

Inventor Relations Are Complicated! Developing and Maintaining Good Inventor Relationships Is Key

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Know Your Inventor

In the Office of Technology Licensing (OTL) at Stanford, we believe that the inventor is the most important client, our customer. She is the source of our raw material, the person who gives us inventions to find homes for. Therefore, we need to establish good relationships with inventors who sometimes don't really understand the commercialization process. Other inventors do not want to be bothered or educated with the legal and commercial details—especially prior to having inventions; some want to be very closely involved. Still other inventions are, frankly, not of commercial interest, but the inventor, as the creator with little objective perspective, often has unrealistic expectations.

The ideal inventor is someone who is involved and interested in giving input but is willing to rely on, and learn from, the experienced judgment of the licensing professional. On the other hand, sometimes the inventor has important insights that can help the licensing office make a better decision. The inventor, understandably, wants the technology developed and usually wants the licensing office to “get the best deal possible.” Inventors often think we undervalue their technology.