



Mike LaCorte, a founder of Conflict International has over 20 years experience in the investigation industry. He has been instrumental in drawing a number of high profile corporate and private investigation cases to a conclusion and his expertise in gathering legally admissible evidence is highly regarded. Mike speaks English, Spanish and Italian, and was elected 2nd Vice President of the World Association of Detectives in 2015.

GUARDING *your* IDEAS

Conflict Marbella is a new consultancy service dedicated to assisting clients in the region with bespoke intelligence, investigation, security and risk advice. Tapping into the wide range of services from parent company Conflict International in London, Conflict Marbella can offer worldwide assistance with local representatives on hand to create bespoke solutions.



and experience in investigating patent and copyright infringements, licensing issues and discovering counterfeit or stolen products across a wide range of industries.

How do you discover where counterfeit goods are being sold?

Conflict director Mike LaCorte explains that there are a number of steps to the process. "First we identify where the potential counterfeit goods are being sold through desktop work and enquiries. Once we have identified the location we can send out field agents to make test purchases and covertly record them with video and audio. The item can then be sent off to the manufacturer where it is tested and verified as to whether it is fake."

Once fake goods have been discovered, it's up to the manufacturer to decide on the best course of

action. Sometimes sending a 'cease and desist' letter can be enough to deter someone continuing to pass on counterfeit goods. However, in more extreme cases, companies may decide to take legal action in order to be compensated by those selling counterfeit goods as the real thing.

Therefore, it is important that all evidence gathered is legally admissible in court so all investigations are monitored by both the client and legal advisors who provide expert assistance and help in submission of evidence for any subsequent legal proceedings.

IP theft is more than just counterfeit goods

Technology has increased the potential for electronic as well as physical fraud. "It's not necessarily just what you see, in terms of tangible products, it's also copyright infringement, protecting valuable trademarks and avoiding your brand being compromised."

Conflict Marbella, through its London head office, has a dedicated Due Diligence team that can conduct forensic investigations using analytical tools to recover information and data from a client's IT systems. They also have a network of discreet companies in place to covertly identify the source of counterfeiting or illegal copying of products.

Very often, it is difficult for a company without experience in this area to attempt to track down the source of fake products and potentially even harder to get to the source of online infringements. However, with a network of international partners, Mike LaCorte says the world can suddenly get a lot smaller.

"Whether the client wants to tackle the seller at the end of the chain or trace things back to the manufacturer of counterfeit goods, there is often an international element to our investigations. It is vital to have a company in place who can work with trusted fellow investigators across borders in order to build the whole picture of where the fraud is taking place and where it originates from."

All of Conflict's investigations operate within the Data Protection Act and they are registered with the UK's Information Commissioner's Office. They comply with the UK Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and The Human Rights Act.

Protecting intellectual property is becoming a more complex issue and is clearly not going to be eradicated so companies are being urged to be better informed about the risks and how to combat them.

Protecting intellectual property is a growing area of the company's business.

Intellectual property, or IP for short, refers to the protection of inventions, designs, highly sensitive business information, slogans or branding – all of which can become the subject of fraud.

It is generally accepted that IP theft is growing across the world. Many countries are not able to put a figure on the cost to businesses but a study for the US Government in 2013 claimed the loss to the economy was around \$300 billion per year and rising. China, Russia and India were identified as the countries where much of the IP theft originates.

Conflict's team of intellectual property investigators has in-depth expertise

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Contact Conflict International
To arrange a no obligation chat with Mike LaCorte about how we may be able to assist please email info@conflicinternational.com

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(Strictly by appointment only)

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