

3 benefits of having a registered U.S. trademark on your business

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As a business owner, your brand is everything. And the core of your brand identity is your unique name and logo.

If you have an established business, that is how your existing customers or clients know you and recommend you. If you are starting a new business, your strategies for future growth and success will likewise depend on creating a distinctive brand presence in the marketplace. Your advertising, marketing and social media campaigns will be built around creating awareness of your name and logo in your target audience of potential customers or clients.

Whether you have been in business for six months or 60 years, your unique name and logo carry with them the reputation for high-quality goods and services that you are building with the public through your hard work, creativity and persistence.

But have you properly protected these important elements of your business? And have you secured the potential future benefits that trademark registration can bring? Here are three important benefits of obtaining a registered U.S. trademark for your business name or logo:

1. A registered U.S. trademark can provide strong protection against new competitors who are looking to use a name or logo that resembles yours. If you have a retail business, it could be the new store opening in a nearby town. If you provide services like accounting or consulting, it could be the new agency drawing away your online traffic. Your competitors may have chosen a similar name or logo by coincidence, or they might be deliberately looking to profit from your hard work and investment. Either way, your business can lose customers or clients who confuse their goods and services with yours.

By officially registering your brand name or logo with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), you may be able to deter new competitors from choosing a similar name or logo. New businesses considering various names or logos often check the USPTO database and may see your registered mark. You will also have the right to place the ® symbol next to your name and logo everywhere you use them, alerting everyone that your trademarks are officially registered with the U.S. government. Reputable or smart competitors will not want to get drawn into trademark litigation or be forced to change their name or logo after building a business around them.

Furthermore, by registering your trademark you can extend your trademark rights nationwide, rather than having only common law protections in the areas where you are currently operating. You will have much stronger legal authority to warn or sue new competitors who do begin using a confusingly similar name or logo, with the potential for recovering enhanced damages or other remedies as well.

2. A registered U.S. trademark is essential if you ever want to franchise your business concept in the future. Franchising can be an excellent way to profit from the expansion of your successful business without having to make the personal investment of time, money and energy necessary to open new locations. Before you can sell a franchise, however, you must provide the buyer with the legal right to use the name and logo associated with the business. An officially registered U.S. trademark meets that requirement and can be an important part of creating your own franchise income stream.

3. A registered U.S. trademark may provide a greater return down the road if you decide to sell your successful business. A registered trademark is a valuable asset that can be transferred with the business and can significantly enhance the overall value of your business to potential buyers who know that they will also be able to use that registration to keep out confusingly similar competition or to franchise the business concept on a nationwide basis as discussed above.

Given all of the potential benefits of registration, every business owner should consider applying for a registered U.S. trademark for their business name and logo. The cost can be reasonable and the value added to the business now and in the future by registration can be significant.