>. The Respondent does not assert that he was unaware of the Complainant when he registered the disputed domain name. The Panel concludes that it was more likely than not that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant when he registered the disputed domain name.

There is no evidence before the Panel of use by the Respondent of the disputed domain name. The Complainant relies upon the doctrine of passive holding, which is set out in *Telstra Corporation Limited v. Nuclear Marshmallows*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0003](#), and other cases. Panels have found that the non-use of a domain name would not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel notes the distinctiveness and reputation of the Complainant's trademark and finds that in the circumstances of this case the passive holding of the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of 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 <benchling.ai> be transferred to the Complainant.

/John Swinson/

John Swinson

Sole Panelist

Date: September 23, 2025