

Tips for the virgin exhibitor

 By [Sajidha Gamiel](#)

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So, you've finally taken the leap and decided to exhibit your product designs, but you're worried about copycats lurking at the exhibition waiting to pounce on your prized creations. Here are a few helpful pointers to help you navigate your way through the intellectual property dilemma many designers face during exhibitions.

Design protection

Is your design something new which has never been revealed to the public anywhere in the world? If so, it may qualify for design protection and we would strongly recommend that you consider applying for a design registration prior to exhibiting your products. Don't worry, if you're pressed for time and will be exhibiting, say, tomorrow, you can still apply for a design registration six months from the date that you first revealed your design products.

The name of your products, ie. your brand, or even your business name may be quite distinctive. Brand names, especially those that are catchy and inventive, are likely to be remembered by attendees once they have left an exhibition. Your potential customers will research your business and products online. Therefore, you need to consider registration of domain names that correspond with your business name and brands and thereafter set-up a website.

Ensure that any documents you have that prove your intellectual property rights are easily accessible. Having a long paper trail can help resolve any potential disputes easily and cost effectively. For example, your design may be automatically protected by copyright. Therefore, you need to ensure that you date and save any designs that you originally create on paper.

Strict policies

Have a strict "NO PHOTOGRAPHS POLICY" at your stand. Put up a big sign saying "NO PHOTOGRAPHS" and try to implement this at all times. No exceptions. A quick photograph using a cell phone camera can be sent around the world in an instant. If you have a website on which pictures of your products are available, it is advisable to use watermarks and copyright notices to deter any would-be copycats.

Lastly, make lots of money at the exhibition and enjoy the fruits of your creativity!

Adams & Adams is the official legal advisor to the Design Indaba and sponsor of the Design Indaba Expo Innovation Award.

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