

## RECAPPING THE 2024 BAR YEAR AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

*By Danielle M. Parks*

And just like that, we are halfway through the bar year. I am not surprised the first half of the bar year flew by as the YLD has been busy!

It kicked off with our annual Welcome Back Happy Hour and Diverse Law Student Reception. Both events were at new venues, filled with attendees from the YLD and the ACBA at large. The Education Committee kicked off the year with Financial Planning To-Dos and To-Don'ts for Today's Attorney, presented by Tim Cummings of Compass Rose Financial. Members of the YLD and ACBA played a competitive and exciting tournament of pickleball.

The Council also celebrated the start of the bar year with their annual Council dinner, honoring immediate past YLD Chair Tara Sease.

This year two YLD members were elected to the Board of Governors. Taylor Gillian was elected as a Board



*The first half of the bar year ended with the YLD Holiday Party. We packed Talia full of YLD members as well as members from the ACBA and the Board of Governors.*

*Pictured Above: Timothy Cummings of Compass Rose Financial, YLD Chair Danielle Parks, YLD Immediate-Past Chair Tara Sease, ACBA Immediate-Past President Marla Presley, YLD Chair-Elect Rebeca Himena Miller, and Jessie Rawlings, Liz Parker and Bob Raver of RRP Law.*



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# POINT OF LAW

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# WRAPPING UP KINDNESS: THE IMPACT OF THE 2024 CHILDREN'S GIFT DRIVE

By Erin K. Volz

Once again, the Annual Young Lawyer's Division (YLD) Children's Gift Drive and Stocking Stuffer Event has shattered the record set just last year. Under the leadership of Chair McCall Chafin, and the support of the YLD Public Service Committee Chairs, along with dedicated members of the Bar Leadership Initiative Class Members and Co-Chairs of the Gift Drive Committee—Zoe Crawford, Samantha Thompson, Nathaniel Ecker, Antonio Bonnetty, Ashley Morgan, Jake Noble, and myself—we have made this year's gift drive our most successful yet, reaching more children and families than ever before.

The YLD was able to support 18 community partners in Allegheny County to provide gifts for unprivileged children. The entire Bar Leadership Initiative Class worked to assemble a virtual Angel Tree, which introduced a new online platform to the gift drive this year. The children were then sponsored by members of the Bar Association, including law firms, judges, individual attorneys, and supporters from outside of the Bar Association, such as corporate sponsors. The sponsors purchased gifts to be shipped directly to these organizations in time for their holiday parties.

In total, the gift drive served 1,262 children this year, the largest number of children served to date! Due to the generous sponsors, each child received 1-3 gifts, amounting to approximately 3,500 gifts purchased for this season.

In addition to the purchased gifts, the YLD was able to participate with

several shelters at their holiday parties. Several sponsors purchased granola bars, cookies, juice boxes, hats, gloves, scarves, chapstick, fidget toys, and toothbrushes and toothpaste, which were stuffed into stockings by bar association volunteers on the morning of Saturday, December 7 in the Koppers Building. The volunteer turnout was truly remarkable, with 577 stockings stuffed and prepared for delivery.

A record-setting year would have been incomplete without the heartfelt delivery of these stockings, thanks to our volunteer Santas and their helpers! Also on Saturday, December 7, teams of volunteer Santas and YLD members spread holiday cheer by delivering stockings to participating shelters, bringing joy and smiles to children across Allegheny County.

In every aspect of the gift drive, records were set this year! From the most children to the most gifts, to the best volunteers, the YLD was able to make its biggest impact ever during its largest public service event of the year.

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“There was nothing more touching than when Santa enters the building and the children immediately rush to him to ask for a hug, as well as the children waiting in anticipation to receive their gifts.” -

**Sojourner House MOMS**

“We cannot thank you enough for what you do for our children. It is so touching to me every year (and I have been here 16 years).” -

**Sojourner House**





**TOP LEFT:** A record number of stockings were stuffed and prepared for delivery during the Gift Drive.



**TOP RIGHT:** Volunteers and YLD members deliver stockings to a local shelter. The Gift Drive served 300 more children compared to the previous year.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** BLI members Zoe Crawford, Ashley Morgan, Nate Ecker, Erin Volz, Samantha Thompson, Jake Noble and Antonio Bonnetty pause for a photo with the YLD Children's Gift Drive Chair McCall Chafin.

