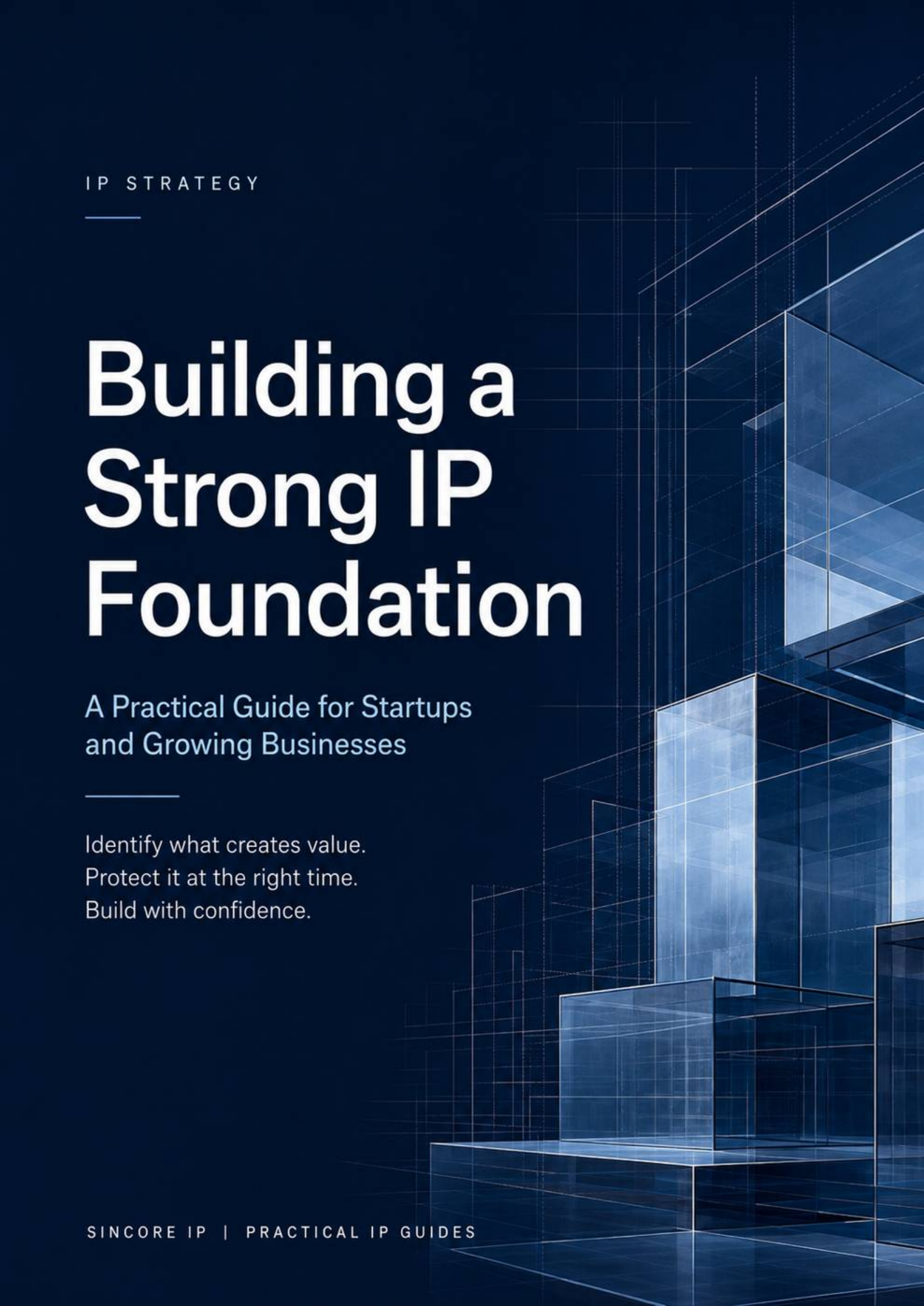
IP STRATEGY

Building a Strong IP Foundation

A Practical Guide for Startups and Growing Businesses

Identify what creates value.
Protect it at the right time.
Build with confidence.



SINCORE IP | PRACTICAL IP GUIDES

WHY IP FOUNDATIONS MATTER

IP Should Not Be an Afterthought

For startups and growing businesses, some of the most valuable assets are created long before they appear on a balance sheet.

A product concept, brand name, technical solution, design, software, process or piece of know-how may become central to future growth. Yet that value can be weakened when ownership is unclear, protection is delayed or commercial decisions are made without understanding the surrounding IP landscape.

A strong IP foundation does not mean registering everything. It means identifying what creates a competitive advantage, confirming who owns it and deciding what should be protected, where and when.

