

Joint Ownership

Patents may be owned jointly by two or more persons as in the case of a patent granted to joint inventors, or in the case of the assignment of a part interest in a patent.

Any joint owner of a patent, no matter how small the part interest, may make, use, offer for sale and sell and import the invention for his or her own profit provided they do not infringe another's patent rights, without regard to the other owners, and may sell the interest or any part of it, or grant licenses to others, without regard to the other joint owner, unless the joint owners have made a contract governing their relation to each other.

It is accordingly dangerous to assign a part interest without a definite agreement between the parties as to the extent of their respective rights and their obligations to each other if the above result is to be avoided.

The owner of a patent may grant licenses to others. Since the patentee has the right to exclude others from making, using, offering for sale, or selling or importing the invention, no one else may do any of these things without his/her permission. A patent license agreement is in essence nothing more than a promise by the licensor not to sue the licensee. No particular form of license is required; a license is a contract and may include whatever provisions the parties agree upon, including the payment of royalties, etc.

The drawing up of a license agreement (as well as assignments) is within the field of an attorney at law, although an individual under law may draft its own license. Such attorney or individual should be familiar with patent matters as well. A few States have prescribed certain formalities to be observed in connection with the sale of patent rights.