

Protecting your creativity on the web

 By [Jani Cronje](#)

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The internet is the new global market place and it would be commercial suicide not to advertise or display your wares in this space.

Of course, the advantage of the whole world having access to your great idea is also possibly the greatest threat - beware the copycat! Not to worry, there are ways to protect your prized creation before revealing it to the world.

Designs

If your design is something new which has never been disclosed to the public anywhere in the world, design protection is your first stop. If you have an urgent deadline in respect of the great reveal, don't stress, it is still possible to apply for design protection within six months from the date you first made available your design to the public. Best to consult an expert on designs, but remember, design protection relates to your actual product - what it can do and what it looks like.



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Trade Mark

The name of your product (ie. your brand) or even your business name, if catchy and unique, is what people will also remember. If you register this as a trade mark, you can prevent someone from creating confusion out there by using a similar name - my brand, don't touch! And, even better yet, you can renew your trade mark, in perpetuity! Who said that you cannot plan for the future? Your brand can become a valuable asset, it makes sense to protect it from the get go.

Domain name

In addition to registering your brand as a trade mark, you should get your own address on the internet. Registering your brand as a domain name is fairly simple. That being said, you should act quickly, there are only so many top level domains (TLDs) available - #mybrandisawesome.COM. If you think local is lekker, you can also register your domain name in our own country specific domain, .CO.ZA. You can link your domain name to your own website and guess what, it is also possible to protect the content of your website.

Copyright

For you...for free! Copyright in a drawing, literary work, website page, computer program or the lyrics to a song, for example, exists automatically as soon as you put pen to paper or finger to keyboard. No need to register your copyright (in fact, it is not possible to do so, unless we are speaking about a cinematographic film, of course). Copyright generally lasts for 50 years after you have kicked the bucket or the date the work is first made available to the public. Best to keep a paper trail! Also, remember the © sign is your friend. Put this at the bottom of your work, with your name and the year the work is created.

Generally speaking, when displaying your work on the internet, if possible, use watermarks. Also, when engaging with third parties regarding your creation, ask them to respect your intellectual property and sign a non-disclosure agreement. This is a contract entered between the two parties. It won't protect you against the world, but at least it will confirm in writing what is most probably the understanding between the parties signing the contract - what's mine is mine and should stay mine. A clever notice which must be accepted when entering a website, should work nicely.

Best of luck and be IP savvy!

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