

EBOOK

Your Agency's Guide To Preparing Leak-Proof Campaigns

IMATAG

An invisible protection to visibly protect your content



SUMMARY

01

Why protect your customers from leaks? 03
How does a leak impact your client? 04
LEAK STORY - Apple iPhone 13 release 05

02

Why protect your agency from leaks? 06
How does a leak impact your agency? 07
CASE STUDY - Production agency 07

03

How do leaks happen? 08
Usual sources of leaks 09
LEAK STORY - Nintendo & The Pokémon Company 10

04

How to (re)gain trust? 11
Building leakproof workflows 12
CASE STUDY - Licensed Collectible Toys 13

05

How to prevent leaks? 14
NDA & embargos 15
DAM & DRM 16
Metadata 16
Invisible Digital Watermarking 16

06

How to choose a leak prevention solution? 19
Imperceptibility 20
Robustness 21
Scalability 21
Easy integration 21
CASE STUDY - Consumer Electronics 22

INTRODUCTION

Today, businesses across the globe rely on their online presence to build and grow their brand. Digital marketing, press relations, and creative campaigns provide a wealth of opportunities to create excitement around a new product or service launch. Many brands decide to delegate these missions to outside agencies, trusting them with their most valuable asset: their intellectual property.

This guide is for professionals involved in preparing launch campaigns, such as creative production companies and digital marketing and advertising agencies.

As an agency account executive, your role is to build customer trust by reassuring your client about the safety and impact of their content.

The production and delivery of creative projects include many sensitive steps and can involve a multitude of third parties. You need to control the risk of your clients' content leaking at every step of the way, analyze how the content spreads, and show its impact on your client's campaigns.

If a leak occurs during the production process, not only can it damage your client's launch plans, but it can also discredit your agency's reputation. Therefore, it is critical to provide the right set of services that protect your clients' digital assets.

In this guide, you will learn how leaks happen, how to regain trust from your customers after a leak, and what solutions exist to prevent content leaks.

Ready? Let's get started!





01

Why protect your customers from leaks?

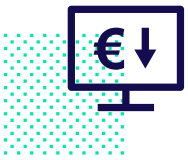
WHY PROTECT YOUR CUSTOMERS FROM LEAKS?

In this new era of virtual events and livestreams, building customer engagement and excitement requires a new way of building launch campaigns. This growing trend means that your clients rely on their digital image to grow their customer base and sell their products.

The spending on advertising worldwide has been increasing steadily over the past few years and is expected to surpass 630 billion U.S. dollars in 2024, according to a report published by Statista.

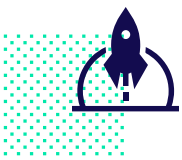
Considering your client's investment, there's a lot at stake. And unfortunately, as the demand for high-production virtual launch campaigns continues to grow, so do the risks of prelaunch leaks of confidential information. Therefore, securing prelaunch digital assets is critical.

HOW DOES A LEAK IMPACT YOUR CLIENT?



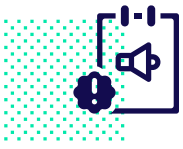
Fall in sales

- Sales drop of current models
- Loss of competitive advantage
- Contractual issues



Costly launch campaigns are spoiled

- A compromised launch due to diminished 'buzz' surrounding launch
- Loss of valuable time and money
- Compromised trust among teams



Bad press

- Damaged brand image by amateur quality of communications by fans or leakers
- Reluctant and frustrated customers
- Uncertain adoption of the product due to the poor quality of its presentation



Counterfeits and fakes hit the market faster

- Risk of the new product design, feature or price revealed before launch
- Non-compliance with the brand's standards
- Brand image degradation

As the gatekeeper of your clients' valuable digital assets, your agency is responsible for protecting their intellectual property, buyer trust, and reputation to preserve brand value and future sales.



LEAK STORY - APPLE IPHONE 13 RELEASE

Despite Apple's tight rules and iron-clad non-disclosure agreements, at the launch of the new Phone 13 series in September 2021, highly sought-after product features leaked on an e-commerce website — spreading like wildfire across news media sources and social media just days before Apple's annual mid-September launch event.

