



WHAT'S BETTER, A PATENT OR A PPA?

Here are some issues to seriously consider before getting protection on your idea.

WHY YOU SHOULD GET A PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION (PPA)

The #1 reason to get a PPA is...you have a truly unique idea.

You've done LOTS of research (online, in stores) and think your idea solves a common problem.

Most important, it's really like nothing else out there.

So it's *not* a typical re-design, say a garbage can or drill or cat toy or garden rake, which would have *no* new features.

(That said, sometimes re-makes and combo-inventions have striking new features and may be considered "unique". This applies to them too.)

A good example of a peerless invention is that user-free machine that throws balls for the dog without any help from mom or dad.

Very cool, very smart, super useful.

When a product like that - one with no equal - debuts, most people think "Patent!"

In fact, initially a PPA is all you need.

Read on before you get into patent research.

IF YOU DO GET A PPA

Smart inventors favor PPAs, if and when protection is needed.

They're simple, cheap, quick to file and give you the coverage you need to feel confident about revealing your idea to companies.

Remember that no one can look up what's in your PPA, and the Patent Office doesn't look at them.

They are neither renewable nor extendable, they don't apply to designs, and they last just one year.

That should be plenty of time for you to scope out potential licensees.

Knowing that, this next sentence is key:

If in one year or less you haven't found a willing manufacturer after calling everyone on our lists, your idea isn't ready for the market.

Ideally you've followed these steps -> you've made a sell sheet, filed an inexpensive PPA, and called marketing directors.

Best case, they want your invention. Yes!

Worst case, no one thinks they can make it work, and you've only spent a year and a hundred dollars or so finding out.

That beats spending your life savings making the worst possible inventing mistakes:

1. Having a complicated prototype built with your own money

2. Dealing with expensive gurus who end up making you contact companies yourself (you pay \$\$\$\$ and they still won't give you their contacts)
3. Having thousands of units manufactured yourself, only to find out stores don't want your product

Again, here's the best way to get started, even more simply put:

>>Sell sheet, phone calls & emails, manufacturers say yes or no.<<

Don't make it any harder!

These people have the pulse of the industry under their thumbs; please trust their intuition and knowledge.

If you call dozens of companies and they all say the same thing, listen.

File a PPA here:

<https://www.uspto.gov/patents-application-process/file-online>

WHY YOU SHOULD GET A PATENT

There are a few good reasons to get a full patent at [uspto.gov](https://www.uspto.gov).

1. Your idea includes truly new, breakthrough technology unknown before
2. It's in a niche that's highly specialized, like IT, aerospace, cyber security, nuclear/military/marine tech or engineering, AI, facial recognition, etc.
3. In addition, your product may take well-educated workers and specialized machinery to reproduce your product on a mass scale.

HOWEVER, the smart way to get a patent is still to get a PPA first.

Ideally you'd file a PPA, approach companies with a sell sheet, and find an interested party.

You'd then negotiate to **have them** spend the money and time on a patent filing for you.

Finding the right company to patent and distribute it is the easiest - and possibly most lucrative - route for the inventor.

Again, this is not going to happen on a simple, non-unique design because it's not needed.

Re-cap: getting a patent without spending a dime:

1. Your invention includes unique, specialized, breakthrough tech
2. You get an inexpensive PPA
3. You pitch companies
4. A company wants your idea
5. You negotiate and they file the patent for you. Congrats!

That's the world's best way to become a bona fide inventor, with little or no cost and tons of time and frustration saved.

WHEN YOU PROBABLY DON'T NEED PROTECTION

1. Your idea is in an industry that's not highly sensitive, examples being housewares, toys, lawn & garden, or pets.
2. It's simple, with no specialized labor or equipment required to produce it.
3. It's a re-do, an improvement over something that already exists, but doesn't have new features or a unique function.

If there are products similar to yours already out there, you are *probably* okay without protection.

(Though you ought to look into patents of comparable products to be sure you're not infringing. Read "Researching for Uniqueness" on the [Articles page](#).)

In a nutshell: is your idea a re-make, in a common category, and easy to manufacture?

Then it's likely that a PPA is fine but you don't need one to get started approaching companies.

That said, if you're really new to inventing and would feel better with protection, get a PPA.

Or get a free first-time consult with a patent attorney who may tell you the same thing.

They can be trusted to keep your idea safe; their job is filing trademarks and patents and occasionally lawsuits, not ripping off inventors.

Just remember some attorneys may feel the need to convince you to get a patent...that's why they exist..."when you're a hammer all the world's a nail".

In the end, getting a PPA, a patent, or nothing at all depends on the scope of your idea.

Keep researching all avenues before you waste time and money!

Aiming to make your inventing day a little easier... Kristina Powell-Raines

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