

**7 WAYS**  
TO STREAMLINE YOUR  
**IP PORTFOLIO**  
**MANAGEMENT**

In any business, the bottom line is making sure that a company's operations result in revenues exceeding the cost of those activities. This makes Intellectual Property an incredibly tantalizing proposition for many firms because these assets offer the potential for a high return on investment (ROI) relative to the cost of obtaining and managing IP rights. While patents and trademarks may be difficult concepts, even for business executives, everyone understands the importance of ROI to business success. Although registering IP rights can cost many thousands of dollars, those rights may lead to very lucrative forms of monetization like licensing deals.

However, IP management has about as much to do with managing risks based on the IP rights of other firms as it does with securing your valuable corporate assets. Globalization has contributed to an incredible increase in the number of patents that are currently active worldwide as companies race to protect their technological advantage in many countries. Often, these assets are sold off to companies who do not practice the technologies covered by the patents, firms known as non-practicing entities (NPEs). Many NPEs seek to monetize their patents through litigation campaigns meant to result in an IP license. Managing risk in these situations is not limited to an analysis of your market competitors.

Today's economy poses plenty of litigation risks that are faced by companies trying to operate legally in the marketplace. Often, these legal challenges are brought by NPEs or "patent trolls" just as a company is achieving success or reaches an important milestone, such as an initial public offering of stock. Companies need to be able to operate free of legal risks. Still, patent trolls threaten this stability across industry sectors, especially for companies that implement digital platforms made available by third-party providers.


It is not easy to know where to get started with implementing better IP management processes, especially in businesses that have not previously undertaken this work. The good news is that there is no better time than the present. However, meeting the challenges of managing both litigation risk and valuable intangible assets can seem daunting. The following tips will offer you some helpful thoughts on where and how to get started taking better control of your firm's fortunes in a world where IP is becoming increasingly important.



## Tip #1: Invest in a robust, enterprise-level IP management software solution

Especially if you are navigating the world of IP management for the first time, the right software solution can be a practical guide in showing you which IP matters deserve your most urgent attention. As you continue to incorporate IP into your business model, an enterprise-level software solution for IP management will become a necessity to get a handle on the vast amounts of IP office correspondence that can accrue from registering even just a few assets. The most reliable software solutions will provide not only useful tools for IP portfolio and budget analysis but also support detailed records for each of your company's IP assets.






## Tip #2: Set a clear IP strategy that is closely aligned to your business goals

Like any other business activity, a company's IP management practices need to be shaped after its end goals. Firms will often spend a lot of time and energy pursuing IP rights that do not bring any benefits. It is important to remember that obtaining IP assets is not an end in and of itself but, instead, is supposed to help a firm establish and maintain a competitive advantage. There will be times when difficult questions must be asked on which assets should be pursued and which are better left abandoned. Those questions become easier to answer correctly if your corporate policies are clear on how IP should support your business.





## Tip #3: Engage in regular audits to increase the value of your company's IP practices

Firms that use IP successfully do not merely obtain IP assets and catalog them for later use. Performing a thorough review of your company's entire portfolio of IP assets at regular intervals is essential to ensure that your greatest performing assets are properly registered with all maintenance fees paid to the correct agency by the deadline. Similarly, regular review of a company's existing IP-related agreements, including any patent or trademark licenses, as well as IP portfolios owned by competitors, mitigates legal risks. Completing this review every six months or quarterly goes a long way in reducing costs and identifying potential opportunities for leveraging IP in a more valuable way.



## Tip #4: Do not resist the necessary changes to your company's IP strategy

No matter how important a particular product line or service is to your business success today, it is not a good idea to marry your company to any specific IP assets without considering changing market conditions. Especially with the rapid pace of change in our high-tech, globalized world, keeping your IP management activities aligned with your business goals requires a very critical eye. An annual review of the corporate IP strategy is the bare minimum that a company should undertake to ensure that intellectual property assets are contributing value and not merely draining resources.







## Tip #5: Consult with an IP professional for an expert's opinion on risks and opportunities

Much like implementing an effective software solution, asking for guidance from an IP consultant experienced in portfolio and risk management is a great early step, which ensures that your IP management activities get started on the right foot. Whereas you are the expert when it comes to your business, an experienced IP consultant is the expert you need to ensure that your intangible assets support your business goals. International regulatory compliance, infringement monitoring and even IP-related tax issues are aspects of IP management that can be made much more manageable with an IP consultant's expertise.



## Tip #6: Identify complementary IP assets across your product lines

Organizing your various patent, trademark and trade secret assets that are represented in a company's product lines is one way to keep those assets grouped based on strategic priorities. While many of those assets will likely have different deadlines to track, understanding how certain assets are related to each other can aid in the decision-making process. Keeping documentation of these asset groupings can help you quickly reference them later.





## Tip #7: Narrow your IP registration filings to your most important markets

Maybe you have a product line that is reaching customers in countries you had not considered selling those products into. While keeping your options open is a good idea when conducting business across borders, registering all of your IP assets in those new countries is not always necessary. While no business professional wants to lose sales, it is essential to be sure that the value of certain IP assets in a particular country is worth the cost and effort of obtaining those assets.