> We want the chance to tell our customers why the product is great and not have that done poorly by someone else.
>
> **Greg Joswiak**
> Apple product marketing executive



02

Why protect your agency from leaks?

WHY PROTECT YOUR AGENCY FROM LEAKS?

Getting ready for your client's new product reveal means a lot of stress to you and your agency. In today's hyper-digital reveals, the competition to create **the most innovative and spectacular** launch has never been so intense.

With the rise of online product reveals and launches, **ensuring complete secretiveness** among key stakeholders is critical. Perhaps you've already experienced an unexpected leak before a client's major product launch. As you probably know, reassuring your client that it will never happen again is difficult and can lead to a loss in future work.

HOW DOES A LEAK IMPACT YOUR AGENCY?

- Questioning of the agency's loyalty
- Loss of contract
- Negative impact on the agency's reputation
- Difficulties in gaining new clients

Agencies must prove to their clients that their platforms, processes, and workflows are leak-proof and provide the latest technologies to track and spot leaks immediately.
Protecting your client against leaks allows you to maintain trustworthy relationships, increase customer loyalty and create a competitive advantage.

CASE STUDY - PRODUCTION AGENCY



Challenge

This audiovisual production company produces all types of content for major automotive, fashion, and luxury brands. To perpetuate trustworthy relationships with its customers, the company had to guarantee the confidentiality of the content it produced until launch.



Solution

The agency needed to deliver embargoed visuals to media partners several days before the official reveal. To track their visual content, they chose IMATAG Leaks, an invisible watermark that marks multiple copies of the same content with different identifiers.



Result

If IMATAG Leaks detects an image or video's unique identifier, the agency can quickly locate the source of the leak to protect against unauthorized usage. This traceability of digital content is reassuring, and relations with customers are more serene during product launches.



03

How do leaks happen?

HOW DO LEAKS HAPPEN?

With the heightened focus on **hyper-digital product reveals and customer experiences**, the investment in digital assets is often substantial. The digital agencies preparing these campaigns need to share images and videos of undisclosed models many weeks before the launch date.

Ensuring a buzz means **making sure that digital assets are not leaked** before the launch date and that images from livestreams are not stolen or misused.

USUAL SOURCES OF LEAKS

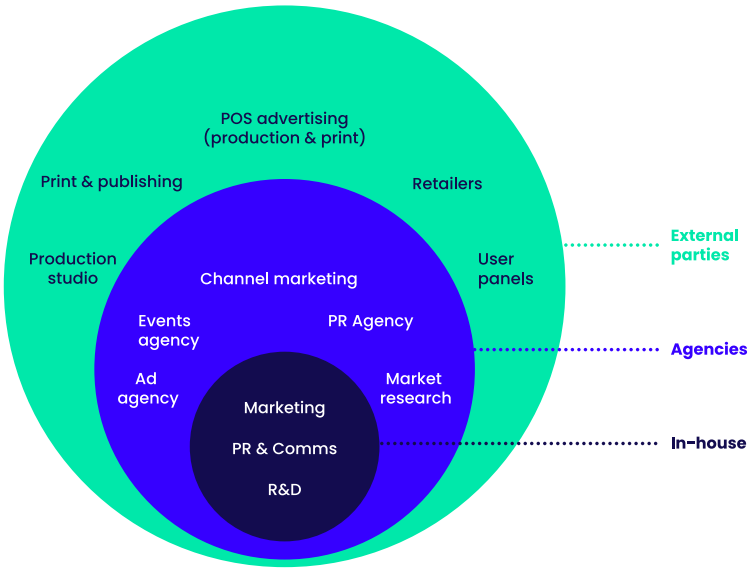
WHEN

- Market research
- Design, creative phases
- Preparation of launch campaigns
- Prelaunch

WHO

- Retailers, marketplaces
- Agencies (Creative, Ads, Digital, PR, Media…)
- Agency subcontractors
- Focus groups
- Internal

The challenge of a leak-proof product announcement is the sheer number of internal and external people who need access to images and videos in preparation for the launch date. Despite non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and embargoed content, controlling who has which digital image or video and the corresponding sharing authorization is virtually impossible.



The level of control decreases as the number of stakeholders increases.

