

Intellectual property protection is critical for companies that are aiming to create value, especially if they hope to take on investment or IPO in the future.

Do you know what qualifies as intellectual property (IP) in your company? Many companies might not realize that several of their business practices might fall under the definition of intellectual property, beyond innovations and technologies.

While IP can be a complex issue locally, maintaining intellectual property protection gets even more complex when your company starts expanding internationally. In today's world, where technology plays such an important role, startups and companies must be very careful to educate themselves and protect their most valuable assets.

It's vital to have all the information to protect your IP before hiring any international employees.

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## What is considered intellectual property?

According to the [International Trade Administration](#) in the United States, IP includes:

- Works of authorship (books, logos, and software)
- Patents for inventions

- Trademarks
- Designs
- Trade secrets

### **How can you maintain intellectual property protection internationally?**

Locally: The first step is to be the first to register your IP in your local market.

Globally: Subsequently, you must register your IP in any countries where you are currently doing business or intend to do business in the future.

High-risk markets: It is always good to register your IP in countries with a significant counterfeit market.

Some countries have free trade agreements with your local market to protect IP. However, you must file for property in each country to get those protections. For countries in the European Union (EU), you only need to file with the EU — not with each country.

The most important aspect of filing for IP both locally and globally is that you must be the [first to register](#), whether for trademark registration or as an inventor for patent registration.

In many countries, even if you are the first to get your product to market, it won't matter unless you are the first to register for IP for that product, trademark, invention, etc.



### What are your company's intellectual property rights?

Your international IP rights will vary according to each location. After registering IP in your local market, take the time to contact local authorities and learn more about protections in international markets.

Once you have registered your IP in a new market, you must make sure to consult with local authorities as well as civil, administrative, and criminal experts. IP laws in international markets may be complex and subject to constant change.

### What are the benefits of having an intellectual property agreement/corporate intellectual property policy?

Protecting your IP globally can have significant benefits for your company:

- Raising capital: If you have a [startup trying to attract capital](#), investors will want to know that their investment is protected. If your IP is registered, you are more likely to attract investors.
- Increase your time to market: Failing to register your IP while developing it might have serious legal and business consequences when you are finally ready to roll it out into the market. The repercussions may involve a competitor beating you to market or a lawsuit for violating a previously registered IP.

## Why Is Intellectual Property Protection Important for Companies Hiring Internationally?

- Gain market share: In a world where innovation is precious, protecting your IP will help you gain your place in the market and make sure that your competitors can't use it against you.
- Protection from third parties: As your business grows and you start to expand your operations globally, you might start looking for partners in international markets. Working with third parties increases the risk of exposing or even losing your IP.

[In a world where innovation is precious, protecting your IP will help you gain your place in the market and make sure that your competitors can't use it against you. Click To Tweet](#)

### How can you protect your intellectual property while hiring globally?

When companies start to expand, they face challenges, such as registering with local authorities, setting up an international entity, and learning and understanding local IP laws and regulations.

If you want to hire internationally without setting up an entity, your company may decide to work with international contractors or staffing agencies but be prepared for intellectual property protection challenges.

<b>International contractors</b>	Contractors are a viable option for many companies that want to avoid setting up an entity. However, sharing or developing your IP with contractors can be complex. Depending on the country they might claim property over anything they create while working for you.
<b>Outsourcing and staffing agencies</b>	When working with staffing agencies, companies often fail to realize that, while their employees work for them, the agencies are the employers. This means that when your company shares or develops new IP it will be unnecessarily exposed to people outside of your company.

The good news is that among your options for hiring global employees, there is a solution that can help you protect your IP. An Employer of Record (EOR) allows you to hire international employees without setting up an entity while safeguarding your property.

An EOR also enables companies to hire globally by serving as the legal employer, managing payroll, benefits, taxes, and HR functions. The EOR, unlike other hiring models, makes sure that companies retain one hundred percent of the management responsibilities over their international employees.

### **In what other ways can an EOR help with intellectual property protection?**

In addition to allowing you to hire international employees without the need to set up an entity, an EOR provides you with in-country HR experts that can help you navigate the employment law landscape, as well as keep you up to date on any IP laws and changes.

If you want to learn more about the benefits of hiring through an EOR, we invite you to listen to our recent webinar, [“We Love Compliance: Essential Strategies to Reduce Risk While Going Global.”](#)