

Fact sheet | IP Services

Evaluating a patent and technical literature search provider

Five questions to ensure your peace of mind.

When you need patent research support, you need confidence that your search provider's strategy, analysis, and reporting will meet the legal and technical objectives underlying your request.

Your patents are a critical asset and a key component of your business strategy. Make sure your provider can give you peace of mind through quality, consistency, collaboration, and customization.

01

Q.

Does your provider have the ability to perform true native language searching?

A.

The best search providers will have the ability to perform native language searching of full, original text, which is critical to many patent and technical literature research projects. Confirm that your search provider's "native language searching" goes beyond just searching translated documents. If that's the approach they take, some critical technical nuances may be lost. A true "native language search" involves utilizing a team with the actual language skills on the staff side to search documents in their original language. Matching specialized language searchers with native documents greatly reduces your risk of missing critical documents.

02

Q.

Can your provider offer local customer service in the local language?

A.

Just as native language searching is critical, so is local language customer service and locally based support. Working with a provider with offices based in your market, staffed by a team that speaks your language, provides you with multiple benefits. A provider that serves you in your local language (or languages) ensures a thorough understanding of your search requirements and clear communication of search results, and having an office in your local market provides the convenience of coordinating work and discussions within the same time zone. In addition, a provider with a worldwide network of offices can support you by leveraging the resources of its other offices as needed, including the ability to search hard copy resources that may only be available "on the ground" at libraries or patent offices.



With customization and flexibility, your searches will provide the results you need.

03



What literature resources can your provider leverage, and how expansive are those resources?



Excellent search providers rely on multiple search engines, databases, and libraries for every search, with a search strategy customized to meet your specific and unique needs, based on their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of every resource. They will keep drilling, often in multiple languages, creatively pursuing all possible avenues. Navigating hard copy collections requires a different skill set than performing searches using online resources; deep library experience is required to do such searching effectively. Additionally, ask your search provider if they have unique expertise in using nonpatent literature resources across technologies and languages, which is often required to find critical prior art needed to support invalidity searches.

04



How much customization and flexibility does your search provider offer?



Finding a search provider that can customize their approach to best address your search needs is a wonderful advantage—why wouldn't you want to work with someone who can use whatever process or report format works for you? Ask about the formats that your search provider can use to deliver search results and discuss what processes and workflows are best for your review. Partner with someone who can set up as many or as few interim reviews as you need to feel comfortable during the project. Make sure that you are able to easily interpret the results that your search provider presents, rather than receiving raw data that you'll have to sift through to make sense of. With customization and flexibility, your searches will provide the results you need, and you'll avoid expending time that you don't have following up with an ineffective search provider.

05

Q.

How strong is your search provider's project management approach and team?

A.

When you use an external search provider, you need to be confident that the results will provide you with the thorough, accurate information you need to meet your critical legal and business needs. The ability of your search partner to provide that confidence is dependent on the background, experience, and training of their search team. The team should include patent agents, attorneys, and patent examiners, as well as former practicing engineers and scientists, many of whom hold advanced degrees in their areas of technical specialty. Search providers that send their team through carefully designed and structured internal training and career development programs hold a distinct advantage by adding consistency to their team, ensuring that every searcher on every project consistently follows the same search strategies and techniques.

Additionally, a robust and complete project management approach includes an in-house, full-time team of experienced relationship managers and searchers around the world that can provide every possible type of search throughout the lifecycle of a patent (and for any technical area). Look for a provider that is consultative, highly communicative, responsive, and high-touch. Make sure your provider is scoping your project to understand the true requirements, instead of touting their own capabilities with no reference to how they will serve your needs—top of the line search providers understand the importance of customer involvement and input to deliver useful results. These providers are responsive to your involvement, and will share and discuss interim results so that search approaches can be adjusted mid-project if needed.

Remember, your patent and technical literature search provider should be an extension of your team. Choose a partner you can trust who has the capabilities and qualities described here.

Working with a search provider that you have full confidence in allows your team to focus on other critical activities, leaving you with the peace of mind that your patents are thoroughly protected and remain a valuable asset to your business.

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