

**KitchenAid**



# KitchenAid tightens the reins on global branding with BrandProtect

While the proliferation of online activities escalates, so do the opportunities to compromise company brands. For cultural icons like the Kitchenaid® stand mixer silhouette, which became a registered trademark in the 1990s, policing online usage is integral to protecting millions of dollars worth of brand equity. With the help of BrandProtect's solutions, Kitchenaid has found that the job of maintaining the integrity of its corporate identity and reputation is much easier and more efficient.



## The Evolution of an American Icon

Although the KitchenAid stand mixer silhouette has been a registered trademark since the mid 1990s, it has been a well-recognized symbol since the current design was introduced in the 1930s. As one of only a handful of registered silhouettes (others include Mickey Mouse's ears and the Coke bottle), the KitchenAid stand mixer image is now protected in more than a dozen countries around the world.

*"The KitchenAid mixer is an incredible asset so it is important for us to protect both the name and the image from becoming generic,"* says Brian Maynard, Director, Brand Marketing of KitchenAid, who reports that the equity of the brand has been estimated to be in the tens of millions of dollars. Any kind of violations that go unnoticed can quickly erode that precious equity.

Then there is the challenge of maintaining trademark status. "Throughout history terms like escalator and aspirin have become generic simply because people did not do the work to protect them," says Maynard.

***"To avoid that fate, you have to show the courts that you have put every effort into protecting your brand. If you don't police your brand, courts will typically rule that the mark is no longer meaningful and has become ubiquitous."***

## The Online Branding Jungle

The challenge of brand protection however, has grown exponentially for companies operating in the online world. Violations are more plentiful and harder to track. In addition, the nature of these violations can be far different from the typical ones found in more traditional media.

*"With the advent of the Internet a few things happened,"* explains Maynard. *"Everyone in the world could now see the mixer so the potential for misuse of our trademark became greater. Because it is so well known, there was more risk of companies creating knock-off products and marketing them under other names. So it was even more important than ever to prove that we were putting every effort into protecting the brand and our trademarks."*

Other types of violations also surfaced as KitchenAid's online policing activities grew. Some, such as sites using the logo without permission, were minor and could be easily fixed with a warning letter. Others were not so innocent, such as using the logo to create links to illegal sites. *"We spent a lot of time training people and policing online activities,"* says Maynard. ***"Even though we were catching some violations, we knew we could do a better job, we just didn't know how, until we met BrandProtect."***

## Better Protection Means Better Business

BrandProtect is a managed service that enables organizations to maintain the integrity of their corporate identity, reputation and brand online. It uses a combination of advanced technology, round-the-clock monitoring, proven best practices and exhaustive human analysis to uncover threats that put an organization and its customers at risk.

BrandProtect goes beyond the detection of infractions. It categorizes risks according to their severity, and then initiates proactive and escalating response protocols to effectively mitigate threats.

*"When I heard about the solution I didn't even realize there was anything like that out there,"* says Maynard. *"I saw right away that it solved a problem I didn't even realize existed."*

He adds, *"BrandProtect educated us in terms of other things going on in the virtual world that we might want to be aware of. That was extremely valuable to us, because consumer trust is so integral to our brand reputation. We can't afford to be associated with online scams."*

BrandProtect monitors a wide range of activities, from logo and URL usage (e.g. the trademark KitchenAid cannot be used in an unauthorized URL), to phishing and illegal redirecting of web traffic.

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BrandProtect spent four weeks working with KitchenAid to complete questionnaires and set up the appropriate solution. All services are billed at a flat rate on a monthly basis. *“Some services have high up front costs or keep adding to their rates for extra services,”* says Maynard. *“With BrandProtect, it’s just a flat fee which makes it much easier.”*

**Within the first week of signing up for the service, BrandProtect found 50 to 100 URL registrations by retailers that contained the trademark KitchenAid reports Maynard. “One of them wasn’t even selling our products.**

**BrandProtect was able to clean all that up for us right out of the gate.”**

**Maynard’s group now receives a comprehensive weekly report that outlines violations according to their severity, along with recommended next steps. After reviewing, items of concern are flagged for further action.**

BrandProtect then performs the initial follow up activities, including investigating the site or activity in question and notifying the violators in writing. If the problem is not resolved after three warnings, KitchenAid then refers it to their legal department for further action. On average KitchenAid files four to five lawsuits annually – and has won every case to date. Maynard also reports that BrandProtect has increased accuracy by more than 20 per cent.

*“Ninety per cent of the time however, the violations are minor.”* Maynard says the speed and accuracy of BrandProtect allows them to take proactive steps before any damage can be done. When a vendor inadvertently registered an improper URL on a Wednesday, Maynard was notified within 48 hours. *“He didn’t even know he couldn’t have ownership of that URL and was stunned that we knew about it so quickly.”*

Sometimes BrandProtect has been able to find a violator KitchenAid can’t. In one example, a Google image search for KitchenAid turned up an explicit photo. *“We didn’t know how that link worked,”* says Maynard. *“We just called BrandProtect and within two hours it was gone.”* Last year, following a global dealer training initiative focused on Web-based marketing, Maynard used BrandProtect to make sure everyone was meeting compliance requirements.

## Peace of Mind

Given the strategic importance of the KitchenAid brand, Maynard says BrandProtect has played a major role in bringing him peace of mind. *“It is my responsibility to protect this brand and I am not going to allow any loss of equity on my watch. In fact, the value of the stand mixer silhouette continues to increase year over year. Before BrandProtect however, I thought I was out there*

*doing it on my own. Now I know I can leave the brand in better condition than when I started.”*

## About BrandProtect

As the leader in internet reputation management, BrandProtect empowers organizations to gain control over how they are represented online by uncovering and mitigating the issues that put their reputation at risk and erode customer trust. BrandProtect’s Response Services help detect, uncover and mitigate brand and trademark infringement issues, phishing attacks, web traffic diversions, website integrity issues and defamatory discussions. BrandProtect was the first company of its kind to be offered full membership by the Forum for Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST). It also has relationships with more than 4,000 Internet Service Providers globally, accounting for more than 90 percent of the traffic flowing across the internet.

