Fonts and design are inextricably intertwined. As with many other digital assets, the internet has become woven into the practice of design and is now a foundational element of the business of design. The anonymous nature of the internet, and the ease of sharing files online, makes it easy to lose track of the proprietary nature of font software.

Stated simply, someone, usually a lone designer/artist, created the font and someone owns the rights — including the right to license the use of the software. When fonts and licenses are misused, the implications for a designer and the designer’s clients are monumental, the largest of which is liability.

Software Compliance Must Include Font Compliance

Computer software is protected as a form of intellectual property. It is the role and responsibility of IT and management to ensure that software is legally licensed.

A critical point that is often overlooked is that fonts are also covered by various licensing, intellectual property, and trademark laws. These protections raise the legal importance of font licenses to that of computer software.

Problems with font compliance have led to some prominent legal cases, so it is important to understand these risks. Font compliance violations typically come from those who don’t read or respect the terms of font licenses — and they can come from anywhere in your organization.

Best Practices To Mitigate The Risk

Established creative teams often have massive font collections, with a lot of uncertainty around historic font purchasing and licensing. Follow these tips for more effective font compliance:

+ Audit your font collection.
+ Manage your fonts centrally and control user access.
+ Create a policy and process for purchasing fonts.
+ Deploy a font management solution to every desktop.
+ Always read your font license agreements.

Learn about font management solutions that mitigate your font compliance risks at extensis.com