

Identifying the Right Trademark:

A Strategic Approach to Discovery of Licensing Opportunities

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Introduction

Licensing can be one of the most effective strategies for accelerating product growth, entering new markets, and differentiating products in competitive categories. When the right trademark is paired with the right product opportunity, licensed products can achieve strong consumer appeal, premium pricing, and expanded distribution.

However, the success of a licensing initiative depends heavily on one critical factor: identifying the right trademark to license.

Many companies exploring licensing opportunities know their product category, understand their consumer segment, and have clear retail distribution goals. What they often lack is a systematic process for identifying trademarks that align with those strategic requirements.

In practice, trademark discovery frequently occurs through informal channels such as trade shows, licensing agents, or existing industry relationships. While these sources can generate opportunities, they rarely provide a comprehensive view of the full universe of trademarks that could support a licensed product.

Goldmarks has developed a structured methodology for trademark discovery that enables companies to systematically identify, evaluate, and prioritize trademarks that align with their business objectives and product strategies. Rather than relying on static databases of trademarks, our approach focuses on building a customized Licensable Trademark Index for each client engagement.

The Challenge: Finding the Right Trademark

The global trademark landscape includes thousands of marks spanning industries such as consumer products, lifestyle brands, media properties, cultural institutions, technology brands, and heritage consumer brands.

Within this universe, only a small percentage of trademarks are likely to be appropriate for a particular licensed product opportunity.

Selecting the right brand requires answering several key questions:

- Which trademarks possess the consumer awareness and credibility necessary to support the product?
- Which trademark identities align with the product's features, benefits, and positioning?
- Which trademarks resonate with the target consumer segment?
- Which trademarks have the potential to strengthen relationships with retailers and distribution partners?
- Which trademark owners are likely to pursue licensing partnerships?

Without a structured discovery process, evaluating these questions across hundreds of potential trademarks can be extremely difficult.

Trademark Discovery Method

The Goldmarks discovery method provides a systematic process for identifying trademarks that could support successful licensed product initiatives. Our methodology is designed to generate a customized universe of brand opportunities that match the licensee's specific requirements.

Stage 1: Licensing Strategy Assessment

The process begins with a detailed assessment of the licensee's strategic objectives and business requirements. These objectives help define the role a licensed brand should play within the licensee's overall product strategy.

Stage 2: Product and Market Definition

We then define the licensed product opportunity in greater detail. This analysis helps determine the type of trademark attributes required to support the product concept.

Stage 3: Customized Licensable Trademark Index

Rather than searching a static database of trademarks, we develop a customized Licensable Trademark Index specifically tailored to the licensee's opportunity. We utilize structured research and AI-assisted analysis to identify multiple trademarks that meet the defined criteria. This customized index becomes the foundation for evaluating potential licensing opportunities.

Stage 4: Trademark Extension Evaluation

Candidate trademarks are evaluated using structured criteria derived from established extension and licensing frameworks. Each trademark is evaluated using quantitative and qualitative metrics to determine its relative suitability for the licensed product opportunity.

Stage 5: Trademark Opportunity Identification

Typically, we identify three to five trademark opportunities that demonstrate the strongest potential for supporting the licensed product initiative. This analysis provides companies with a clear and objective basis for pursuing licensing discussions with trademark owners.

Keys to Success in Trademark Discovery

Our experience has shown that successful trademark discovery depends on three critical factors.

1. Ask the Right Questions

The most important step in identifying appropriate trademarks is defining the right strategic questions at the beginning of the process. A clear understanding of these factors ensures that trademark discovery is aligned with the licensee's broader business strategy.

2. Use Relevant Evaluation Metrics

Effective trademark discovery requires objective criteria for evaluating potential licensing opportunities. We assist companies to compare multiple opportunities systematically using consistent metrics and prioritize those with the greatest potential.

3. Evaluate the Right Trademark Universe

Perhaps the most critical factor in trademark discovery is ensuring that the correct universe of trademarks is considered. By constructing a customized Licensable Trademark Index for each engagement, we ensure that the evaluation universe includes brands that are both relevant and strategically aligned with the licensee's objectives and goals.

Conclusion

The global marketplace contains thousands of trademarks that could potentially support successful licensed product initiatives. However, identifying the right trademark requires more than informal industry contacts or ad hoc research.

A structured discovery process that aligns trademarks with product strategy, consumer positioning, and distribution requirements significantly improves the likelihood of licensing success.

By developing a customized Licensable Brand Index and applying structured evaluation criteria, Goldmarks helps companies transform trademark discovery from a largely informal process into a strategic capability that can uncover new opportunities for growth and differentiation.

About

Founded in 1997, Goldmarks Co. provides research, planning and partnership development to create new products for intellectual property licensors, licensees and agencies. The firm specializes in quantifying the monetizable power of trademarks and copyrighted assets, translating consumer demand insights into royalty structures, and developing IP commercialization strategies.

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