

# Introduction

I am a patent attorney with a master's in electrical engineering and a bachelor's in biochemistry, and I assist my clients with fascinating and cutting-edge technology on a daily basis. From industry leaders to garage inventors, I work with a full spectrum of clients and a wide variety of technology. Detection crystals for supercolliders, drone technology, military hardware, and even thong underwear for dogs are a few of the inventions with which I have worked. My passion, however, is working with startups and emerging companies. I love the energy and enthusiasm of budding innovators hustling to bring their products to market and I find that these clients are the most in need of reliable counsel on how to protect their ideas and inventions.

Some of these companies may consist of only a few core founders who are working to develop a first product with their own savings as startup capital. Others have raised money through Kickstarter, angel investors, or venture capital funds, but are still pushing to get a first product on the market. Despite being new to the process, these innovators are keenly aware that patents are usually one of the most valuable assets their companies will own and are eager to learn more about the process.

Unfortunately, these same companies typically have a hard time getting good patent guidance. Although general information about the patent process is available from a wide range of resources, those resources do not provide necessary detail or offer a one-size-fits-all strategy that fails to account for the unique needs of each business and product. Seasoned patent attorneys are the only reliable source of a custom-crafted patent strategy that maximizes patent protection and brings value to a company, but attorney time is extremely expensive. Sophisticated and well-capitalized companies already know how to

grow and leverage their patent assets and will invest exorbitant sums on a carefully planned and cultivated patent portfolio. Such companies are typically well versed in the nuances of patent strategy or have the budget to hire experts who can provide that expertise. On the other hand, emerging companies are often completely new to the world of patents and are in desperate need of mentorship from a seasoned patent attorney, while also being concerned about the expense involved. Although developing a targeted patent strategy is absolutely crucial at these early stages, new companies tend to be the most under-served and misinformed, and often unknowingly make mistakes that cripple the company before it gets off the ground. From waiting too long and forfeiting all patent rights, to over- or under-spending on worthless patent protection, I see far too many great ideas, products, and businesses that have been compromised beyond salvation and needlessly lost.

This book provides a cost-effective solution to this problem by providing an easy-to-understand insider guide to patents. Based on my first-hand experience with both successful and failed companies of all sizes, I can assist you in learning how to maximize patent protection on any budget, with strategies that can be tailored to companies with any business plan or product. Instead of being intimidated and confused by patents, you will learn how to proactively work with a patent attorney to craft a customized patent plan. This book will teach you insider patent strategies that large successful companies already know and that many serial entrepreneurs learn only after a few failed attempts. Whether you are building up the courage to start your own company, preparing to launch your flagship product, or already have a patent application filed, this book will give you crucial insight into planning and growing a patent portfolio at any stage. Most importantly, this book will help you to understand patents and the patent process so that you can effectively plan an intellectual property strategy that maximizes protection within a reasonable budget.

This book is for tinkers, entrepreneurs, and innovators, as well as businesses with products or processes that could be patented. It is useful to inventors and companies at any stage of development, and the content is even relevant where patent applications have already been

filed or where patents have already been issued. The content is also applicable to all sorts of products and technology, including simple mechanical products, computer software, electronic devices, biotechnology, production methods, business methods, and improvements on existing products or processes. Additionally, although the focus is on U.S. patents, foreign companies seeking U.S. patents will also benefit from this book.

We begin by discussing the four main types of intellectual property (trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets, and patents) so that you can understand what types of inventions can be protected by a patent and what innovations are better protected in other ways. From there, we walk through all the stages of the patent process—from protecting yourself during invention and product development to selecting a patent attorney and working with him or her to draft patent applications and working through the examination process at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Finally, we discuss advanced techniques for building a patent portfolio having multiple patents and offer advice on how to license, enforce, and otherwise leverage patent assets.

It's likely that you are reading this book because you already have an inkling of how powerful patents can be. You know that growing companies can be propelled to success by patenting ideas and inventions. The information in this book will enable you to avoid years of trial-and-error or the high cost of a patent attorney providing you with a personal master class on the patent process. Welcome to the insider world of patents. Let's get started.