



# Intellectual Property Law

**Q** Should our company implement a reward program for inventors?

**A** Reward programs can be very useful in promoting the submission of ideas for patenting and encouraging active participation in the patent process. It is best if payment of the reward coincides with the filing of a patent application, since inventor input and assistance is critical during the process of preparing the patent application itself. Distributing a reward among

multiple joint inventors can

be tricky, however. The usual resolution is to provide the same reward to each joint inventor for up to three or four inventors. If there are more inventors than this, all joint inventors split the total reward. For example, the reward may consist of \$500 per inventor up to four inventors, and if there are more than four, a set amount of \$2,000 can be split between them equally.

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Monetary rewards may also be provided when a patent is granted or when maintenance fees are paid. However, because these dates can be years away from filing, such rewards are usually not particularly effective motivational tools during the important period leading up to the filing of the application.

Another viable, more informal reward system entails presenting plaques engraved with the cover

sheet of the granted patent to inventors for their accomplishments, perhaps at a small recognition ceremony. This is a cost-effective means of demonstrating the value the company places on intellectual property protection and provides recognition to those who put the effort into helping the company protect these assets.

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