Today, protecting your client's brand means safeguarding highly sought-after images and videos from hackers and unauthorized sharing.



LEAK STORY – NINTENDO & THE POKEMON COMPANY

In November 2019, Nintendo and The Pokémon Company publicly announced their intentions to no longer work with a Portuguese website that broke a review embargo to leak photos and a video of an unreleased Pokémon Sword and Shield online — before the game's release date. The leaked images created an incomplete picture of the highly-anticipated game, making some of the game's fans confused and angry.

> Nintendo will always protect its intellectual property and brands. Leaks hurt not just Nintendo, but the thousands of employees who work hard to bring games to market, and the millions of fans around the world who look forward to news and surprises.
>
> **Official statement of Nintendo in November 2019**



04

How to (re)gain trust?

HOW TO (RE)GAIN TRUST?

Building client trust is instrumental in your agency's growth and gaining new clients. It can be a real competitive advantage for your agency too.

Your role is to control the risk of your clients' content leaking, from creation to delivery. Creative workflows need to be secured, especially when handling confidential or embargoed information.



BUILDING LEAKPROOF WORKFLOWS

When preparing product launches, the first step to protecting your clients' confidential information is to **understand the importance of sensitive information.** It's crucial to discuss with your client what information is critical (price, design, new functionality), what formats it is made available, and when (launch date, embargo period).

No workflow is one-hundred percent leak-proof. The risk of content leaks starts from the moment you share information outside your organization. The more stakeholders involved, the higher the risk.

Thus, the second step to protecting your client is to **list all the third parties** involved who have access to confidential information and digital assets.

You need to ensure everyone understands the level of confidentiality required and with whom the information can be shared.

Even if an NDA agreement has been put in place, it is not always sufficient because identifying the wrongdoer is difficult, and therefore, the person who leaked sensitive information doesn't fear the negative consequences of the NDA.

Did you know that...

A majority of agency directors believe that an NDA signed with their clients is enough to maintain their confidence in the event of a leak.

Read more

A third step to prevent pre-launch leaks is to **set rules on how critical information is shared.** To minimize the risks, map out workflows to spot where leaks can happen (internally and externally), safeguard access to sensitive assets, and ensure that platforms used to transfer information are secure (avoid using sites like WeTransfer or sending sensitive content by email).

Sometimes a product launch depends on a specific calendar. For example, products dependent on the launch of a major film may have precise requirements and restrictions that must be taken into account when sharing images and videos with partners. In this case, **pay special attention to the project's launch dates** to avoid any license and contractual issues.

CASE STUDY - LICENSED COLLECTIBLE TOYS



Challenge

Faced with a rising risk of counterfeit products hitting the market before launch, the creator of licensed consumer goods required a way to quickly spot leaks of images sent to its global network of distributors and retailers.



Solution

The timing of a reveal means sharing digital assets one month before a major film or video game launch. Using the IMATAG Leaks and Monitor solutions, the creator easily integrated the invisible watermarking process into its workflow and now securely shares images to its external network prelaunch.



Result

The creator seamlessly integrated invisible watermarking within its workflows, providing continual monitoring for potential leaks while assessing post-launch image usage.

Because information moves quickly online, the ramifications of a leak are substantial. You'll want to understand how a leak happened (when, where and by whom) to ensure it doesn't happen again.

The good news is that technologies and solutions are available to help reduce the risk of leaks. By simply integrating them within your processes, you can provide a greater level of transparency and reassurance to your clients and stakeholders.



05

How to prevent leaks?

HOW TO PREVENT LEAKS?

To build client trust and keep clients long term, it's vital to provide **the right technologies and solutions** to keep their digital assets safe from unauthorized usage and potential leaks.