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU

01 **RECOGNIZE**
The IP assets within your business

02 **CONNECT**
Those assets with appropriate protection options

03 **IDENTIFY**
Common ownership, timing and market-entry risks

04 **DEVELOP**
A practical, business-aligned IP roadmap

KEY INSIGHT

A strong IP strategy begins with business priorities—not a list of registrations.

Your IP May Be Broader Than You Think

Intellectual property is not limited to patents. Most businesses create and use several forms of IP, even if those assets have never been formally identified or recorded.[1]



BRAND IDENTITY

Company names, product names, logos and slogans

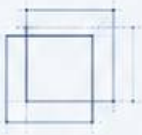
Potential protection: Trademarks



TECHNICAL INNOVATION

New technical products, processes and solutions

Potential protection: Patents or other invention rights [1][2]



PRODUCT APPEARANCE

Visual features of a product, packaging or interface

Potential protection: Design rights



CREATIVE AND DIGITAL CONTENT

Software, website content, photographs, graphics and other original materials

Potential protection: Copyright, depending on the applicable law



CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

Technical know-how, formulas, methods, commercial information and internal data

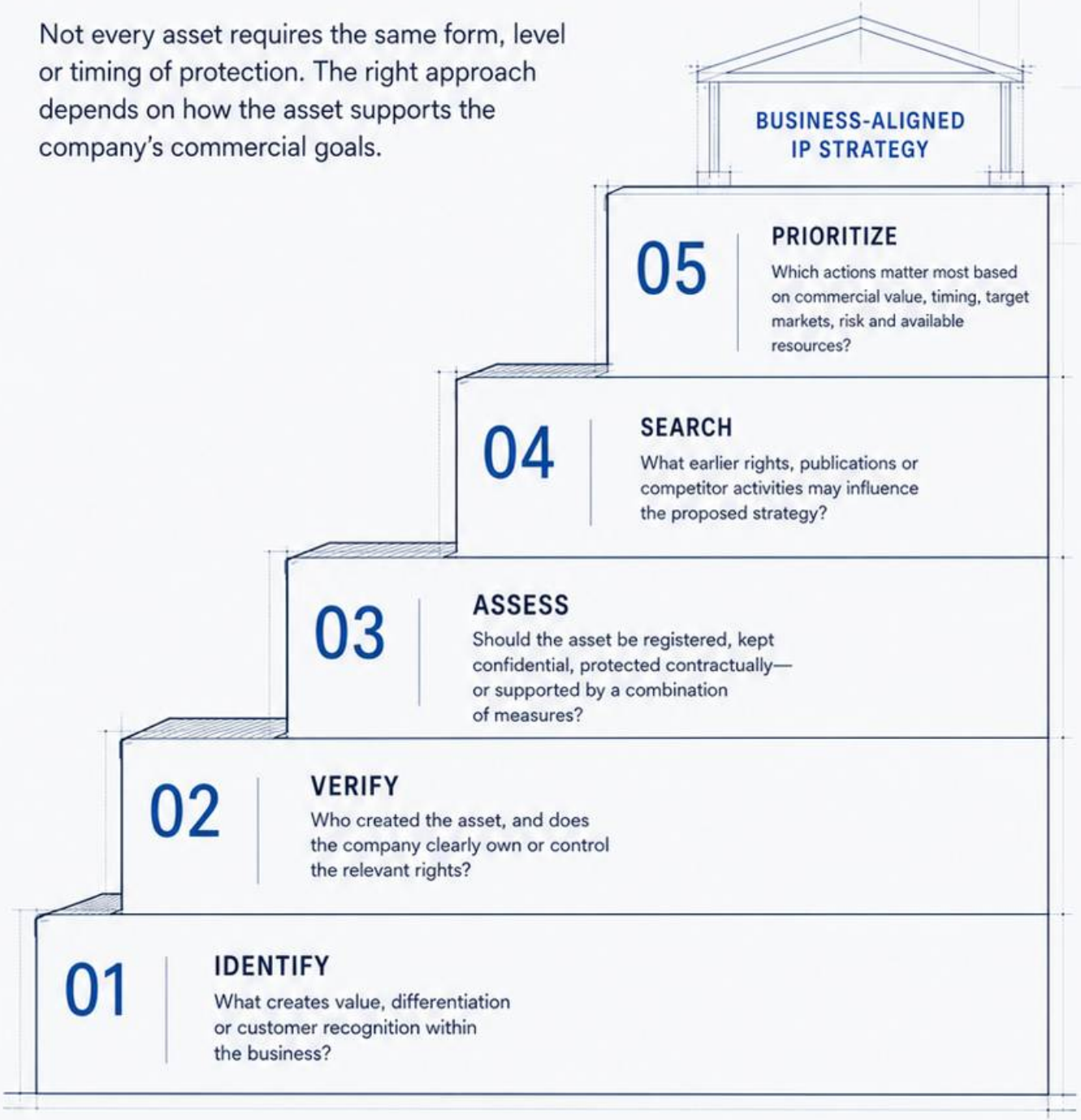
Potential protection: Trade secret measures, confidentiality controls and contracts [3]

KEY INSIGHT

A single product or service may involve several forms of IP at the same time.