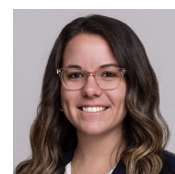


**"The ACBA YLD's efforts have made an incredible impact on our community, and we are deeply grateful for your generosity and support. Thanks to your organization's donations, we are able to provide toys to over 200 youth in our programs. For many of our kids, these gifts represent more than just presents—they are a source of joy, hope, and a reminder that people care. Without your contributions, some of our children might not have had presents to open this holiday season, and it truly means the world to us to be able to give them that experience." - Boys and Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania**

An extra special thanks to our Gift Drive Chair, McCall Chafin, who managed to take on this role with exceptional leadership and organizational skills, diligent coordination, and dedication, making this event possible. We could not have achieved such an incredible outcome without you!

To each and every volunteer, sponsor, Santa, and YLD member, I'd like to extend the sincerest thank you on behalf of our co-chairs and fellow BLI Class Members for helping us set records. In speaking to our community partners and the volunteers that

delivered stockings and attended the holiday parties, your efforts this holiday season truly changed the lives of so many children. There is no greater gift than giving back and I am so honored to have been a part of the gift drive's most impactful year yet. ■



**Erin K. Volz** is an associate at Very Law and a member of the Allegheny County Bar Association Bar Leadership Initiative class of 2024-2025. She can be reached at [ev@verylaw.com](mailto:ev@verylaw.com).



# WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR? — THE BLI CLASS OF 2025 CLASS PROJECT

By Giulia R. Schaub

Every year, the Young Lawyers Division Bar Leader Initiative (BLI) members design, develop, and execute a class project that supports and enriches the Pittsburgh community. This year, the BLI Class of 2025 opted to create their project to support a special group of all our neighborhoods whose needs are often overlooked: refugees and immigrants. This is why they chose to partner with Hello Neighbor, a nonprofit organization that provides resources and guidelines to recently resettled individuals and families and assists them in becoming acclimated to their new life in the United States.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to inspire contentment and confidence within the newest Pittsburghers by providing them with housing, medical services, basic food and necessities, employment opportunities, cultural orientation, English language classes, and more. By ensuring a warm welcome from the moment they arrive in Western Pennsylvania, Hello Neighbor allows displaced persons the best opportunity to feel safe and welcome in their new homes, amongst the friendliest of neighbors.

The project is aptly titled "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" and seeks to support Hello Neighbor's objectives in various ways, while also intending to introduce our local community members to the various cultures within Pittsburgh's largest refugee and immigrant populations. "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" is an event that will feature an international short film(s) that reflect the cultures of these populations. Additionally, attendees



will enjoy foods and drinks from these same cultures, all featured by culturally diverse Pittsburgh restaurants. Such a reception shall result in recently displaced persons comingling with individuals local to Pittsburgh and the United States, in hopes of exposing each other to their respective worlds for their own enrichment and expanding their neighborhoods beyond geographical bounds. Indeed, Hello Neighbor intends to assist displaced persons in attending the event themselves so that they may connect with the Pittsburgh legal community on a personal level.

As one can imagine, relocating to the United States is an arduous and daunting process, and the challenges these individuals face often present further uncertainty and fear. This

prompted the BLI Class to work with Hello Neighbor to further its initiative to ease the stress and burden of arriving to the United States under such circumstances—all while getting the local Pittsburgh community involved. Hello Neighbor identifies as a "Resettlement Agency" and offers a Reception and Placement program, which begins with picking up our new neighbors from the Pittsburgh International Airport and helping them settle into their new neighborhoods. From there, Hello Neighbor offers a Mentorship Program, which pairs trained local mentors with refugees and immigrants to participate in social activities, in order to encourage a safe space to ask questions and seek advice

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# THE STRUGGLES OF SMALL BUSINESSES WITH FOREIGN INFRINGEMENT ON ONLINE MARKETPLACES

By Rebeca Himena Miller



In today's increasingly globalized electronic commerce (e-commerce) environment, small businesses are flourishing through online marketplace platforms like Amazon.com, eBay.com, Alibaba.com, AliExpress.com, Temu.com, Etsy.com, Shopify.com and others. These platforms provide access to a vast global customer base, enabling even the smallest of enterprises to reach consumers worldwide. This immense opportunity, however, comes with significant challenges, particularly when it comes to protecting intellectual property (IP) rights. Small businesses are often struggling to combat foreign infringement, where counterfeit goods, unauthorized listings, and IP violations are rampant.