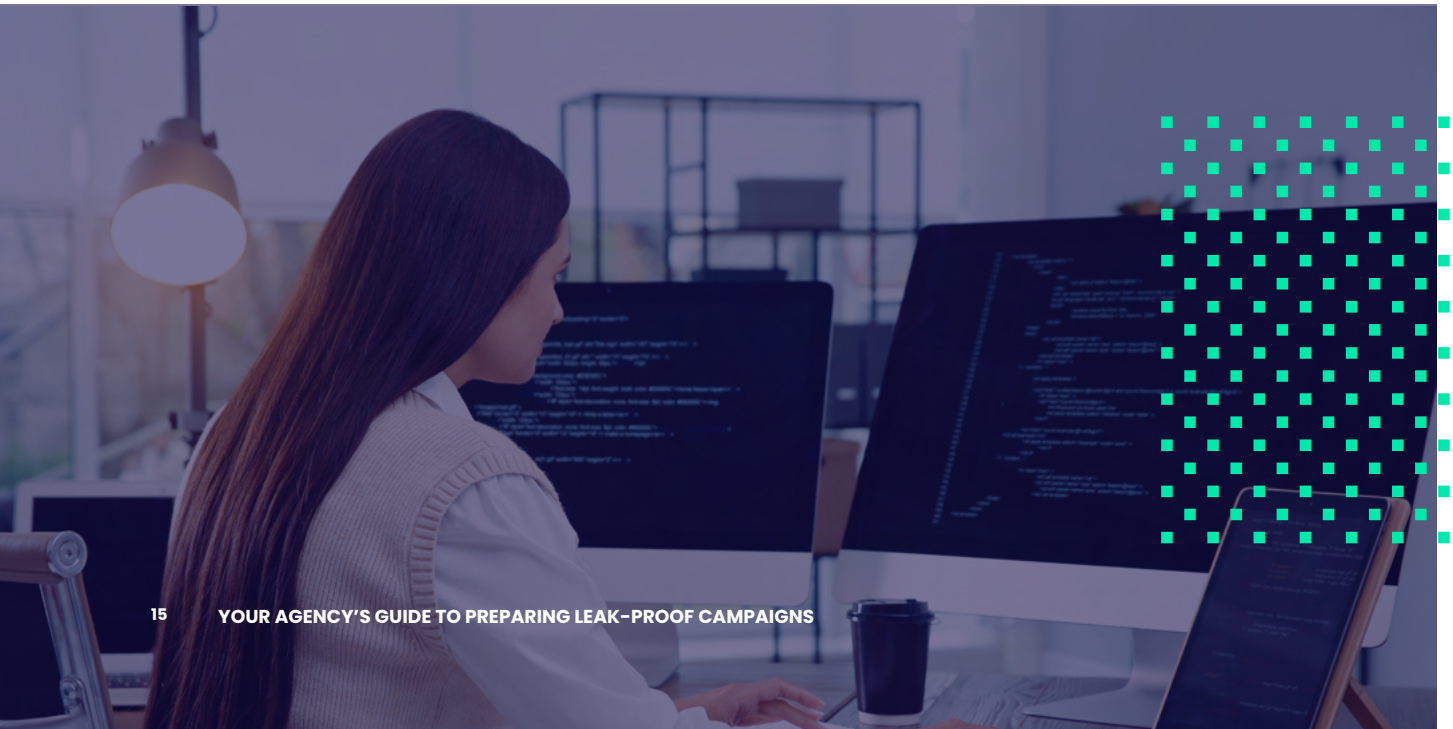
In the following sections, we have listed the methods and technologies available today so that you can find the right one for your teams, agency, and clients.

NDA & EMBARGOS

A non-disclosure agreement (often referred to as an NDA) is a legal contract between two parties aiming to protect shared confidential information. The goal of the NDA is to prevent a person or company from incurring losses or damages as a result of the disclosure of information. An NDA also aims to prevent the entity that the information has been shared with from profiting from it illegally. Even though an NDA is a legal document, it **does not prevent a person from disclosing confidential information**. Instead, it sets out the consequences if the person does not comply with the NDA.

An NDA often provides little assurance that a leak won't happen. And usually it can mean **adding a time-consuming process into an already complex workflow.** Managing who has signed a document and ensuring it is understood and respected is built on trust and accountability. In addition, if your third-party stakeholders are located in varying countries or regions, laws and regulations can vastly differ regarding legal issues.

An NDA **doesn't allow identifying sources of leaks and holding them accountable**. Therefore, the person who leaked sensitive information doesn't fear the negative consequences of the NDA personally and can act freely.



DAM & DRM

If you're working with a digital asset management (DAM) or a digital rights management (DRM) system, you've already put in place a process to manage how images and videos are shared across your agency's extensive network of production teams and outside agencies.

