UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA Alexandria Division

RAI STRATEGIC HOLDINGS, INC., et al.,)))
Plaintiffs,)
v.) Civil Action No. 1:20-cv-393 (LO/TCB)
ALTRIA CLIENT SERVICES LLC, et al.,))
Defendants.)) _)

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant Philip Morris Products S.A.'s ("Defendant") Motion Seal (Dkt. 664) and supporting memorandum (Dkt. 667). Defendant seeks leave to file under seal an unredacted version of its Memorandum in Opposition to Reynolds' Partial Motion to Stay Injunctive Relief Discovery ("Memorandum") and accompanying exhibits 2-7. (Dkt. 666.) Plaintiffs RAI Strategic Holdings, Inc. and R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company ("Plaintiffs") filed a reply in support of Defendants' motion (Dkt. 681) pursuant to Local Civil Rule 5(C). See L. Civ. R. 5(C).

District courts have authority to seal court documents "if the public's right of access is outweighed by competing interests." *Ashcraft v. Conoco, Inc.*, 218 F.3d 288, 302 (4th Cir. 2000). Procedurally, a district court may seal court filings if it (1) "provide[s] public notice of the request to seal and allow[s] interested parties a reasonable opportunity to object, (2) consider[s] less drastic alternatives to sealing the documents, and (3) provide[s] specific reasons and factual findings supporting its decision to seal the documents and for rejecting the alternatives." *Id.*



Upon consideration of the parties' filings, the Court makes the following findings.

First, Defendant has provided public notice of their request to seal and interested parties have been given a reasonable opportunity to object. Defendant filed its motion and public notice on May 26, 2021. (See Dkts. 664, 665.) Because over seven days have elapsed since Defendant filed the motion and no interested party has objected, the Court may treat this motion as uncontested under Local Civil Rule 5(C). See L. Civ. R. 5(C). Accordingly, Defendant has satisfied this requirement under Ashcraft and the Local Civil Rules.

Second, this Court has considered less drastic alternatives. Defendant filed a redacted version of its Memorandum on the public docket. (Dkt. 663.) This selective protection of information constitutes the least drastic measure of sealing confidential material. *See Adams v. Object Innovation, Inc.*, No. 3:11cv272-REP-DWD, 2011 WL 7042224, at *4 (E.D. Va. Dec. 5, 2011) "[The] proposal to redact only the proprietary and confidential information, rather than seal the entirety of [the document], constitutes the least drastic method of shielding the information at issue."), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2012 WL 135428 (E.D. Va. Jan. 17, 2012).

Finally, the Court finds reason to seal the Memorandum and Exhibits 2-7. The redacted portions contain the parties' confidential, proprietary, and competitively sensitive business information, which is also protected by the protective order in this case. Additionally, the exhibits contain the parties' technological information, which is designated as confidential. Release of this information to the public could lead to competitive harm to the parties in this lawsuit and to third parties.



Accordingly, it is hereby

ORDERED that Defendants' motion (Dkt. 664) is **GRANTED**. Docket number 666 shall remain permanently under seal.

ENTERED this 3rd day of June, 2021.

United States Magistrate Judge
THERESA CARROLL BUCHANAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Alexandria, Virginia