## How big is the growth of online marketplace platforms?

E-commerce platforms have democratized business opportunities, allowing small businesses to scale their operations by reaching international markets. According to a report by eMarketer, global e-commerce sales reached \$5.8 trillion in 2023, with online marketplaces being a dominant force.<sup>1</sup> By 2027, the growth of online marketplaces is projected to surpass \$8 trillion.<sup>2</sup> Amazon alone accounts for a significant portion of global retail sales, and platforms like eBay, Alibaba, and Temu facilitate access to markets across Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

While these platforms offer immense opportunities, they also pose

a significant challenge when it comes to small businesses protecting intellectual property. As these businesses expand internationally, they often face an influx of counterfeit products or unauthorized resellers on these platforms. Foreign infringement, particularly from sellers who may be in regions with weaker IP enforcement mechanisms, exacerbates these challenges.

## What is the nature of foreign infringement?

Foreign infringement occurs when counterfeiters or unauthorized sellers in different countries exploit gaps in intellectual property protection to sell fake or pirated products on online platforms. Often, these infringing goods are sold at lower prices, directly competing with the legitimate products from small businesses. And the problem is multi-faceted.

Counterfeiters replicate products, branding, or logos and sell them as genuine on the same online platforms. These counterfeits may look like the authentic products, making it hard for consumers to distinguish between the two.

Some sellers acquire products in bulk, often from legitimate sources, and resell them on online platforms without permission. This can create pricing conflicts and undermine the original business's ability to control distribution.

While online platforms have procedures for reporting IP violations,

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member and Jesse Exilus was elected as Treasurer. Both members started their terms in July 2024.

As the seasons changed from summer to fall, YLD members put on their Halloween-best to bar hop through the North Shore for the annual Booery Tour. The popular Scary Legal Issues CLE returned. The newest members of the YLD, the newly barred attorneys, met for the Passing the Bar Bash to celebrate their milestone accomplishments of graduating law school and passing the bar. The Wills for Heroes program continued to serve our community's first responders by providing basic estate planning.

This year's Bar Leadership Initiative class hit the ground running. The class has dived in to learning more about

the YLD by attending a wide variety of events and meetings. Currently, the class is working on their class project to benefit Hello Neighbor, a nonprofit organization aimed at assisting refugees and immigrants who have settled in the Pittsburgh area.

The Communications Committee published the first Point of Law for the bar year. The Committee continued to maintain the Division's social media accounts, which has seen an influx of engagement with YLD and ACBA members.

And then the YLD's largest public service project kicked off, the Children's Gift Drive. Headed by our own Mrs. Claus, McCall Chafin, the Drive's buying process underwent some massive changes to better serve

our community partners and make the buying process easier for our sponsors. McCall and her committee's hard work, along with the support of the YLD and ACBA, enabled 1,262 children to receive gifts and 18 community partners to provide 577 stockings to children. Members gathered on a cold Saturday morning to stuff the stockings in record time.