Unfortunately, **this won't keep your client's digital assets from being inadvertently shared** outside of your defined lists of recipients or from professional leakers intercepting and stealing them.

While digital assets are safe and under the agency's control in a DAM, no one really knows what happens to them once they are distributed. Therefore, finding a solution that works within your agency and client's workflow is essential.

METADATA

It's often assumed that metadata (attached to a photo or a video) provides the tracking capabilities needed to monitor unauthorized usage of product images. However, unbeknownst to brands is that **social media platforms and publishers often remove metadata** or make it inaccessible. This can mean that leaked photos or videos are only spotted when it's too late.

Did you know that...
To keep track of prelaunch leaks, smartphone brands used to change the wallpaper on their product images depending on the recipient ... until the entire leak community found out about the trick!

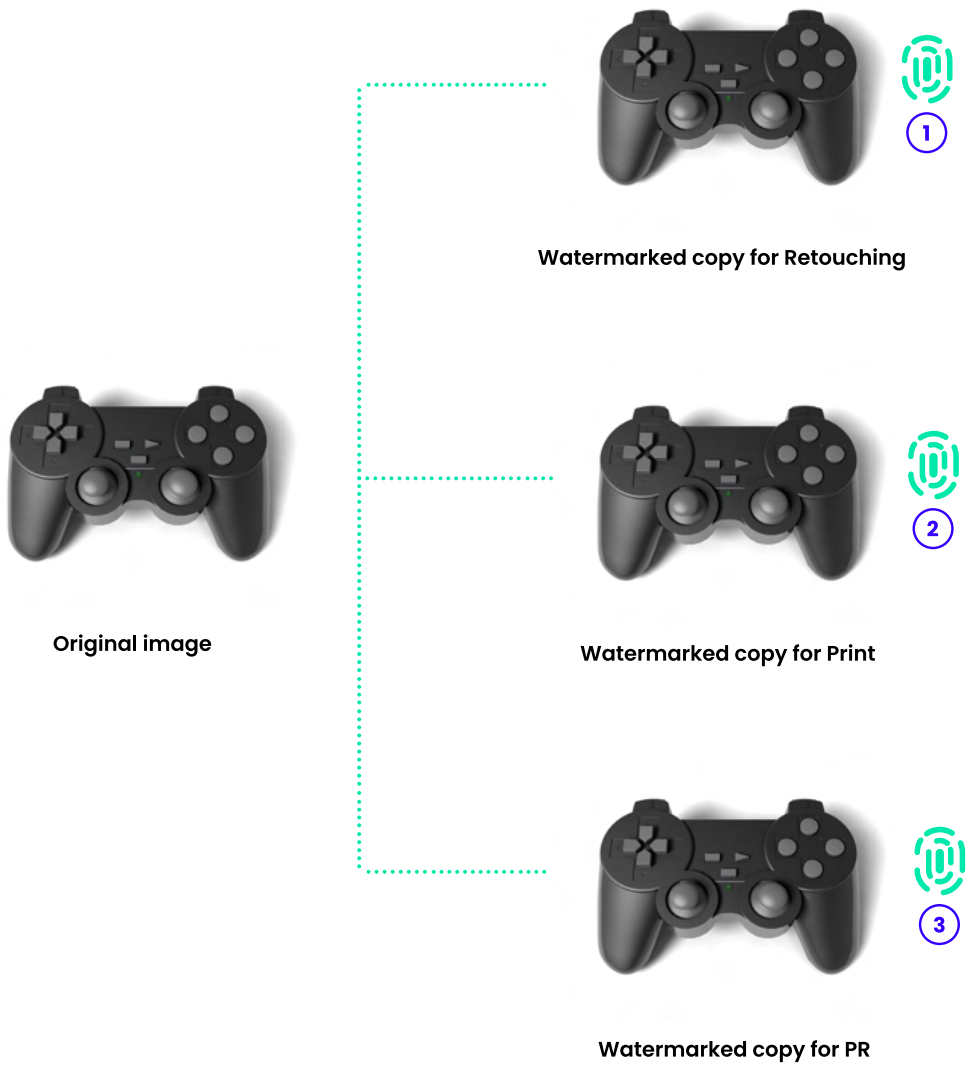
Read more

INVISIBLE DIGITAL WATERMARKING

Today, protecting your clients' digital assets requires a **robust technology that seamlessly integrates within your workflows and current tools**. This is why invisible digital watermarking is the smartest and most reliable way to combat against daily web attacks your clients' digital brand content faces.

