

### ***When is the right time to look for a Patent Lawyer?***

In today's fast-paced cost-sensitive business environment, it is not unusual for a business or organization to wait until it is absolutely necessary before calling for outside help. However, in the case of a patent lawyer, the necessary moment may not be obvious – and the obvious moment may be too late. You might suppose that you need to call a patent lawyer only when you have finalized the invention, put it in production, and are about to (or already did) ship your first order. That could well be too late! As in most other professional relationships, there is a significant advantage in having an established working relationship before the need becomes urgent and before valuable rights may be unknowingly foreclosed.

The process for selecting a patent lawyer should seek to match the overall characteristics and needs of the client and its business goals and activities to the character and capabilities of the patent law firm. A joint review of the client objectives, business plans, nature of the attorney/client interface, anticipated scope of legal work, and the billing practices of the attorney should all be part of the discussion. Here, in addition, we match each client with an attorney and a paralegal as a legal team who will normally manage all aspects of the client's intellectual property cases.

The attorney will meet and be in communication from time to time with the client's management and technical staff as well as its inventors to identify patentable technology and assist in the development and implementation of a strategic patent program that is harmonized with the company's business objectives. A carefully executed patent program reduces a company's risk of losing control over its core technology, and allows the company to operate from a position of strength in licensing and settlement negotiations. The lawyer, consulting when appropriate with other lawyers in the firm, also provides early or late stage counseling on infringement, validity, product clearance, and design around analysis, and can render informal or formal legal opinions on patentability, patent validity and patent infringement when necessary.

The paralegal facilitates case management, docket control, routine client correspondence, and is often able to answer client questions directly.

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The registered patent lawyers at Maine Cernota & Rardin have substantial experience in the preparation and prosecution of U.S. patent applications and international protection through a network of skilled agents. They counsel clients in all aspects of patent law, ranging from invention harvesting to patent acquisition, portfolio maintenance, and patent licensing. Their mode of operation is to gain an understanding of the invention, its commercial implications, and the client's business objectives - and to then offer legal and business advice and appropriate legal services in each case. The firm is further staffed and equipped to support its lawyers with the legal and procedural complexities of managing a domestic or international intellectual property portfolio.

Perhaps the very best time to look for a patent lawyer is now...