



3 Tips To Protect Your Bottom Line from Copyright Infringement

Why CFOs need to care about copyright

Digital transformation continues to be a leading trend for CFOs, with innovative technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and predictive analytics becoming essential. According to a recent survey by Gartner,¹ 79% of CFOs stated that leading digital transformation efforts is their top area of focus, and this aligns with increased interest in AI.

AI is poised to have a significant impact on industries around the globe, offering unprecedented opportunities to enhance efficiency, productivity, and innovation, but this powerful upside must be balanced against the potential risks.

AI is also having an impact on the way that users interact with content, adding a new layer of complexity to copyright compliance. Copyrighted works are not only implicated in the training of AI systems, but also end user workflows including summarization of collections of articles, interrogation of documents for insights, automation of literature screening, and the creation of visualizations of content sets. In the absence of an appropriate license, these activities create copyright infringement risk.

Smart corporate copyright strategies are multifunctional, typically involving finance, IT, human resources, and legal departments—but CFOs' desks are increasingly the convergence points as copyright-protection costs work their way into corporate budgets.

Here are three tips to help you control costs and reduce your company's exposure to potentially costly infringement suits (and the associated harm to reputation) as you incorporate new technologies and position it for growth. Savvy copyright management also helps boost productivity by moving licensing seamlessly into employees' workflows and decreasing the time spent pursuing copyright permissions. In addition, copyright protection practices can help your company act as an ethical corporate citizen, respecting others' intellectual property as it expects others to respect yours.

1

Extend Your Company's Employee Training To Include Copyright Compliance

First, the bad news: with few exceptions, your company is liable for any copyright infringement by its employees in the course of their work. The good news? Copyright awareness is increasing among companies and employees, and that recognition is the first step towards change.

These days more companies are taking inventory of their copyright-protected intellectual property, such as manuals, instructions, and software code. As they itemize their IP assets, many discover the extent to which they make use of others' IP. For most employees, IP from external sources—online text, images, videos, and audio—is information that the digital workplace renders effortless to share, even when it is legally prohibited.

Talk with your company's human resources or training director about adding a section to employee training to cover copyright responsibilities when using and sharing your IP as well as third-party content such as journal articles, blog posts, images, and videos. What is and is not allowed? Educate your company's employees so they know the answers.

2

Secure Usage Rights that Are Consistent and Available Companywide

Assess your company's licensing rights with your CIO or information manager. Do the agreements provide consistent rights to reuse articles, images, and other content for all divisions, locations, and employees? Is it easy for employees to use information responsibly and to avoid infringing? Licensing that's simple for staff to understand saves the time that can be wasted chasing down permissions.

Remember that in addition to written content, employees share images, video, and audio content, much of which is copyright-protected. How is your company addressing its non-text licensing needs?

Examine whether your company purchases licenses from different sources, such as individual publishers, content aggregator services, document deliverers, and rights brokers. If it does, are the license rights consistent? That is, some rights allow employees to reuse select content in ways that other agreements prohibit. Look for consistency. Be sure limits are clear.

Global copyright usage can become complex. Not all licenses provide global coverage, and companies need to be aware that the countries in which they operate all maintain local copyright laws and requirements. International companies need to determine whether their licenses cover rights for content use by employees in multiple countries.

3

Implement a Companywide Copyright Policy

Talk with your corporate counsel to ensure your company has a copyright policy in effect. Be sure the policy is communicated to employees. Handbooks that languish on corporate shelves are no defense against infringement claims.

The first step is to review existing policies to ensure they address the use and distribution of your company's IP. Educate employees on which materials are copyright-protected. The second step is just as important: be sure your policy tackles the use of third-party IP. It's common for corporate copyright policies to focus solely on protecting their own IP without addressing the use of other copyright holders' works.

Need assistance? We can help.

We offer complimentary resources such as a sample copyright policy and videos to help workers understand how copyright affects them. Of course, we also offer proven licensing solutions that provide consistent, company-wide content usage rights for the world's most soughtafter journals, books, blogs, movies, images, and more. Licenses that make compliance easy whether your company has one office or operates around the world.

¹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-01-25-gartner-survey-shows-that-leading-ransformation-is-the-top-priority-for-cfos-in-2024>

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