Invisible digital watermarking allows you to:

- Create multiple copies of an image and embed each with a recipient-unique identifier
- Crawl the web and detect leaks
- Determine the source of a leak thanks to the identifier specific to the image



One image, three identical copies, but actually different!

To ensure that all parties are protected, and that trust between internal and external teams is not jeopardized, invisible digital watermarking provides a foolproof solution. The simple process of securing the continual flow of images and videos with an embedded watermark creates an environment where **all parties feel confident when sending or receiving digital assets**. In the case of a leaked image or video, the source is immediately spotted.

INVISIBLE WATERMARKING IN 3 STEPS

01 Watermark your campaigns

- Upload your assets, register your recipients
- Generate a unique watermarked copy per recipient

02 Send marked copies

- Download your files (one per recipient) and send them
- … wait for leaks

03 Detect the source of leak

- You spotted a leak somewhere online? Upload the suspicious file
- Identify the original source of the leak



By placing an invisible watermark on your clients' brand digital assets, you'll be able to track how they are being used online, by whom, where, and when. This **deep level of intelligence** means you'll be able to precisely track and continually monitor where and how their visual assets are used.

In the next part, we explain how to choose the right leak prevention solution for your agency.



06

How to choose a leak prevention solution?

HOW TO CHOOSE A LEAK PREVENTION SOLUTION?

To select the right technology to protect your agency and your clients against leaks, you can either do a benchmark of existing solutions or hire an external expert to compare and find the best solution for you.

Either way, to properly evaluate how well a solution matches your agency's needs, you'll want to look at the following important criteria.

