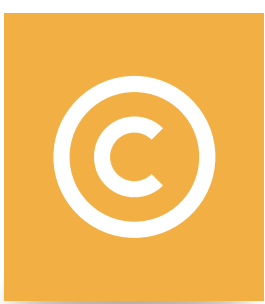


Cost Effective Strategies for Launching an IP Portfolio

Coming up with fresh ideas that translate into products or services is the lifeblood for inventors and creators. However, it can be costly to protect one's intellectual property. Patents in particular have multiple stages, which translates into extensive costs. However, there are some alternative IP protection strategies that could be used.



Obtaining a Copyright Before a Patent

In some situations, a copyright may be obtained on its own. This is possible if the item being created also has an **“ornamental” element or unique aesthetic design**, and is recognized as a work of art.



Obtaining a Trade Secret Before a Patent

An inventor may want to think about **protecting an asset as a trade secret before a fully fledged patent**. A trade secret is, of course, secret. It costs less, but is also a riskier form of protection, with the nature of the protection found in “keeping the secret.”



Obtaining Trademarks

According to the USPTO, trademarks may be used in a design patent application in “limited circumstances.” There may be **components of an innovation that creators want to protect that don't involve disclosure** of how the product is made.



When to Make Patents Priority

Even with all these strategies, there may still be situations in which a patent is the best option. Creators should think about these questions:

- Is the invention something that will be useful beyond 20 years?
- Could another person or company reverse engineer the process?
- Will someone discover or invent the same process in the near future?
- Are aspects of the process or the product itself seen and/or observed in public settings?