

Trump, Burnett to be Deposed this Week for Lawsuit Alleging NBC-TV's ``The Apprentice'' Was Ripped Off

LOS ANGELES -- After Attempts to Settle Dispute Amicably, Velocity Entertainment Group Forced to Take Legal Action; Depositions Take Place This Tuesday and Thursday

Donald Trump and Mark Burnett, Executive Producers of the hit NBC show "The Apprentice," will be deposed this week as part of discovery in a lawsuit filed by the Los Angeles-based production company Velocity Entertainment Group and its chief principal, Mark Bethea. Bethea filed a complaint for damages against the producers of the show in the United States District Court, Central District Court of California, in September of 2004. The complaint contends that executive producer Mark Burnett of Mark Burnett Productions, Inc. (MBP) and co-executive producer Conrad Riggs, stole the show from a legally registered presentation made by Bethea to Riggs in the summer of 2001.

Donald Trump's deposition is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, 2005, at 10:00 EDT at Trump Towers in New York. Mark Burnett's deposition is scheduled for Thursday, April 28, 2005, at 10:00 PDT in Los Angeles. The trial is set to begin November 1, 2005.

In August of 2000, Mark Bethea conceived and developed a reality-TV show titled "C.E.O.," which had contestants competing against each other in a corporate environment for the ultimate prize of becoming the chief executive officer of an actual corporation. Due to his corporate experience, on-screen presence and credibility, Donald Trump was specifically named to host "C.E.O." Bethea pitched the idea to producers, including Riggs, in June of 2001. During subsequent communications, Riggs informed Bethea that Riggs and Burnett were not interested in producing "C.E.O." In addition, Bethea contends it was understood Riggs would keep the concept for "C.E.O." confidential.

According to Ronald W. Makarem, Esq., whose West Los Angeles law firm, Makarem & Associates, is representing the plaintiffs, his client tried to contact the show's producers when NBC first announced "The Apprentice" in Spring of 2003 in an effort to try to settle this matter. These efforts were rebuffed, thus resulting in this lawsuit.

Gross revenues for the first season of "The Apprentice," which included 15 episodes on NBC, are believed to have exceeded \$100 million. The gross revenues of "The Apprentice," including the second and third seasons plus commercial products, are expected to be well into the hundreds of millions.

The suit seeks damages arising out of a number of legal issues, including copyright infringement, breach of implied-in-fact contract and unfair competition. Additional defendants named in the suit include: NBC Universal, owned by General Electric (NYSE:GE), and Vivendi Universal (NYSE:V); Trump Productions, LLC; and executive producers of the show, Donald Trump and Jay Bienstock.

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