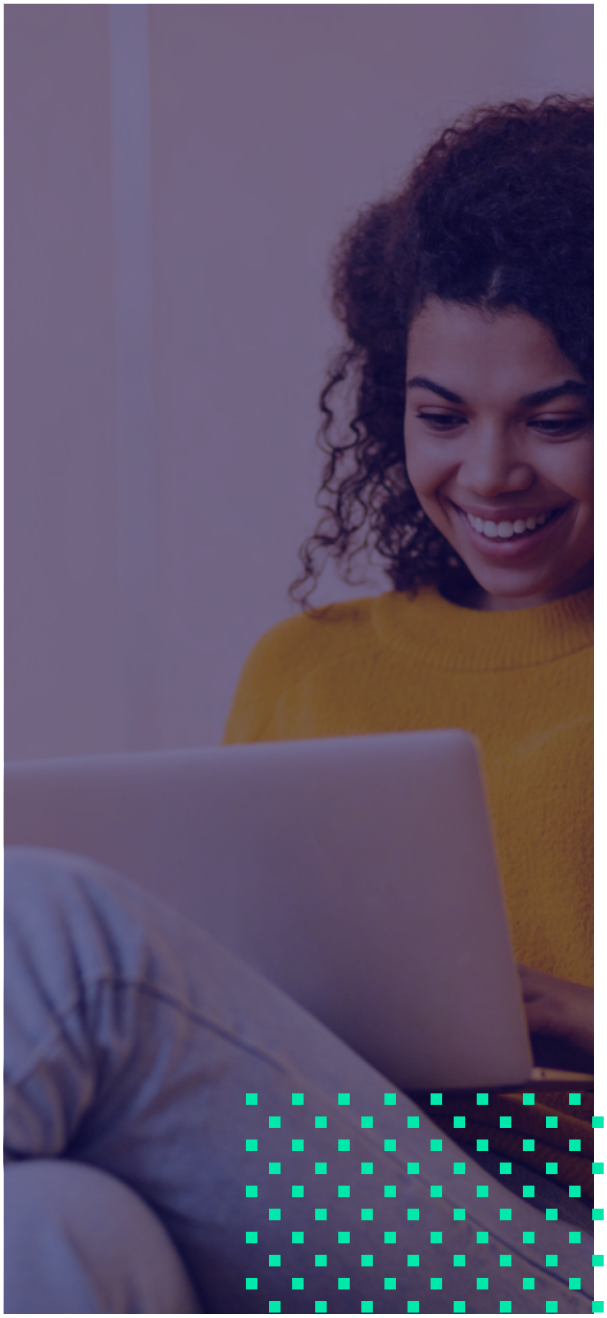


IMPERCEPTIBILITY

The magic of an invisible watermark is that it is imperceivable and **does not distort or degrade the quality** of the medium being monitored or protected.

Due to its virtually undetectable and indestructible nature, it is a fail-safe approach to protecting and monitoring a brand's images and videos, whether purely digital or even in print.

IMATAG uses an invisible modification of pixels which means that the digital watermark is perceptually shaped to remain invisible to the human eye.
As our invisible watermark does not obstruct or alter the visual appearance, it provides your agency with a way to ensure usage compliance and intelligent monitoring **without compromising your client's product** and brand beauty or appeal.



ROBUSTNESS

While selecting a leak prevention solution, it's important to ensure that the watermark **will still be detected after various alterations of the image on the web.**

Most watermarking solutions available today can be easily defeated by the systematic compression of JPEG images on most websites and platforms (social networks, marketplaces, and more).

Using its proven watermarking algorithm, IMATAG's cloud-based platform embeds a recipient-unique, invisible, and indelible code to each frame or image. This secret message is written in a binary code that a computer can only decode. This technique is so robust that even if an invisibly watermarked photo or video is **cropped, color-edited, compressed, inverted, reframed, recalibrated, screen-shot, or even printed, the embedded binary code survives.**

SCALABILITY

An efficient leak prevention solution must be able to **differentiate several copies of the same image.** For example, if you're planning a product launch, you may need to send the same embargoed visual to 15 journalists. You will have to «mark» the same image 15 times, i.e., produce 15 visually identical unique images, each secretly carrying the identifier of each recipient.

With IMATAG's Leak solution, **an unlimited number of copies of a single image can be automatically generated,** each with its own unique watermark.

EASY INTEGRATION

If your agency or clients use a DAM system, you'll want to look for a leak prevention solution that provides **seamless integration.** Through an application programming interface (API), a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other, you can link your agency or client's DAM to an invisible watermarking service.

With IMATAG's API, you can **integrate the best traitor tracing (or forensic steganography) technology into your workflows**. Use the API to hide an invisible identifier in your client's sensitive images or videos—all without altering them or arousing the suspicion of your recipient. Then, in case of a leak, use the same API to detect this identifier in the disclosed content.

CASE STUDY - CONSUMER ELECTRONICS



Challenge

When a globally recognized smartphone brand faced a growing risk of pre-reveal leaks, it looked for a tamper-proof technology solution to secure its visual assets without diminishing image quality.



Solution

Using the IMATAG Leaks solution, the brand embedded invisible watermarks on all its prelaunch visuals, including those sent to employees, agencies, and commercial partners.



Result

The brand systematically and invisibly watermarked its visual assets, providing a more serene workflow and a secure way of detecting and stopping damaging leaks.

> There was no question of deteriorating the quality of our renderings, we were looking for robustness and imperceptibility to secure our product launch contents.

L.Q.
Creative Operations Director

CONCLUSION

For agencies, the stakes are high in ensuring they protect their clients' digital assets in an ever-changing environment. By implementing sound practices with leading-edge technologies, you can gain the peace of mind you, your agency, and your clients deserve.

If you're looking for a way to monitor and track potential leaks of your clients' visual assets, then invisible watermarking technology is the optimal solution for your agency. Whether you're worried about leaks of a prelaunch livestream, images, or videos, or whether you need to monitor the usage pattern of your clients' digital assets, you'll need a single-source-of-truth approach.

Building customer trust means reassuring your client about the safety and impact of your content. Now that you understand how leaks can occur and how to prevent them, you can better control your future launch campaigns.

Ready to take the next step? Book your free demo today and see why leading agencies use our leak-proof solutions.

Book a demo



IMATAG

www.imatag.com