

Susman Godfrey Wins \$2.3 Million Jury Verdict for Client WickFire in Lawsuit Against TriMax Over Manipulation of Online Advertising

A federal jury in Austin, Texas has awarded \$2.3 million in damages to Susman Godfrey LLP client WickFire — while rejecting a \$22 million counterclaim filed against WickFire — in its lawsuit with competitor TriMax. Both companies are agencies that buy online advertising. The jury found that the owner of TriMax violated the Lanham Act and tortiously interfered with WickFire's client contracts by engaging in click fraud and spoofing WickFire's Google AdWords identity. The case, *WickFire LLC v. TriMax Media LLC et al*, was filed in 2014 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, however Susman Godfrey was brought on board shortly before trial.

In its complaint, WickFire alleged that TriMax CEO Laura Woodruff, after losing a client to WickFire, began systematically searching out that client's ads on the internet and clicking them in order to grossly inflate the pay-per-click price, thus wasting WickFire's advertising budget. WickFire also alleged that TriMax created false Google AdWords accounts in the names of key WickFire personnel and used those accounts to buy fake ads that were made to look like they were coming from WickFire. This activity made it appear that WickFire was in direct violation of contracts with its clients and affiliate networks, as well as with Google.

In its verdict issued Feb. 6, the jury found that TriMax owner Woodruff conspired to hurt WickFire and acted out of actual malice or gross negligence.

"This is a resounding victory for WickFire and we thank the jury for this long-awaited and well-deserved justice for our client," said Susman Godfrey partner [Lexie White](#), who served as lead trial counsel for WickFire. "These vicious actions by a competitor could have shuttered WickFire and did cause significant harm to the company's business. We are gratified the jury agreed and acted to right this wrong."

In addition to White, the Susman Godfrey team included associates [Ryan Caughey](#) and [Alejandra Salinas](#). WickFire is also represented by Benjamin Bernell of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, Bradley Coburn and Mary Dietz of Dykema Cox Smith, and Katherine Atlas of Atlas Law PLLC.