Another accomplishment for the Division's has been the establishment of the Law Student Committee. The Committee is aimed at increasing law student involvement with the YLD and ACBA as well as providing programming and events geared toward law students. In past years, law student membership was merged with YLD membership in one committee,

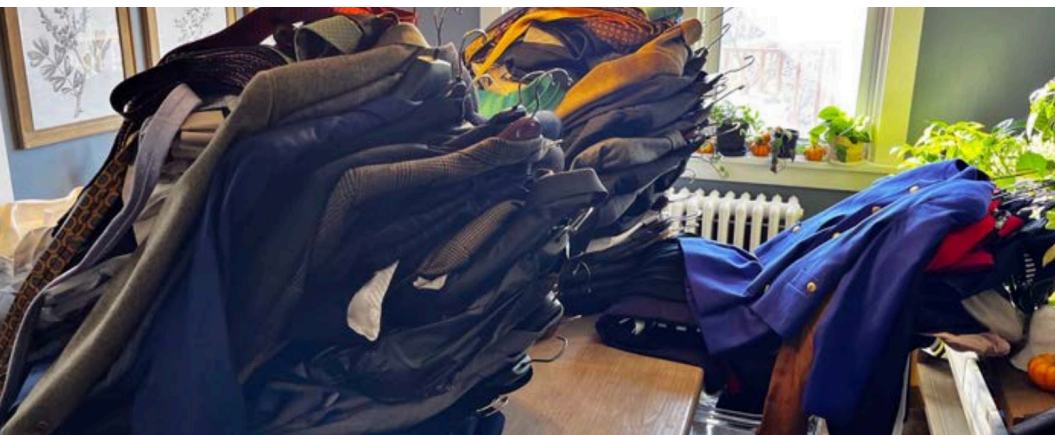


*The new Law Student Committee's professional clothing drive was a major success as it yielded around 400 donations to benefit the career closets at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and the Thomas R. Kline School of Law of Duquesne University.*

*The collection featured roughly:*

- 120 men's suits
- 100 blouses
- 80 suit dresses and women's suits
- 80 dress shirts
- Multiple pants and blazers

*Special thanks to attorney Victor Pribanic, who personally donated 37 men's suits and blazers.*



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**“I was blown away by the participation we got. We had some really generous participants.” -**

**Taylor Gillan,  
Clothing Drive Chair**

the former Membership Outreach Committee. In the reorganization of the YLD this year, the Law Student Committee was created to better meet the needs of law students.

As members know, law students are automatic members of the YLD. This year, their membership is free thanks to the Quatrini Law Group, who graciously offered to cover the cost of law students' membership. Through the Quatrini Law Group's generosity, the YLD has seen an enormous increase in law student membership and participation at our events. It seems like every YLD event, CLE, or service project I attend, there are law students. This is in stark contrast to my law school years where I was one of a few law students that would attend events throughout the year.

Spearheading the Law Student Committee is Taylor Gillian, former YLD Chair and University of Pittsburgh Law School alumna and Jamie Drennan, former YLD Treasurer, YLD council member, and Thomas R. Kline School of Law of Duquesne University alumna. These two women, and in conjunction with Mary

Ann Fiorilli, Director of Membership, Events and CLE for the ACBA, have undertaken the monumental task of launching the Committee. Rebeca Himena Miller, YLD Chair-Elect, and I also have the privilege of sitting as committee members.

During the Committee's short tenure, they have organized a professional clothing drive for students at both the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and the Thomas R. Kline School of Law of Duquesne University. Each school maintains career closets for students. The closets provide students access to free professional clothing for job interviews, career fairs, and other professional events.

The Committee also filmed a welcome video for the law students. The video's aim is to provide law students and overview of what the YLD can offer them and the benefits of joining the YLD. A huge thank you to not only Jamie and Taylor for providing their perspectives as Pitt and Duquesne alumni, but to Rebeca for her insight on attending a non-Pittsburgh based law school

and Denzel Gregg for his insight as a current law student.

Moving forward, the Committee aims to regularly meet with law students to determine programming and events that would benefit them. The next event is the Career Services Fair on February 11, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. The Fair will be located at Duquesne University's Power Center Ballroom. The Fair will host over twenty practice areas, and it is free and open to all law students.

The YLD has many events, public service projects, and CLEs planned for the second half of the bar year. Thank you to YLD Council and YLD members, for your hard work. I look forward to a successful second half of the bar year! ■



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## Submit an article for *Point of Law* *The YLD's ABA award-winning newsletter*

YLD members are encouraged to write about the practice of law or any substantive legal issue of interest. Additionally, writers are encouraged to write responses to any article appearing in this issue. Featured authors will have their article – up to 1,000 words long – published along with a brief bio.

