

Trademark Basics for HC IT Pros

What a Trademark Protects

A trademark protects:

- Your **business name** (e.g., *HC IT Pros*)
- Your **logo**
- Any **taglines or slogans** (e.g., “Smarter Tech. Local Service.”)

It **does not** protect:

- The services themselves (that’s covered by contracts)
 - Ideas, processes, or source code (that’s copyright or trade secret)
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1. Start with a Free Search

Before spending money on filing, make sure your name and logo aren’t already in use:

Search 3 Places

1. **USPTO Trademark Database** → <https://tmsearch.uspto.gov/>
 - Search “HC IT Pros” and similar spellings (e.g., “H C IT Professionals,” “Hill Country IT Pros”)
 - Look under **Live** marks, not dead ones.
2. **Texas Secretary of State Business Search** → <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/coa/>
 - Ensures no other Texas company is registered under that name.
3. **Domain and Social Media**

- Make sure *hcitpros.com*, *@hcitpros*, and *linkedin.com/company/hcitpros* are available.


✓ If all three are clear — you're good to proceed.

2. Registering a Trademark

Option A — Federal Trademark (USPTO)

Best if you plan to grow beyond Texas.

- File online at <https://www.uspto.gov/trademarks>
- Cost: **\$250–\$350 per class** (depending on filing option)
- Class you'd likely use:
 - **Class 42:** IT support and computer services
 - **Class 35:** Business and technology consulting
- Takes ~8–12 months for full approval
- Protects you nationwide and allows the ® symbol once approved

 Example filing name:


HC IT Pros™ — providing information technology support, asset management, and remote technical services.

Option B — State Trademark (Texas)

Lower cost, faster, but only protects you in Texas.

- File with the **Texas Secretary of State**
- Cost: **\$50 per class per mark**

- Turnaround: 4–8 weeks
- Application form: **Form 901** (can be filed by mail or SOSDirect)

 Good interim step if you're testing your brand locally before going federal.

Option C — Common Law Trademark

If you're already using *HC IT Pros* commercially (website, invoices, marketing), you automatically have “**common law**” rights to the name in your region — even without filing.

 You can use the ™ **symbol** immediately.

But it only protects you **locally** and can be hard to enforce.

3. When to File

Recommended Timing:

- As soon as your logo, name, and domain are final.
 - After your LLC is registered (so you file under the company name, not your personal name).
 - Before scaling marketing or hiring staff.
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Estimated Costs

Step	Option	Cost	Timeline
Name / Logo Clearance	USPTO & Google search	Free	Same day
Texas Trademark	State level	\$50 / class	4–8 weeks
Federal Trademark	USPTO	\$250–\$350 / class	8–12 months

Legal Help (optional)	Trademark attorney	\$300–\$600 flat fee	—
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You can save by filing yourself, especially if your brand name is simple and unique.

Pro Tips

- Use TM now (e.g., *HC IT Pros*TM) while you apply; change to ® only after approval.
 - Keep a folder of **proof of first use** — dated invoices, screenshots, social posts, website backups.
 - File your logo separately if you want it protected (as a “design mark”).
 - Renew every **10 years** (federal) or **5 years** (state).
 - Don’t forget to trademark *variations* of your name if you use them in marketing (e.g., “HC IT Pro Solutions”).
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Integration with Your Business Setup Plan

After **Phase 1: LLC + EIN + Bank**, add:

Phase 1.5 — Brand Protection

1. Search availability (USPTO + State + Web).
2. Reserve or register trademarks.
3. Update your logo and business templates to include TM or ® once approved.