



Ben Heslop

For sole traders protecting your intellectual property rights is essential. But what if you don't even know what IP is?

Ben Heslop is the programme manager of Cumbria Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) which offers free help and support to businesses. It is based in Carlisle Library.



We help explain the basics of IP and how it relates to protecting your own unique 'brand' or original 'idea'. You'll walk away with the knowledge confidence and tools to make your own 'better informed' IP decisions

Increasingly we are being asked to field more and more questions about Intellectual Property (IP). I find this super encouraging as it means more and more small businesses are starting to wake up to the fact that in today's modern marketplace small and large businesses need to take themselves as seriously as each other. Partly this is due to the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the ever-growing world online but also it is because being a business is a serious business in 2023, post-pandemic and post-Brexit. Nothing is given away freely as our high streets reflect. And while a large multinational obviously makes huge efforts to protect its billions, in a strange way the sole trader should be more bothered as if they fell foul or lost their IP it could prove way more devastating on a personal level.

But this is not a "let's freak them out" article, far from it. We are here to help! Now, I only know anything about IP due to my current role and I can confirm the learning curve was steep when I started. I am lucky enough through the BIPC to be trained by the Intellectual Property Office (IPO). Worryingly, like most small business owners, when my business was my sole source of income I knew nothing about the risks and did nothing about protecting IP.

So, to help you make sure you are not as unaware as I was! Your IP can be protected by patents, trademarks, and copyright. To keep this simple and brief, patents are for inventions and designs, trademarks are for logos, words, phrases and even colours and copyright is for authorial or entrepreneurial works, books, photos music, web content etc. Our main area of enquiry is around trademarks and advice on copyrighting.

Sophie our Carlisle BIPC advisor says: "At BIPC Cumbria, we help break down the jargon of IP and how it relates to your

business. We help explain the basics of IP and how it relates to protecting your own unique 'brand' or original 'idea'. You'll walk away with the knowledge confidence and tools to make your own 'better informed' IP decisions."

However, we are lucky to have a patent lawyer on our team of "Experts in residence" as well. In the last year, with their expert help we have supported two inventors from Cumbria in getting their inventions through the patent process and both now have patents pending on their designs and are working with big industry to go to production. It goes without saying at this stage all parties have signed non-disclosure agreements so the rest I am afraid I simply cannot tell you about! So if this could be you and your garage invention or new app needs professional help, now is the time.

Well, we have survived the tedious bit, now for the fun bit! Did you know... a judgment handed down by the High Court of England and Wales, saw Cadbury secure a trademark for its colour purple per se, with no description other than reference to its Pantone number (which for all you Pantone geeks out there is 2685C!). Also sticking with sweets, when Nestle acquired Rowntrees they paid an eye watering £2.5bn. Only £0.5bn was for the physical assets and the £2bn was for the intangibles... in other words the IP!

If we ignore these things, when it really matters is when it is often too late. So why not start 2024 the right way and check out what IP you have that should be protected? If you want any help finding out what your IP is or want to know what to do next then drop us a line at the BIPC.

cumbriabipc.org.uk
cumbria.bipc@cumbria.gov.uk