FAST IP SURVEY

Keeping UK Plc in business – protecting Intellectual Property Rights

FAST
Federation Against
Software Theft

The Digital Economy Act is moving towards being implemented following a number of high profile legal test cases and Judicial Reviews and yet, despite this, around three in five UK businesses are unaware of the legislation and the legal framework currently being rolled-out.

The threat posed to intellectual property remains and according to research conducted by the Federation Against Software Theft, businesses are more than aware of the consequences.

The UK has always valued intellectual property and has recognised the need for those holders of intellectual property to be able to capitalise on their creations.

The quality and value of British design has made the UK synonymous with innovation and quality. However, such innovation is only possible in an environment where intellectual property is properly valued and protected.

With intellectual property theft growing and becoming more ingrained as an organised criminal activity, British industry is losing billions of pounds a year, the Treasury is losing significant tax revenue, consumers are being put at risk and ripped off, and local legitimate businesses are finding it hard to compete with the illegal traders. The impact can thus be measured in terms of economic, consumer and social harm.

To identify the concerns of UK plc, and to measure the impact of intellectual property theft, the Federation Against Software Theft conducted a major survey of over 200 organisations to see just how well they were prepared if their intellectual property was stolen.
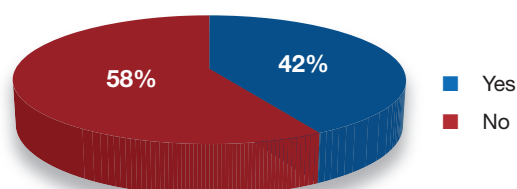
The quality and value of British design has made the UK synonymous with innovation and quality

Business needs educating

In spite of numerous Government led reviews on copyright reform and IP protection, businesses and individuals remain somewhat in the dark as to what their specific rights and protections are.

According to the research the majority of businesses remain in the dark about the government's plans for reforming and enforcing intellectual property rights.

Are you aware of the current Government plans to reform Intellectual Property (IP) Law?
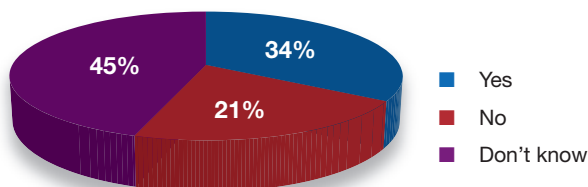

58%   42%

■ Yes
■ No

For small to mid sized businesses this is not good news. Whereas larger software houses often possess the knowledge or the economic clout to seek out and pursue copyright infringers, many SMEs are not in a position to do so. It's therefore important that we empower SMEs to act when their IP is being threatened and make the legislative process as efficient and straightforward as possible to help SMEs to fortify themselves against IP theft.

Ignorance is bliss

A staggering 45 per cent of the sample remained in the dark as to whether their own company had a formal intellectual property strategy in place. Taken together with the 21 per cent that confirmed they had no policies or procedures in place then British business is not best placed to fight back against the IP thieves.
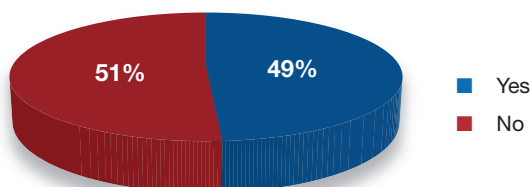
Does your business have an IP strategy?

- 34% Yes
- 21% No
- 45% Don't know

Jobs threat

Just under a half (49 per cent) of UK professionals working in IT are concerned that any potential threat to their organisations' intellectual property would directly lead to the loss of their job.

Do you feel your job would be threathened if your company's IP was targeted by copyright infringers?

- 49% Yes
- 51% No

Furthermore, over half the businesses questioned felt that not enough was being done to protect them against IP infringement or theft.

The Digital Economy Act is moving towards being implemented following a number of high profile legal test cases and Judicial Reviews and yet, despite this, many of the survey participants were unaware of the legislation and the legal framework currently being rolled-out.
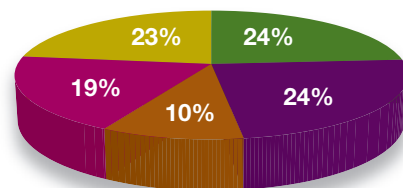
SMEs themselves also feel that not enough is being done to protect them from infringers, with over half the sample stating more should be done (53 per cent)

The priority for government

Over half (58 per cent) of the sample did not know what the Government's current IP strategy was. This represents a welcome decrease from 2011 when the figure stood at 66 per cent, however it is still not pretty reading for government, businesses and employers alike.

When asked what the most important action government could take to protect IP 23 per cent stated it should increase punishments for infringers; 19 per cent felt Trading Standards should have increased powers; 19 per cent felt that ISPs should block copyright infringers

What do you consider to be the most Government measure in protecting IP?

- 24% / 24% / 10% / 19% / 23%

- Force the internet service providers to block copyright infringers
- Create an IP crime unit
- Give powers to industry bodies to act on your behalf
- Empower Trading Standards
- Increase the deterrent level through greater punishments

UK business is saying they are still concerned about the theft of their IP and the majority believe still not enough is being done to protect those rights! This appears to be hitting home with one 'killer fact': roughly half (49 per cent) of respondents felt that their jobs would be threatened if copyright infringers were to target their company's IP, up from 39 per cent in the last year alone. So in spite of numerous Government led reviews on copyright reform and IP protection, businesses and individuals remain in the dark as to what their specific rights and protections are. ■

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About The Federation Against Software Theft

The Federation Against Software Theft (FAST) was formed in 1984. FAST is a
not-for-profit organisation limited by guarantee and wholly owned by its members.
It was the first organisation to protect software publishers' rights and advances
its mission through education, enforcement and policy initiatives, together with
promoting standards and best practice in the professional management of software.
FAST advocates IP for growth.

FAST

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