From brand to protection: what founders need to know about IP

Key takeaways, July 2026

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Introduction

On 23 June 2026, Ashfords Commercial and IP team hosted an Intellectual Property and Brand Workshop in partnership with FinTech West.

The session brought together founders, directors, investors and advisers to explore the role that brand and intellectual property play in supporting business growth, attracting investment and creating long-term value.

The event opened with insights from Stuart Harrison, who shared FinTech West's own experience of developing, protecting and evolving its brand. Suzie Miles, Partner at Ashfords, then led a fireside chat with Ingrid Anusic and Liz Richards, discussing the importance of building credibility, trust and visibility as businesses scale.

Chris Fotheringham, Associate in our Commercial and IP team, followed with a practical overview of intellectual property, highlighting the importance of protecting and owning key assets to support growth, investment readiness and future commercial opportunities. The session concluded with an interactive workshop, where attendees applied the key principles through a series of case study discussions.

Here are some of the key takeaways from the event.

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Fireside chat

Suzie Miles, Ashfords with Liz Richards and Ingrid Anusic, FinTech West

Suzie Miles chaired a fireside chat with Ingrid Anusic, CMO at FinTech West and Liz Richards, COO at FinTech West. Drawing on their extensive experience, they shared insights into building, evolving and transforming brands through periods of growth. Here are the key takeaways from that discussion.

- A strong, authentic narrative builds credibility long before formal funding or acquisition discussions begin.
- Acquisition decisions are strategic. Brand strength matters, but it must support a clear commercial growth story.
- Founders should build with the future in mind. Acquisition readiness often starts years before any transaction takes place.
- Acquirers buy people, culture and expertise as much as products and technology.
- Trust is earned through consistent delivery and operational reliability, not marketing alone.
- A brand is the sum of every customer experience and interaction, not simply a visual identity.
- Brand value may be intangible, but its loss has very tangible commercial consequences.
- Legal protection should be viewed as part of business growth strategy, not an administrative exercise.
- Investors see strong IP protection as evidence of good governance and long-term value creation.

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Protecting your brand

Chris Fotheringham explored the importance of protecting your brand

Chris Fotheringham provided a practical overview of trade marks, branding and intellectual property, highlighting why businesses should view brand protection as an integral part of their growth strategy rather than an afterthought. The session explored how founders can build brands that are commercially valuable, legally protectable and attractive to investors, while avoiding some of the common pitfalls encountered by growing businesses.

- **Your brand is a valuable business asset –** it represents your reputation, builds customer trust and can contribute significantly to business value.
- **Build a brand that is distinctive and scalable –** choose something memorable, protectable and capable of supporting future growth.
- **Protect your brand early –** leaving trade mark protection until after launch can create unnecessary risk and expense.
- **Carry out clearance searches before launch –** identifying existing rights early can help avoid disputes and costly rebrands.
- **Registering a trade mark provides stronger protection –** registration can make enforcement easier and create a valuable commercial asset.
- **Think intentionally from the outset –** trade mark protection is territorial, so businesses should consider future markets and expansion plans early.
- **Ensure your business owns its IP –** clear ownership of its intellectual property (e.g. its brand and software) is essential for the company's growth and investment readiness.
- **Investors look for well managed IP –** strong protection, clear ownership and reduced legal risk can increase business value and support future investment opportunities.

Key contacts

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FinTech West

Suzie Miles
Partner, Ashfords

T: (0)117 321 8058

E: s.miles@ashfords.co.uk

learn more

Chris Fotheringham
Associate, Ashfords

T: (0)1392 333680

E: c.fotheringham.@ashfords.co.uk

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Stuart Harrison
Director, FinTech West

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