



# Patent Ownership

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**Q** My employee invented something amazing that we'd love to patent and perfect. Would the patent belong to the company or the employee?

**A** It depends. The company will likely own any patent rights if it hired the employee to invent, or if the employment or other agreement includes specific language giving the company those rights. Absent such an agreement, however, or if the agreement is not written properly, the employee may have ownership, even if the invention occurred at work. And inventions developed independent from work typically belong to their inventors. State laws –should also be considered -- for example, California and Washington laws offer more protection to inventors. Oregon does not. An experienced patent practitioner can help you avoid potential disputes over patent ownership.