Protection Starts with the Business

Not every asset requires the same form, level or timing of protection. The right approach depends on how the asset supports the company's commercial goals.

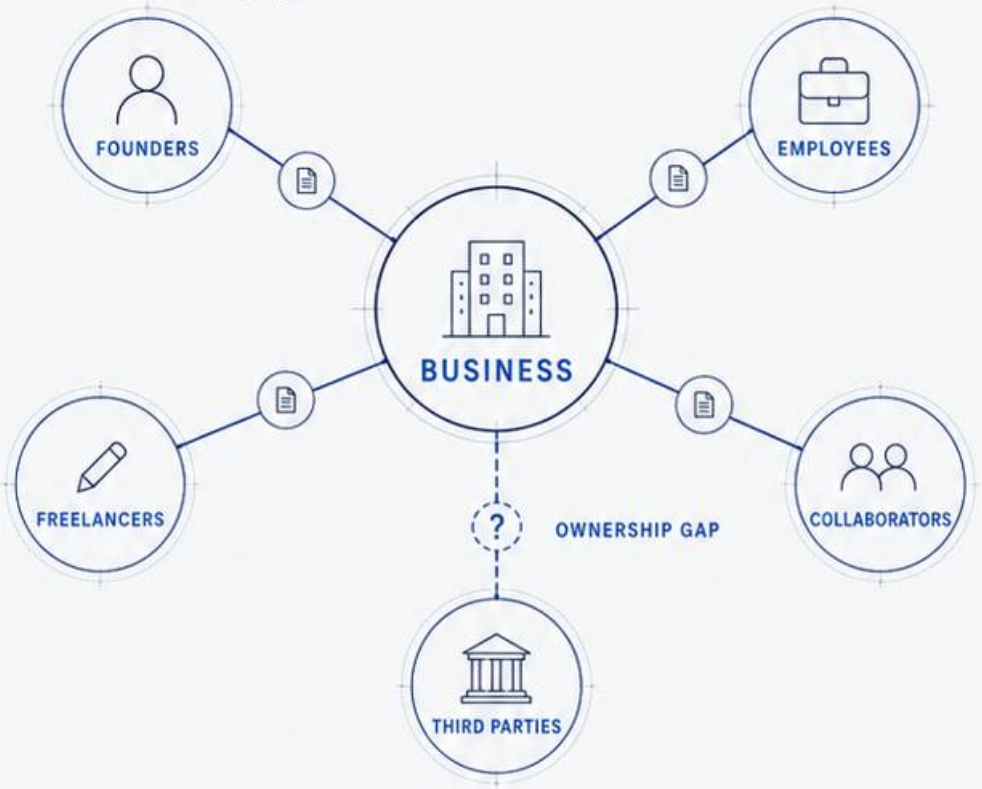


KEY INSIGHT

The objective is not to build the largest possible IP portfolio.
It is to protect the right assets in the right way.

Using an Asset Does Not Always Mean Owning It

A company may rely on a logo, software, product design, technical solution or creative work without owning—or having sufficient rights to use—the underlying IP.



Ownership gaps commonly arise when IP is created by founders before incorporation, by employees or interns, by freelancers or agencies, through joint development projects, or using licensed and third-party materials.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

01 Who created each core asset?

02 What do the relevant contracts provide?

03 Have necessary assignments or licences been documented?

04 How is confidential information shared and controlled?

05 Are development records and contributions properly maintained?

Clear ownership and contractual documentation can become particularly important during registration, licensing, investment, enforcement, due diligence or acquisition discussions.[1]

LEGAL NOTE

Ownership rules differ between jurisdictions and should be reviewed under the applicable law.

Different Decisions Require Different Searches

WHAT DECISION ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE?

01 TRADEMARK CLEARANCE

Can we adopt this brand?

Is the proposed name or sign available, and could its use or registration conflict with earlier rights?

02 PATENTABILITY AND PRIOR-ART SEARCH

Can this invention be protected?

Does the invention appear to meet key patentability requirements, and what earlier technical information may affect the filing strategy?

03 DESIGN SEARCH

Is this appearance sufficiently distinct?

