

Valuing Your Intellectual Property

by Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC © 2005

Have you ever stopped to think that you have valuable property right on your hard drive? Undoubtedly, you have a variety of notes that you have taken over the years arranged in various categories. You may have written an article or two, or perhaps several. In support of your clients or customers, you have developed forms that enable them to easily transact business. You also have a variety of presentations and slides such as those created with programs including PowerPoint or Corel Presentations, for example, as well as charts, exhibits, graphs, and other items that constitute materials for participants at your presentations.

On top of all these items, it is likely that you have boiler plate material for contracts and agreements. There may be carefully worked boiler plate letters that you adapt based on the particular situation at hand, and other templates, rosters, and check lists that represent value, the likes of which you may not have recently, or ever, contemplated.

What about your database? If you have 1,000 or 10,000 names, these represent intellectual property of sorts--marketing intelligence, in this case. Elsewhere on your hard drive, you may have proprietary photographs, files containing logos and/or trademark materials, as well as formulas, processes, even material that represents trade secrets. You may have data, notes, or material on specific industries, trend information, quotes, or collections.

Given the highly likely probability that your hard drive examined in this new light contains a wealth of intellectual properties, how are you protecting your property?

- Do you have a well developed and often practiced back-up routine to save and store your valuable files?
- Do you have security measures in place so that unauthorized individuals are not privy to them?
- Do you have a confidentiality policy and trade secret policy prepared, which mandates that any staff you may have are required to sign a written notice acknowledging that they have read and understood such policies?
- Do you execute work for higher agreements so that it is clear to all participating parties that work you authorize and pay for shall become and remain solely your property?
- Have you developed an employee departure procedure, whereby all materials belonging to you are returned to you?
- Do you have non-disclosure and non-compete agreements in place with the employees who, upon departure, could easily start a rival business or greatly contribute to a rival business?

The more valuable your intellectual property, be it on your hard disc, or any place in your office, the more important it is to safeguard your belongings. ♦♦♦

Jeff Davidson helps organizations and individuals overcome the relentless burden of information and communication overload. Call your Financial Forum representation at 435.750.0062 to check his availability for your next event.