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[Royaldutchshellplc.com](http://Royaldutchshellplc.com)**

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# **UNITED STATES TRADEMARK LAW**

**United States Patent and Trademark Office,  
Concurrent Use Registration,  
Royaldutchshellplc.com, Copyright Status of  
Work by the U.s. Government, Doctrine of  
Foreign Equivalents, Trademark Trial and Appeal  
Board, United States Trademark Law**

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# CONTENTS

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Introduction	v
Concurrent use registration	1
Copyright status of work by the U.S. government	11
Disparagement	15
Doctrine of foreign equivalents	19
Fair use (U.S. trademark law)	23
Fucking Machines	25
Gripe site	27
Lanham Act	29
Nominative use	33
Principal Register	35
Royaldutchshellplc.com	37
Service mark symbol	41
Supplemental Register	45
Tea Rose – Rectanus doctrine	47
	iii

## ROYALDUTCHSHELLPLC.COM

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**royaldutchshellplc.com** is a Royal Dutch Shell gripe site and blog operated by Alfred and John Donovan, who engaged in several marketing campaigns with Shell during the 1980s and early 1990s. The father and son duo believe Shell violated intellectual property agreements and filed several law suits against Shell prior to starting several websites critical of Shell, including **royaldutchshellplc.com**. The site has been oft quoted in news sources and is known for its activities as an Internet leak and forum for Shell whistleblowers.

### **Website background**

The Donovans owned a chain of petrol stations in east London and Essex, for which they created many sales promotion campaigns under their company Don Marketing.[2] In 1981, Don Marketing devised a promotional game scheme for Royal Dutch Shell called "Make Money".[3] Because the promotion was successful, Don created several other promotional campaigns for Shell,[4] which led in part to Shell being identified as "perhaps the biggest user of games" in 1986.[5]

In 1992 Shell appointed a new National Promotions manager to whom Don's promotional ideas were disclosed on a confidential basis.[6] In 1994, Don Marketing issued a writ against Shell with respect to a follow-up "Make Money" promotion claiming breach of confidence and breach of contract, which ended in a \$60,000 settlement.[7] A second writ was issued concerning a Nintendo promotion that ran in 1993.[8]. Shell settled both claims in October 1996.[6] A third law suit was processed in 1999; however, the claimant abandoned the claim.[9]

During the course of the litigation, the Donovans founded the "Shell Corporate Conscience Pressure Group"[10] and accompanying gripe site, which Shell UK Media Relations responded to internally in March 1995.[11]

After Don Marketing was dissolved, father and son Alfred and John Donovan created several websites to expose their perceived injustices while working with Shell, one of which is royaldutchshellplc.com. They also operate Shellnews.net.

While Royal Dutch Shell plc is a trademarked name of the company, the domain name was first registered by Alfred Donovan.[12] It avoids being an illegal cyber-squatter as long as it is non-commercial, active, and no attempt are made to sell the domain name, as determined by WIPO proceedings[13] In 2005 Donovan said he would relinquish the site to Shell after it "gets rid of all the management he deems responsible for its various recent woes."[14]

## **Reaction to site**

### **Internet leak**

The site has been recognized by several media outlets for its role as an Internet leak. In 2008 the *Financial Times* published an article based on a "letter published by royaldutchshellplc.com,"[15] which *Reuters* and *The Times* also covered shortly thereafter.[16][17] The site has also been cited several other times by the aforementioned news sources as well as others.

On October 18, 2006, the site published an article stating that Shell had for some time been supplying information to the Russian government relating to Sakhalin II.[18] The Russian energy company Gazprom subsequently obtained a 50% stake in the Sakhalin-II project.[19]

Other instances where the site has acted as an Internet leak include a 2007 IT outsourcing plan,[20] as well as a 2008 internal memo where CEO Jeroen van der Veer expressed disappointment in the company's share-price performance.[21]

## **Recognition**



The gripe site has been recognized as a bona fide source of information regarding Shell by several news sources. In the 2006 *Fortune Global 500* rankings, in which Royal Dutch Shell placed third, royaldutchshellplc.com was listed alongside shell.com as a source of information.[22] In 2007 the site was lauded for becoming "a hub for activists and disgruntled former employees." [2] A 2009 article called royaldutchshellplc.com "the world's most effective adversarial Web site." [23] The site has been described as "an open wound for Shell." [18]

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- Don Marketing

A hyperlinked version of this chapter is at <http://booksllc.net?q=Royaldutchshellplc%2Ecom>



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