Are there earlier designs that may affect novelty, registration prospects or commercial risk?

04 FREEDOM-TO-OPERATE ANALYSIS

Can we commercialize in this market?

Could the planned manufacture, sale, use, import or other commercial activity conflict with enforceable third-party rights in a relevant market?

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

A PATENTABILITY

Is the invention potentially protectable?

≠

B FREEDOM TO OPERATE

Could commercialization conflict with another party's rights?

An invention may potentially qualify for patent protection while its commercial use could still be affected by another party's broader or earlier rights.

Searches cannot remove every uncertainty. They can, however, help businesses replace assumptions with better-informed decisions.

The Right Decision at the Wrong Time May Be Too Late

01

CONSIDER PROTECTION BEFORE DISCLOSURE

Non-confidential disclosure of an invention or design may affect the availability of protection. The rules and possible exceptions differ between jurisdictions.[1]

02

THINK TERRITORIALLY

IP rights are generally territorial. Protection obtained in one country or region does not automatically create equivalent rights in every other market.[1][2]

03

FOLLOW THE COMMERCIAL ROADMAP

Territorial priorities should reflect where the company intends to sell, manufacture, license, collaborate or face meaningful competition.

A PRACTICAL DECISION SEQUENCE



KEY INSIGHT

IP timing should support the business roadmap—but it should never be left until after key commercial decisions have already been made.

COMMON GAPS TO AVOID

Six Gaps That Can Weaken an IP Foundation

Strong IP foundations are often weakened by overlooked decisions rather than the absence of registrations.

01 LAUNCHING A BRAND WITHOUT CLEARANCE

Discovering a conflict after investing in a name can make rebranding costly and disruptive.

02 DISCLOSING INNOVATION TOO EARLY

Early non-confidential disclosure may reduce the protection options available in certain jurisdictions.

03 ASSUMING THE COMPANY OWNS EVERYTHING IT PAID FOR

Paying for work does not necessarily mean that all related IP rights have been transferred.

04 CONFUSING PATENTABILITY WITH MARKET FREEDOM

Seeking or obtaining a patent does not by itself confirm freedom to operate.

05 TREATING ONE REGISTRATION AS WORLDWIDE PROTECTION

International protection requires deliberate territorial planning.

06 FILING WITHOUT A MANAGEMENT PLAN

IP rights require deadline control, renewals, documentation and periodic strategic review.

KEY INSIGHT

Most IP gaps begin as business decisions that were delayed, undocumented or made without sufficient information.

Your Next 90 Days

A practical IP foundation can begin with three focused phases.

A STRONGER IP FOUNDATION

30

DAYS 1–30

IDENTIFY AND ORGANIZE

- Map the assets connected to your products, services and competitive advantage
- Record who created them and review the relevant agreements
- Identify commercially sensitive information and how it is accessed

60

DAYS 31–60

ASSESS AND PRIORITIZE

- Review existing applications, registrations, contracts and deadlines
- Determine which searches or risk assessments may be needed
- Rank protection priorities by business value, timing and target market

90

DAYS 61–90

ACT AND MANAGE

- Take the selected filing, contractual or confidentiality actions
- Assign internal responsibility for IP decisions and deadlines
- Establish a regular review process as the business evolves

KEY INSIGHT

An effective IP strategy is not created through a single filing.
It develops through informed decisions, clear ownership and consistent management.

TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

Build on Stronger Ground

A strong IP foundation connects innovation, ownership, protection and commercial direction. It helps a growing business make better decisions before launching, entering new markets, working with partners or seeking investment.

The right starting point is not always a filing. It may be identifying an overlooked asset, clarifying ownership, conducting a search or deciding what should remain confidential.



HOW SINCORE IP CAN SUPPORT YOU

Sincore IP supports startups, growing businesses and international partners across the IP lifecycle—from protection and IP intelligence to portfolio management and international coordination.

REQUEST AN IP ASSESSMENT

Receive a practical review of your current IP position and identify the areas that may require attention.

→ EXPLORE MORE: PRACTICAL IP CHECKLISTS

www.sincoreip.com | hello@sincoreip.com

SELECTED RESOURCES

[1] WIPO (2021), Enterprising Ideas: A Guide to Intellectual Property for Startups

[2] World Intellectual Property Organization, Patents

[3] World Intellectual Property Organization, WIPO Guide to Trade Secrets and Innovation

This guide was independently prepared by Sincore IP. The resources listed above were consulted for general legal and conceptual background.

DISCLAIMER

This guide provides general information and does not constitute legal advice. IP requirements, ownership rules and protection options may vary depending on the jurisdiction and circumstances.