Articles and inquiries may be submitted to:  
[YLDCommunications@gmail.com](mailto:YLDCommunications@gmail.com).

## ABOUT THE YLD

The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the Allegheny County Bar Association is comprised of all lawyers who have been admitted to the practice of law for 10 years or less. Lawyers who join the ACBA and meet the criteria automatically become members of the YLD without paying any additional dues. The YLD provides young lawyers with a means of gaining broader participation in bar activities, a forum for continuing legal education, and a vehicle for social exchange with their contemporaries at the bar.

# WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR? — THE BLI CLASS OF 2025 CLASS PROJECT

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about their new lives, in addition to Education, Employment, and Health & Stabilization programs.

The BLI Class is contributing their legal expertise and resources to Hello Neighbor as an additional component to the services it already provides. The Class is currently developing a legal reference guide to highlight resources to address the most common legal needs amongst refugees and immigrants that are likely to appear during this process. The reference guide will include subsections of different legal fields: immigration law, family law, torts and personal injury, landlord/tenant, and civil rights, to name a few. Each section will list attorneys that practice in that area, whether they are able to provide pro bono services and/or translation services, and the contact information for that practitioner and/or their firm/organization. To ensure this reference guide stays current and helpful for years to come, each attorney, firm, or organization may opt to provide a QR code that is linked to their respective website. In the spirit of accessibility and diversity within our community, these reference guides shall be printed in the five most common languages amongst refugees and immigrants in western Pennsylvania: Dari, Swahili, French, Hispanic, and Arabic.

In addition to the reference guide, the BLI members intend to create community education videos, to further assist in the understanding and navigation of the American legal system. Virtually everyone – including natural-born American and international persons alike – have consumed legal misconceptions in pop culture and social media. For instance, common misconceptions may include the belief that women automatically get primary custody of children in divorce, or physically moving from the marital home deprives the right to marital assets. These videos seek to debunk these legal fallacies and inform its viewers of the realities of the law of any particular field that may affect them. The videos will feature the option for closed captions in the five languages listed above and will be available via Hello Neighbors' resources.

"Won't You Be My Neighbor?" is intended to provide beneficial opportunities for local attendees as well. The event will feature a general sponsorship program, broken into tiers, that will feature several perks per tier. Additionally, the BLI class anticipates sponsorship funds needed for the reference guide and community education videos and foresee that each will present advertisement opportunities for their

respective generous sponsors. For practitioners, law firms, and other businesses that are interested in sponsoring "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" or being featured in the reference guide, the BLI Class recommends following the ACBA Young Lawyers' Division Instagram page for future updates.

The BLI Class intends for the event to take place on the evening of Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at a location to be determined.<sup>3</sup> All are welcome and encouraged to attend and get involved! ■

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<sup>1</sup>*All information about Hello Neighbor within this article can be found at their website: <https://www.helloneighbor.io/>*

<sup>2</sup>*The date and location of the event are subject to change.*

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# THE STRUGGLES OF SMALL BUSINESSES WITH FOREIGN INFRINGEMENT ON ONLINE MARKETPLACES

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enforcement can be inconsistent, especially when infringers are in countries with less stringent IP laws or where enforcement is slow or ineffective.

Due to the low barriers to entry in e-commerce, it is not uncommon for unauthorized sellers to flood marketplaces with inferior versions of a product, overshadowing the original product in search rankings or consumer visibility.

## **So, what is the impact on small businesses?**

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For small businesses, the consequences of foreign infringement can be devastating. Some of the key challenges faced by small business owners include:

Counterfeit and infringing goods often sell at a fraction of the price of

legitimate products, diverting customers from original offerings resulting. This results in lost revenue, especially if counterfeiters flood the market with cheaper alternatives.

A business's reputation can be severely damaged if consumers receive inferior products from counterfeiters, even if the original product is high-quality. Negative reviews and complaints can tarnish the brand's image.

Fighting IP infringement across borders is complex and costly. Legal fees, enforcement actions, and potential litigation can be financially prohibitive for small businesses. The process of reporting and proving infringement may require specialized expertise and resources that smaller enterprises lack.

