

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PATENT AGENT PROGRAM

### **Do I need to have a background in the law?**

*No. Our patent engineers come from a variety of fields in science and engineering. We consider it our job to train you and teach you about the law.*

### **What types of skills should I possess?**

*Of the varied skill sets that we look for, time management, ability to think critically and analytically, and intellectual curiosity are paramount. Dealing with a large caseload requires one to be able to manage their time and prioritize which cases need to be worked on now and what can be put off for later while still delivering high quality work products. Being able to think in a critical and analytical fashion is very important during the patent prosecution process, from determining the novel aspects of an invention to forming arguments in office responses. Finally, our patent engineers don't always deal with technologies that they are intimately familiar with, so the willingness to take the time and learn the new technologies is required in order to succeed.*

*Great attention to detail and strong communication skills (both written and oral) are also valuable qualities to possess.*

### **What kind of work will I be doing?**

*As a patent engineer, every day you will be solving problems. When writing a patent application, whether through an invention disclosure meeting or by reviewing a technical disclosure, you are solving problems like: what is the patentable invention? During the process of patent prosecution, whether responding to a domestic or foreign office action or writing an appeal brief, you are solving problems like: how does my patent differ from the prior art? Every day our patent engineers, in conjunction with our patent agents and attorneys, solve problems on behalf of our clients.*

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### **What is my day-to-day like?**

*As a patent engineer, you can expect to spend about half of your day delving into highly technical analysis of complex scientific topics that are present within a particular patent application. This includes self study on the technology, discussions with others within the firm who hold expertise in the technology and with the inventors, and analysis of documents provided by the inventors and USPTO. The other half of your day is spent writing the patent or response and scheduling future projects. Some days may be focused within a single field for a particular invention, while other days you will have the opportunity to dive into more than one technical area and invention.*

### **What type of variability will I see?**

*Projects can range from a few weeks and can be as short as a few hours. Therefore, you will move from one invention to the next relatively rapidly. This provides a high rate of ever changing technological exposure that can vary on a daily or weekly basis.*

### **What are the typical hours?**

*Hours can vary based on your docket. We require a minimum of 1,800 billable hours a year. This may require flexibility from a standard eight-hour workday on occasion, but having a good work-life balance is also very important.*

### **Are there performance evaluations?**

*Everyone at the firm has performance reviews twice a year: one typically in February and the other in September. While open communication between patent engineers and the partners overseeing them is encouraged throughout the year, the evaluations are a time when the partners and the other members of the firm have a formal time to discuss topics such as career progression and development.*

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**The formal mentor is there to answer any questions on firm life, advise a young patent engineer on how to succeed as a patent engineer or agent, and to serve as a one-on-one tutor on issues in intellectual property law.**

### **What is the job training like?**

*Job training is a mix of formal in-house training, formal and informal mentorships, and “learning as you go.” The firm provides formal training in patent law with lectures based on the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP) covering such topics as different types of patents, patentability, statutory bars, etc. This is coupled with biweekly “round table discussions” where members of the firm discuss the latest developments in patent law as a result of various cases. Considering how dynamic intellectual property law has become in the recent years, this is incredibly important for young patent engineers, agents and attorneys.*

### **What is the mentorship program?**

*Each new patent engineer is assigned a formal mentor. The formal mentor is there to answer any questions on firm life, advise a young patent engineer on how to succeed as a patent engineer or agent, and to serve as a one-on-one tutor on issues in intellectual property law. In addition, informal mentorships often result from the collegial environment of the firm. New patent engineers often find informal mentors from more experienced agents and attorneys from working with them on case matters.*

### **Will I be working with attorneys?**

*A new patent engineer usually gets the majority of his/her work from one of the attorneys in the firm, usually a partner. This is where “learning as you go” comes into play. Assignments are given right away, and the process of going back and forth on office action responses, patents, appeal briefs, etc. provides the practical training to succeed as a patent engineer or agent.*

**Upon completion of law school and the state bar, the patent agent will be recognized as a patent attorney and will have had five years of experience in patent prosecution.**

### **Where can I take my career from here?**

*Patent engineers are encouraged to sit for the USPTO Patent Bar usually around the first year mark. Passing the bar allows the patent engineer to become a registered patent agent. From there, the patent agent may choose to attend part-time law school with tuition assistance from the firm. The time to complete part-time law school depends on the person, but typically ranges from three to four years. Upon completion of law school and the state bar, the patent agent will be recognized as a patent attorney and will have had five years of experience in patent prosecution. From there, people can go into patent counseling, litigation or continue with patent prosecution.*