

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 Northern District of California partially granted and partially denied Defendants’ administrative motion to seal materials filed in connection with a Daubert motion. The Court denied sealing for information previously publicly disclosed or not sought to be sealed by Plaintiff, but granted sealing for narrowly tailored confidential business information concerning Zazzle’s operations, users, products, sales, revenues, expenses, and damages calculations.

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	Defendants moved administratively to seal portions of their motion to exclude testimony of Plaintiff’s designated expert witness and related exhibits, and to consider whether another party’s material should be sealed. Plaintiff opposed some sealing requests and stated that she did not seek sealing of other materials.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Requests to seal judicial records more than tangentially related to the merits require compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings that outweigh the public’s strong presumption of access. Materials attached to motions unrelated or only tangentially related to the merits are subject to Rule 26(c)’s lower good-cause standard. The court also required compliance with Civil Local Rule 79-5, including a particularized showing, evidentiary support where necessary, and narrowly tailored sealing.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order, with no precedential-status determination in the supplied record.

PARTIES

Zazzle, Inc., Mohamed Alkhatib v. Nicky Laatz

TOPICS

evidence

daubert standard

commercial litigation

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

evidence

commercial litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. What standard governs Defendants' request to seal portions of materials submitted with their Daubert motion?
2. Whether Defendants established compelling reasons to seal the requested redactions and exhibits under the governing standard and Civil Local Rule 79-5.
3. Whether materials should be denied sealing because the information was previously publicly disclosed or Plaintiff did not request sealing.

HOLDINGS

1. Because the sealing motion concerned Defendants' motion to exclude testimony of Plaintiff's designated expert witness, the court applied the compelling-reasons standard rather than the lower good-cause standard.
2. Defendants established compelling reasons to seal narrowly tailored portions containing confidential information about Zazzle's proprietary Design Tool, designers, designs, products, users, sales, revenues, expenses, and related damages calculations.
3. The court denied sealing for materials that had been previously publicly disclosed on the docket and for materials that Plaintiff expressly did not seek to seal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

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

"Parties seeking to seal judicial records relating to motions that are "more than tangentially related to the underlying cause of action," bear the burden of overcoming the presumption with "compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings that outweigh the general history of access and the public policies favoring disclosure." (at 1)

"Broad allegations of harm, unsubstantiated by specific examples of articulated reasoning" will not suffice." (at 2)

"The Court finds that these documents contain confidential business information regarding Zazzle's designers, designs, products, sales, revenues, expenses, and numbers of users that, if publicly disclosed, would cause Zazzle competitive harm." (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Defendants sought to seal portions of their Daubert motion and exhibits containing information about Zazzle's proprietary Design Tool, server operation, numbers of designers, designs, products, and users, and sales, revenues, expenses, and damages calculations. Plaintiff opposed sealing and stated that she did not request sealing of certain materials. The court found that some information had already been publicly disclosed, while other information constituted confidential business information whose disclosure could cause competitive harm.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The sealing dispute arose in connection with Defendants' Daubert motion at ECF No. 398. The court applied the compelling-reasons standard to materials related to that motion, denied sealing for materials that were publicly disclosed or for which Plaintiff did not request sealing, and granted narrowly tailored sealing for confidential business information.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Kamakana v. City & Cty. 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 Group, 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)
- L.S. v. Henderson, No. 20-
- 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)
- OpenTV, Inc. v. Apple, Inc., No. 14-CV-01622-HSG, 2015 WL 5714851, at *2 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 17, 2015)

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