



Doug Lineberry Discuss Intellectual Property Protections for Small Businesses

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Intellectual Property attorneys Doug Lineberry and Hunter Freeman offered their insights on IP considerations for small businesses in the *Upstate Business Journal* article, “What’s your moat?’ – Why even the smallest startups need to consider intellectual property protections.”

“A lot of people put the cart before the horse, unfortunately,” Lineberry says. “They say ‘I’m going to make some money and then I’ll protect my IP. Sadly, that’s not an option.”

Protecting intellectual property is often an overlooked consideration for inventors and entrepreneurs, but that ignorance can have a cost. In addition, ensuring IP protections before reaching out to investors demonstrates that a startup has good strategic planning and is protecting a competitive advantage.

“If you go to VentureSouth, which is a big [investor] here in the Greenville area, they’re going to ask you what kind of intellectual property protections you have,” Freeman says. “They generally say, ‘What’s your moat?’”

Lineberry says it’s also important to remember that small businesses are the lifeblood of the economy and much innovation happens within such companies. He adds that he and Freeman frequently encounter small businesses that get started and develop products and branding only to find another company has the same name or sign and may have trademark protections. He says that, while they work hard to educate people on IP issues, businesses and individuals have to engage in a certain amount of self-help.

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