


Step-by-step Guide to Using Invention Promoters

A grayscale photograph of a man in a suit looking intently at a martini glass. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Do you think you have a great idea for a product or service?' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper right corner of the image.

**Do you think you
have a great idea
for a product or
service?**



Step-by-step Guide to Using Invention Promoters

Every year thousands of people try to develop their ideas and market them commercially. Some people use the services of invention promotion firms to help evaluate, develop and market their idea. Contracting for the services of such firms is no different from making any other major purchase. If you are interested in working with one, before entering into a contract, the following common sense guidance may help you to avoid costly mistakes:

- ▶ Do your homework – there is a considerable amount of free or low cost advice available, on issues such as patenting and other forms of intellectual property protection, which you may wish to consider first. A few of these sources or routes to information are suggested overleaf.
- ▶ Do not disclose the details of your invention to anyone, including the promoter, without a prior confidentiality agreement – failure to do so could prevent you from obtaining intellectual property rights in the future.
- ▶ Early in your discussion with a promotion firm, find out exactly what the different stages of the service are and the costs associated with each stage, from the ‘research’ about your invention right through to the marketing and licensing.
- ▶ Ask the firm to provide evidence that they have the necessary skills and expertise in the field of your interest to support the activities that they agree to carry out on your behalf.
- ▶ Ask what success rate the firm has achieved in promoting inventions since it started offering its services, and find out whether references can be provided from recent clients.
- ▶ Question claims and assurances that your invention will make money. Commercialisation of inventions is a risky business – no one can guarantee that your invention will be commercially successful.
- ▶ Ask them for their rejection rate – the percentage of all ideas or inventions that the firm finds unacceptable at the first assessment stage. Not all ideas could be considered to be commercially viable and it should be expected that firms should have high rejection rates.
- ▶ Find out whether the services advertised, e.g. the patent search and/or market assessment, will be carried out in countries in which you would like to exploit your invention.
- ▶ If the invention promotion firm claims to know, or have special access to, manufacturers who are likely to be interested in licensing your invention, or if they claim to represent manufacturers on the look-out for new product ideas – ask for proof.
- ▶ If the firm offers the services of a ‘patent agent’ or ‘patent attorney’ ask if those people are registered. The Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys is the professional body for patent attorneys in the UK. It aims to increase awareness and understanding of the innovation process by providing a basic information pack and free clinics, and by arranging talks or seminars when appropriate. CIPA members help inventors to obtain protection, not only in patents, but also in trade marks, designs and copyright.
For further information call CIPA:
T: 020 7405 9450
E: mail@cipa.org.uk or visit
W: <http://www.cipa.org.uk>
- ▶ If the firm offers search services to assess patent prospects make sure that the search is comprehensive and covers all published art. A patent must be new and if the idea is published anywhere in the world before filing then this will invalidate rights. Compare the cost and thoroughness of the search with that provided by the UK Intellectual Property Office. For information on commercial searches call:
T: 01633 811010
E: commercialssearches@ipo.gov.uk or visit
W: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk>
- ▶ If at the end of all this you are happy with the evidence and do wish to enter into a contract, ensure that it contains all the terms you agreed to – verbal and written – before you sign. If possible you should seek legal advice.

The guidance on using invention promoters complements other important measures the Government has introduced to support inventors:

The UK Intellectual Property Office Central Enquiry Unit is able to give advice about patenting and other forms of intellectual property protection. There is also an extensive range of free literature available to individuals and small firms.

T: 0845 9 500505

W: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk>.

Business Links can provide advice on general business practices, the marketing of a product and other related problems, such as advice about how to obtain funding for developing a product and signposting advice on local facilities. Business Links also provide information and application forms for Government grants to help inventors research and develop new products. For further information contact Business Links

T: 0845 600 9 006

W: <http://www.businesslink.org>.

NESTA, set up with an endowment of £200m from the National Lottery, is intended to help creative individuals develop their full potential, while also helping to turn creativity and ideas into products and services and to enable these to be exploited effectively. For further details and a free information pack contact NESTA

T: 020 7438 2500

W: <http://nesta.org.uk>.

In addition to this, access to useful information can be obtained by visiting the following websites:

<http://www.innovation.gov.uk>

The site, which is managed by DTI's Innovation Unit, aims to help organisations understand innovation, why it is important and how the best organisations manage it.

<http://www.invent.org.uk>

The site of the Institute of Patentees and Inventors, which is a small non-profit making organisation, offers advice and guidance on all aspects of inventing.

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