



IPAS 2018: why IP literacy matters

The second annual Intellectual Property Awareness Summit is being held at Columbia University in New York on November 29. Bruce Berman, founder and chairman of the Center for IP Awareness, which is hosting the event, gives an insight into this year's theme

Barney Dixon reports

What is IPAS?

The Intellectual Property Awareness Summit (IPAS) is an annual gathering of IP organisations, holders, educators, creators and thought-leaders who believe that IP rights are frequently misunderstood and have come to be seen by many as unfair and unnecessary. IPAS 2018 is open to any interested party.

What is the goal of IPAS 2018?

At IPAS 2017 in Chicago, participants identified that there is a significant disconnect between how people see and use IP.

The problem is a result of confusion about why IP rights exist and who they benefit. A combination of poor enforcement, vested interests and inaccurate media coverage appear to be responsible for this false impression.

At IPAS 2018, we will 'dig down' and start to identify what a set of basic IP awareness standards needs to look like for various audiences. What are they? How are they best communicated? Information moves faster today and is more accessible than ever.

Many businesses and individuals believe that virtually everything accessible is available to use, and ideas are there for the taking. The theme of IPAS 2018 is 'IP literacy in a digital world'.

Some US lawmakers and courts have over-reacted to patent holders who wish to licence their rights or need to enforce them. This has rendered many patents valueless.

Some people believe that infringing IP causes no major harm and is a part of modern life; and that the penalties for theft, if caught, are an insufficient deterrent.

A basic awareness of what IP rights are and do, and what is appropriate IP behavior, is something everyone can benefit from—and it should come from a trusted source.



Why is IP awareness important?

The lines of IP ownership are frequently misunderstood. Most people do not realise that as developed nations we rely heavily on the creative output of individuals and businesses for jobs. Intangible assets like IP rights have become the major coin of the realm. Without a system that supports their meaning, competition and investment are undermined. This enables nations like China, whose goal is to succeed the US as innovation leader.

China is the world's most active patent filer and is number two in the US. Its investment in technology has quadrupled over the past twenty years and will continue to grow.

Who needs to be better informed?

We need to start with IP professionals. They must recognise there is a problem outside of the IP community and even within it. There are intelligent people who believe that IP theft is not stealing. Then, we need to identify the key audiences for better IP understanding—college students, educators, business schools, lawmakers, K-12 teachers, parents, inventors and other creators, investors, journalists. What three or four basic IP principles do they need to know? Why? When should they be imparted? How can they be reinforced?

What will be a likely takeaway from IPAS 2018?

We have to work harder and smarter to help business and individuals, including students, parents and government, understand why IP

rights exist and who they benefit. We can begin with the historic benefits of successful inventions and inventors, such as Edison and Tesla, and people like songwriters and designers, but it is vital that the message be relevant to the world we live in today and that it resonates with young people. Millennials, for example, have grown up in a digital world.

It is only natural that they are less patient about recognising the rights of content owners, brands and technology businesses. IPAS 2018 will look at how uncertainty about IP ownership and inappropriate behavior impacts everyone and how it can be improved.

For information about IPAS 2018, including the programme and participants, visit www.ipawarenesssummit.com. To learn more about Center for IP Understanding, go www.understandingip.org.

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