Counterfeit products may enter the market through unauthorized channels, leading to disruptions in the

legitimate supply chain. Small businesses may find themselves facing delays, product shortages, or even challenges in securing exclusive distribution agreements.

When counterfeit or infringing products saturate the market, consumers may mistakenly choose the fake option over the legitimate product, leading to a reduction in market share and diminished customer loyalty.

## **How can small businesses protect their intellectual property?**

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While the challenges are real, there are a number of strategies that small businesses can use to protect their intellectual property and reduce the risk of foreign infringement.

A fundamental step for any small business is to ensure that their intellectual property is legally protected. This means registering trademarks, copyrights, patents, and design rights in key markets, especially those where they do business or expect to expand.

Registering a trademark for a company's brand name, logo, and other distinctive marks provides legal protection. In most countries, trademarks are territorial, meaning a company needs to register them in each jurisdiction where it wants protection. For example, registering with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) can provide protection across EU member states.

Protecting new inventions or unique product designs with patents and design rights can prevent unauthorized copies of a company's products. Design

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# THE STRUGGLES OF SMALL BUSINESSES WITH FOREIGN INFRINGEMENT ON ONLINE MARKETPLACES

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patents, particularly, are effective in enforcing a company's rights because the test for design infringement is observational versus a finding for utility patent infringement by court order.

Copyrighting a company's original content (e.g., product designs, packaging, artwork, and website content) can prevent others from using it without permission.

## **What does it mean when a small business leverages its intellectual property rights online?**

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Most online marketplaces, including Amazon, eBay, and AliBaba, have established IP protection programs that allow businesses to report infringements and take down counterfeit listings.

Amazon offers a tool for registered trademark owners called Brand Registry. This allows businesses to have more control over their product listings, making it easier to identify and report counterfeit or infringing listings. The program also provides access to tools that can help detect and stop counterfeit sales. Additionally, Amazon provides the Amazon Patent Express Procedure for patent owners seeking to enforce their rights against infringers.

eBay's VeRO program lets businesses report listings that violate their IP rights. Depending on the type of complaint, eBay typically removes infringing items from the platform.

AliBaba offers a similar program where businesses can report suspected counterfeits and initiate removal from the platform. AliBaba also provides access to tools for

monitoring listings and protecting against unauthorized sellers.

Taking advantage of these programs can provide businesses with a significant degree of protection, although enforcement can still be challenging.

Another consideration is regularly monitoring online platforms for counterfeit or unauthorized listings. Small businesses should consider using automated monitoring tools that scan online marketplaces for potential infringement. Services like Edison IP, Red Points, MarkMonitor, and BrandShield specialize in helping companies track IP violations and enforce their rights across multiple platforms.

Nonetheless, when a violation is detected, it is essential to act swiftly. This includes filing complaints with the platform, sending cease-and-desist letters to infringing sellers, and, if necessary, seeking legal action. In some cases, it may also be possible to work with local authorities to seize counterfeit goods or shut down infringing operations.

Given the complexity of international IP law, small businesses should seek guidance from intellectual property attorneys who specialize in international enforcement. These professionals can help navigate the process of protecting IP rights, filing lawsuits, and managing cross-border disputes.

Above all, building a strong, loyal customer base is an important part of mitigating the impact of counterfeit goods. Companies can educate consumers about how to identify authentic products and the risks of

buying from unauthorized sellers to help direct sales away from counterfeiters. Providing excellent customer service and showcasing the value of the genuine product can also help retain brand loyalty.

The rise of online marketplaces has undoubtedly empowered small businesses to reach new customers worldwide. The same global reach, however, has also opened the door for IP infringement, particularly from foreign counterfeiters. While combating this issue can be challenging, small businesses can take proactive steps to protect their intellectual property, from registering trademarks and patents to utilizing marketplace protection programs and working with legal professionals. By taking these preventative measures, businesses can safeguard their brand and continue to thrive in the competitive e-commerce world. ■

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.emarketer.com/content/worldwide-ecommerce-forecast-2023>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.emarketer.com/content/worldwide-ecommerce-forecast-2023>

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