Lawlor in Marketing Brew: Looking to Partner with a Brand Parody Account? Proceed Carefully

By Joseph Lawlor | August 18, 2025

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Haynes Boone Partner Joe Lawlor spoke with *Marketing Brew* as a lawsuit between Sylvanian Drama, a social media account with 3.5 million followers on TikTok and Instagram, and Epoch, the toymaker and creator of the Calico Critters, comes to a close soon. Epoch filed a lawsuit alleging copyright and trademark infringement and accusing Sylvanian Drama, run by creator Thea von Engelbrechten, of profiting off Epoch's intellectual property without its permission.

"What [Epoch was] going for is that this account was really a marketing/advertising device," Lawlor said.

"It's all about these brand partnerships [and] trying to paint this account as one that's not really a creative outlet or parody, but instead one to market products."

Lawlor, who has no connection to the Epoch lawsuit, said he doesn't think the trademark claims on the dolls' likeness were based on a particularly strong argument, but it's possible that a court could have found merit in the claims that von Engelbrechten used Epoch's IP to generate profit, rather than simply parodying the brand, he said.

While there can be reputational risks that come with being named in lawsuits, Lawlor noted that there didn't appear to be any blowback on Sylvanian Drama or the brands that partnered with the account, but rather on Epoch, at least based on online chatter.

"People [were] just upset that they [were] not seeing the content that they love on TikTok and that all [seemed] to be directed at Epoch and Calico Critters," he said.

To read the full article from *Marketing Brew*, click here.

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