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Make Protecting Intellectual Property Your First Priority

- [Business Tips](#)
- [Technology](#)

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Protecting your company's intellectual property rights is vital for your business. Copyrights, trademarks, and patents give you grounds to pursue legal action should anyone steal your innovations, but it is also imperative to prevent cyber intruders ahead of time by having digital security in place. A single cyber attack can eliminate your business's competitive edge and can cost you thousands of dollars to fight someone who uses your company's unique information without permission.

Below, we at Frontier have provided a few tips on helping protect intellectual property (IP) from hackers and other cyberthieves.

What Is IP?

The World Intellectual Property Organization [defines IP](#) as a “creation of the mind.” Those creations can include products, manufacturing processes, artistic creations, and company logos. Depending on the type of innovation, legal protection falls into one of the following categories.

Copyrights

Copyrights specifically cover artistic works, like novels, poems, plays, films, music, paintings, software, and logos that show artistic merit. Once an original work is created and “fixed in a tangible form,” it’s [protected under copyright law](#)—though copyright registration is required to file a lawsuit.

Trademarks

Trademark registration is the most [common type of IP protection](#). It refers to unique logos, packaging, or symbols that the public associates with a specific company. Under common law, you hold the rights for any mark distinguishing your company as soon as you start using it, but registering it with the trademark office sets up “[legal presumption of ownership](#).”

Patents

Inventors who want to protect their inventions from being copied or stolen can apply for the government-granted right of a patent. To be considered for [patent protection](#), an invention must be useful, novel, and not obvious.

Once you hold a patent, no other company can manufacture or market your product, although you do have exclusive rights to offer licensing.

Trade Secrets

Trade secrets are formulas, devices, or patterns a company values enough to safeguard. [Kentucky Fried Chicken](#), for example, classically protects its trade secret recipe within a locked vault. Trade secrets are covered by state law and don’t have to be registered, but you should have anyone working with such proprietary information sign a strong nondisclosure agreement.

Why Is It Important to Protect IP?

When IP is stolen, it risks a company’s existence. Every year, IP theft costs US businesses roughly \$600 billion, and in 2016, half of business executives said their companies were hacked. It’s essential for businesses to protect their IP—there’s no shortage of hackers, insiders, and even countries employing everything from malware to botnets to web-based attacks to [steal these valuable assets](#).

[Vickie Papapetrou](#), a cybersecurity advisor at Ernst & Young, cautions businesses to accept that their security will be breached.

“Companies must identify their most important information and where this data resides. They must then monitor access to this data across networks, systems, and endpoint devices,” she says. “Other security tips include the use of threat detection and tracking software, appropriate access levels and login criteria, and storing files in backup copies to continue operations in the event of a ransomware attack.”

So what should you be doing to keep your IP safe? Use the following tips to get started.

Create Secure Passwords

According to Centrifry, [80% of all cybersecurity breaches](#) involved a stolen or weak password. There are plenty of [tips online](#) for creating stronger passwords, or you can [sign up for a service](#) to do it for you. It allows you to create passwords or use those generated by the website; your data is also encrypted and secured with a master password.

Another choice is [two-factor authentication](#), which sends a code to your phone that must be used to sign in to an account after you’ve entered your username and password.

Update Software Regularly

No matter how busy your company is, it’s crucial to [perform routine software updates](#) to fix bugs and ensure data protections are in place. Delaying these updates only puts your information at risk.

Seek Out Cybersecurity Experts

Plenty of companies can [manage your digital security](#) by updating software, monitoring anti-malware programs, and encrypting your data, so don’t be afraid to ask for help.

In fact, Frontier Business has several [Frontier Secure packages](#) available with features that allow you to monitor security across your devices; provide malware, spam, and browsing protection; and remotely wipe compromised devices.

Stay Ahead of Cyberthieves

With just one breach, cyber thieves can steal your secrets, copy them, and disperse the information limitlessly. But cybersecurity is evolving to keep pace with attackers.

Don’t let your hard-earned company know-how fall prey to thieves. Use all the tools at your disposal to make sure your company keeps its secrets and its unique position in the marketplace. When it comes to protecting your company’s IP, always have digital security in place. In this competitive business world, it pays to be proactive rather than reactive, every time.