

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Laatz v. Zazzle, Inc.

Laatz · No. 22-cv-04844-BLF · Decided August 28, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California grants Plaintiff Nicky Laatz’s administrative motion to consider whether materials submitted in support of a motion to exclude expert testimony should be sealed. Applying the compelling-reasons standard, the court permits redaction or sealing of confidential information concerning Zazzle’s proprietary Design Tool, users, designs, sales, revenues, and expenses.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Beth Labson Freeman
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	August 28, 2025
DOCKET	22-cv-04844-BLF
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed an administrative motion to consider whether materials submitted in support of her motion to exclude defendants' expert testimony should be sealed. Defendants supported the sealing request, and the motion was unopposed.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Ninth Circuit's public-access standard for judicial records, using the compelling-reasons standard for materials more than tangentially related to the merits and the good-cause standard for materials attached to non-dispositive motions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Nicky Laatz, et al. v. Zazzle, Inc., et al.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- commercial litigation
- expert testimony
- evidence

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

commercial litigation

evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the portions of expert reports submitted in support of Plaintiff's motion to exclude defendants' experts should be sealed under the compelling-reasons standard.
2. Whether Defendants' proposed sealing requests were narrowly tailored and supported by specific facts showing that disclosure would cause competitive or commercial harm.

HOLDINGS

1. Because the sealing motion concerned materials submitted in support of a motion to exclude expert testimony, the materials were more than tangentially related to the underlying cause of action, and the court applied the compelling-reasons standard.
2. The court held that Defendants established compelling reasons to seal information revealing Zazzle's confidential internal technical operations and commercially sensitive information, and that the requests were narrowly tailored because no less restrictive alternative was sufficient.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Accordingly, when considering a sealing request, "a 'strong presumption in favor of access' is the starting point. "" (at 1)

"Broad allegations of harm, unsubstantiated by specific examples of articulated reasoning" will not suffice." (at 1)

"The Court finds that Defendants have established compelling reasons to seal information that would reveal confidential information about Zazzle's internal technical operations and commercially sensitive information." (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The sealing motion concerned portions of expert reports submitted in support of Plaintiff's motion to exclude defendants' experts. Defendants identified confidential information concerning Zazzle's proprietary Design Tool, numbers of designs and users, sales, revenues, and expenses. The requested redactions were unopposed, and the court found that disclosure could reveal confidential internal technical operations and commercially sensitive information.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

In the underlying federal civil action, Plaintiff Nicky Laatz moved to exclude defendants' expert testimony and filed an administrative motion seeking to seal portions of expert reports. Defendants Zazzle, Inc. and Mohamed Alkhatib filed a statement supporting sealing, and Plaintiff filed no response. The district court granted the motion and ordered specified expert reports or portions of reports sealed or redacted.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of Honolulu*, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178-80 (9th Cir. 2006)
- *Nixon v. Warner Commc'ns, Inc.*, 435 U.S. 589, 597 & n.7 (1978)
- *Foltz v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 331 F.3d 1122, 1135 (9th Cir. 2003)
- *Ctr. for Auto Safety v. Chrysler Grp., LLC*, 809 F.3d 1092, 1099 (9th Cir. 2016)
- *Phillips ex rel. Estates of Byrd v. Gen. Motors Corp.*, 307 F.3d 1206, 1210-11 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *Beckman Indus., Inc. v. Int'l Ins. Co.*, 966 F.2d 470, 476 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *Regis Metro Assocs., Inc. v. NBR Co., LLC*, No. 20-CV-02309-DMR, 2022 WL 267443, at *13 (N.D. Cal. Jan. 28, 2022)
- *In re Elec. Arts*, 298 F. App'x 568, 569 (9th Cir. 2008)
- *Music Grp. Macao Com. Offshore Ltd. v. Foote*, 2015 WL 3993147, at *6 (N.D. Cal. June 30, 2015)
- *In re Google Location Hist. Litig.*, 514 F. Supp. 3d 1147, 1162 (N.D. Cal. 2021)
- *U.S. Ethernet Innovations, LLC v. Acer, Inc.*, 2014 WL 7387206, at *1 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 19, 2014)