

..... is Under Investigation for Trade Secret Theft

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Many well-known companies have been on the radar in recent times because of trade secret thefts. Large multinational companies can be razed to the ground with just one intellectual property theft case. Take for example Barnes and Noble who were sued by Amazon because it had infringed upon Amazon's patented one-click purchase system. Amazon has eventually dominated the entire online book business system.

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Paul & Paul's professional team of litigators and prosecutors represent both plaintiffs and defendants in all matters pertaining to patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets”

Alex R. Sluzas, Esq.

According to the EEA (Economic Espionage Act) of 1996 stealing of trade secrets is a violation of Federal Criminal Statutes. If found guilty under this act you could face 10 years in prison or more and a fine of up to \$5,00,000 if you are a company and a fine of \$2,50,000 if you are an individual. You are proven guilty if:

You stole, attempted to steal, or conspired to steal with someone else while being an employee of the company.

You stole a trade secret.

You stole anything related to a product that was produced for or placed in interstate or foreign commerce. This includes nearly everything.

You stole knowing that the object of crime was a trade secret.

You stole being fully aware that your offense could injure the owner of the trade secret.

You stole with the intent to reap economic benefits other than the owner.

Uber for example has been in the news lately as it was accused by Google's autonomous vehicle subsidiary Waymo of [trade secret theft](#). Anthony Levandowski a former employee of Waymo illegally downloaded 14,000 technical files before he left to start his own company Otto- which was later acquired by Uber. Levandowski was paid \$700 million and was in charge of the autonomous vehicle program (a crucial program for Uber's future)

The case has been referred to the U.S Attorney's office by U.S District Judge William Alsup for possible criminal action. But as Judge Alsup noted to Waymo attorney's when making the referral, "You have one of the strongest records I've seen for a long time of anybody doing something that bad."

Uber was forced to fire Levandowski on May 30, who if convicted could face up to 15 years in jail time. The case is so bad that even as Uber is trying to distance itself from Levandowski by claiming that it did not have any knowledge of the engineer stealing the 14,000 files it could still be looking at a huge lawsuit. Levandowski could become a witness against Uber claiming it was very well aware of what was going on.

This is one more blow to Uber's long list of problems from sexual harassment, firing of employees and the internal turmoil that's been going on for a while now.

Though it's unclear if the U.S Attorney will take up the case or if Uber can be proven guilty of the accusations it's clearly bad publicity for Uber who is in the soup lately for not only trade secret theft but also of bad public opinion. To top that a number of its top executives have departed in 2017 alone.

But, Uber is not the only one suffering from an intellectual property dispute. About 80% of today's companies (both national and international) are caught up in some sort of intellectual property dispute. Take the case of Chinese bike-sharing company YouOn. Days before it could start its public offering of shares in the Shanghai Stock Exchange it was forced to stop as an independent inventor had filed a patent infringement suit against it.

Whatever the case maybe it is important that a company protects its intellectual property. If you fire an employee make sure he loses all his rights to access company data immediately. This will prevent a bereft employee from stealing your IP.

A study conducted by the US Department of Justice in 2004, recorded over 8000 cases of various forms of infringement. And most cases perpetrators who have been found guilty have got some form of jail time. Hopefully, stringent policies and laws will deter this kind of cases in the future.

Procedures and policies which would prevent this from happening must be strictly enforced. If you or your company has been a victim of an intellectual property theft then you must contact an intellectual property attorney who could guide you through the various intellectual property laws. If you suspect IP theft give [Paul & Paul](#) a call at 866-975-7231 for a free consultation.

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Alex R. Sluzas, Esq.
Paul & Paul Intellectual Property Attorneys
215-568-4900
email us here

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