

Who said IP wasn't meant to be easy?

review by Malcolm McBratney

Easy IP: How to use the law to protect your money-making ideas

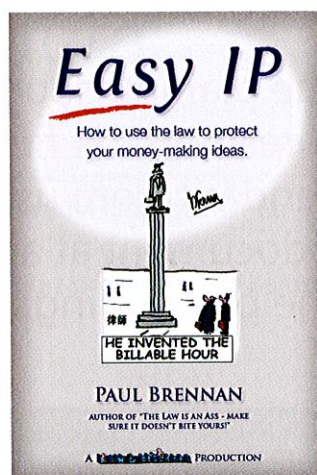
by Paul Brennan

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In 1972 an Australian inventor and electrician named Frank Bannigan built himself a four-outlet electrical power board to assist him with testing his electrical inventions.

He found the power board so useful that he decided to manufacture and sell power boards through his company, 'Kambrook'. Sales soared and the company went on to become a successful manufacturer of electrical appliances and an Australian household name.

However, Bannigan did not patent his invention and competitors soon copied and adapted his original creation. In later years he bemoaned his loss, saying "I've probably lost millions of dollars in royalties alone. Whenever I go into a department store and see the wide range of power-boards on offer, it always comes back to haunt me." If only Bannigan had known then the legal basics of intellectual property law...

In 'Easy IP: How to use the law to protect your money-making ideas', practising IP lawyer Paul Brennan sets out to ensure that future inventors, innovators and entrepreneurs do not repeat Bannigan's mistake. This humorous, conversational and, most favourably, short book introduces readers to the five types of IP law (copyright, patents, trade marks, designs and trade secrets), highlights some common IP disputes and finally discusses possible avenues of recourse.

One of the most common problems I come across is that individuals and organisations don't know what they don't know when it comes to IP. This often means they seek advice when it is too late and the proverbial horse has bolted. If people were to read Paul Brennan's book before they embarked on their inventive or creative journeys they would better understand the importance of IP and what steps they need to take to protect it before it is too late.

The book is well set out and easy to read. Its humorous style keeps the reader engaged and it is not a "dry" legal textbook. The cartoons throughout the book (also drawn by the author) also serve to break up the text and keep readers interested.

All in all, 'Easy IP' is an excellent introduction to IP for the non-lawyer or a lawyer with no exposure to IP. There would be fewer Kambrook-style losses of valuable IP if more people read 'Easy IP' before starting out on their IP adventures.

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