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WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

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Blockin' the Red: Caps fan sues over team logo

Washington Business Journal - by [Melissa Castro](#)

A Vienna hockey fan has filed a federal lawsuit against Ted Leonsis' holding companies and the **National Hockey League**, alleging the **Washington Capitals**' latest eagle logo nicks from logos he had pitched to the Caps.

Chris Joannou claims he started tinkering with the Caps' old logo in his spare time in 1993. He sent the team an unsolicited drawing of an eagle and the Capitol dome embedded in a hockey stick. Very **Pittsburgh Penguin-y**, but the late Abe Pollin, the Caps owner at the time, allegedly acknowledged the design in a July 1993 letter.

"Very creative, very bold, and I like it," Pollin supposedly wrote. "We haven't thought of changing the Capitals' logo or name; but, if and when we do, your logo will certainly be given consideration."

A couple of years later, Joannou alleges, he showed Caps officials two versions of another proposed logo, this time with an eagle astride the Capitol building, its wings outstretched in a "W" shape. (To be fair, Joannou's eagles look like they've taken a dip in **BP's** Gulf of Mexico.)

Shortly after that 1995 meeting, Joannou claims, the Caps unveiled their "screaming eagle" logo. In 1996, Joannou sued the Caps over that logo, claiming the screaming eagle was a knockoff of his Pittsburgh Penguin-like logo (InnerLoop's critique, not his).

That suit was dismissed within five months, according to court records.

In 2007, the Caps showed off a new logo: an eagle astride the Capitol building, its wings outstretched in a "W" shape. Oooh, let's get ready to rumble!

Kurt Kehl, a spokesman for the Caps' holding company, says the latest logo was designed by **Reebok**. The NHL is taking the lead in defending the team, Kehl says.

Besides seeking for an unspecified amount of money damages, Joannou wants an injunction blocking the reproduction, sale, display or distribution of anything bearing the new logo. He's also asking the court where he filed his copyright claim, the federal district court in D.C., to order the "impoundment and destruction of all infringing materials."

Better rock that red while you still can.

... Newark, N.J., may not be Manhattan, but D.C. entrepreneur Stephanie Vance recently took that side of the Hudson River by storm, presenting her six-person company's elevator pitch to a panel of judges in the "Make Mine a Million \$ Business" contest for women entrepreneurs.

Unlike "Shark Tank," a reality show for aspiring entrepreneurs, winners don't come away with a rich venture capital partner. Instead, winners receive free advertising and public relations, access to **American Express** financing, office supply discounts and training on how to get **Small Business Administration** loans.

In 2005, Vance co-founded **Advocacy Associates LLC**, a consulting company that teaches nonprofit groups how to lobby Congress (and the media) on their own behalf.

The company has worked with clients as large as the **Humane Society of the United States**, but Vance hopes the prize package will help her and co-founder Jason Jordan expand from "a few person consulting shop" to a midsize grass-roots advocacy business.

Vance's June 15 pitch was apparently well-received: she was one of eight contest winners. Over the years, 40 percent of the winners have built their businesses into million-dollar enterprises, according to **The Star-Ledger**.

Any other major difference between the glamour of "Shark Tank" and the 5-year-old "Make Mine a Million"?

"Well, there was a woman shooting up heroin in the bathroom next to me at the train station," Vance tells InnerLoop. "She had a strap on her arm and a needle. Welcome to New Jersey!"



Courtesy Chris Joannou

A Vienna man says he sent a logo to the Capitals in the 1990s, years before the team unveiled a similar logo in 2007.

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