Intellectual Properties

New or original knowledge and the creative expression of ideas is the driving force of successful businesses in the 21st century. Therefore, safeguarding such knowledge and creative expression from inadvertent disclosure or its unauthorized use by competitors is becoming increasingly critical for developing and retaining competitive advantage. Building a business also requires various types of other resources, including a network of relationships and sources of funds. The intellectual property (IP) protection system provides a key tool for

(1) keeping at bay unscrupulous competitors,  
(2) developing relationships with employees, consultants, suppliers, subcontractors, business partners and customers, and   
(3) obtaining funds.

Trade name, trademarks and domain names -> the prime elements differentiating your product from those of competitors.

Industrial design search / IP search

Patent Cooperation Treaty, the Madrid system or The Hague Agreement

Questions:

1. Entrepreneurs often ask investors to sign nondisclosure agreements (NDA) to protect the business idea. Few angels and almost no venture capitalists will sign an NDA. If one of their portfolio companies is already working on a similar idea, they can’t sign it. If they did, you could show up years later claiming they stole your idea.

VCs also say you can trust them anyway since breaking confidentiality would hurt their deal flow. Really? If a VC has track record of making entrepreneurs multimillionaires in 18 months, would you talk with them even if you heard rumors they steal ideas? Probably. Especially since those rumors can be dismissed as sour grapes from unfunded entrepreneurs. Indiscretion might tank a VC’s deal flow, but I doubt it would be as devastating as they portray.

But they have a much more solid argument: The idea doesn’t make the difference –entrepreneurship is all about execution. And I agree wholeheartedly, Dreamers with good ideas are a dime a dozen. But in my daily work with entrepreneurs, it’s the day-to-day implementation that makes or breaks them, not the grand ideas.