

# Intellectual property vital to imagining a better future for SA's youth

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The theme of this year's World Intellectual Property (IP) Day is 'IP and Youth: Innovating for a Better Future' - a topic which is particularly relevant in the South African context, where the latest statistics show that nearly one in every three young people under the age of 35 years are unemployed.



Source: [Flxabay](#)

Significantly, IP is critical to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, enabling young entrepreneurs to profit from their work, and stimulating the launch of new start-ups and businesses which provide employment opportunities. Without legal protection for their ideas, entrepreneurs and innovators would not be able to reap the full benefit of their inventions or recoup their investments or worse someone can steal their innovation. This, in turn, would discourage the research and development activities that are essential to the development of new products and services.

Unfortunately, however, a general lack of awareness and insufficient information continue to prevent our youth from realising the full value of IP as an intangible asset for their business.

In South Africa, there are four IP domains administered by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC): trademarks, industrial designs, copyright, and patents. Trademarks are used to protect unique brand identifiers such as company names, slogans, and logos, where industrial designs refer to aesthetic or functional designs. Both must be registered with the CIPC to safeguard your commercial rights to your work.

By contrast, copyright relates to rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works, such as a book, music, painting, film or software. This applies automatically without requiring registration.

Lastly, a patent is an IP right granted for the invention of a new and innovative product or process. To file a complete patent application, the inventor should consult a professional patent attorney to ensure that the application satisfies the necessary requirements, and to submit and prosecute the application on your behalf. The three criteria for a patent are novelty or originality; an inventive step, which would not be obvious to a person skilled in that art; and industrial applicability.



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IP management and support is a key component of the Innovation Hub's various programmes, where we match innovators with mentors and IP lawyers to guide them in enhancing their business' value proposition through securing the necessary IP protections. In this way, we have assisted hundreds of start-ups in securing their IP as part of their business incubation process, enabling them to successfully launch new businesses or make a more compelling case to secure funding from other government entities and financial institutions. Yet much more needs to be done.

As government works to create a robust enabling environment that will allow all parties in the innovation ecosystem to thrive, we need to break down the silos between different departments and entities and implement a one-stop-shop system with a holistic support mechanism for innovators and entrepreneurs. Additionally, we need to enhance public education on IP, and ensure that we provide clear, full, and adequate information for innovators and creators to protect their inventions and ideas.

Ultimately, World IP Day represents the perfect opportunity to celebrate youth-led innovation and creativity, and to draw attention to this vital, yet often ignored component of business development. Our youth represent an incredible, untapped source of ingenuity that need to be encouraged to take charge of their future through securing their rights and safeguarding their ideas and innovations.

By equipping the next generation with the knowledge and tools needed to drive positive change, we can finally move the needle on the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and carve sustainable pathways towards a better future for all.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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