



Publish or Perish vs Patent and Prosper

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June 2015

Scientists are judged on their publication rate and the phrase *Publish or Perish* is the cliché often cited as a rule to live by. In this article we'll explain why scientist should also think *Patent and Prosper* instead of only *Publish or Perish*.

Imaging funding your own research! That is what a patent on your great invention can do for you.

Despite the existence of laws not only enabling but also in many instances requiring that publicly employed scientists commercialize their research, a deep wariness of patenting is still found in many academic environments. The wariness is often based on myths – the most common of which are dispelled in this article. Having a patent on your great invention may provide a source of income, count as a publication on your CV and establish collaborations with industry partners – that is why all scientist ought to consider patenting before publishing. When considering whether to publish or patent always keep in mind that if you even think about patenting, you need to wait with publishing until your patent application is filed. If you don't, your own article will make it difficult or even impossible to obtain a patent on your great invention.

The most common myths we hear as reasons for not patenting are:

If I patent, my science will be kept a secret

This statement reveals a complete misunderstanding of the patent system. The word "patent" comes from the Latin word "patere" which means "to lay open" – in other words to make what is disclosed in the patent available to the public. All patent applications are published 18 months from the date of filing and are publicly available in searchable patent databases. Furthermore, once you have filed at least your priority

founding patent application, you can publish a scientific article detailing your science. In other words: applying for a patent is a genuine two-for one situation as it may give you two publications (with different scope) for the same research.

If I patent, I can't publish my science

This is a common misinterpretation due to the phrase many journals employ in their guidelines for authors, which often state that articles submitted must be *original research which has not been reported or submitted elsewhere*. This does not preclude patenting. You may however need to inform the journal of your financial interest in having your research published – the publication of your research article is likely to cause the value of your patent application to rise.

If I patent, my science is not benefitting the public

This only holds true if you do not make use of your patented invention. As a patent holder you have the right to forbid others to make or use your invention. You also have the right to license out the invention to interested parties, who can help you commercialize your invention – i.e. make it available to the public.

In fact, very often the opposite is true: if you do not have a patent on your invention nobody is interested in commercializing and making your invention publicly available. With e.g. pharmaceuticals there are many years of expensive trials before the product enters the market. Obviously, the companies who make these investments want to make sure – as far as possible – that an income will arrive, and they can only be sure of this if the drug is not copied and sold cheaply by everybody. The companies that make the investments can only be sure of this, if the drug is patented.

If I patent, I cannot apply for grants as the grant proposal is published

In for example Denmark, the law provides that all public institutions must give access to their archives and this includes the research councils. For this reason it is a common misunderstanding that scientists cannot apply for public funding as the grant proposals will become publicly available. This is true only to the extent that if you write that the concept is being considered or is in process of being patented, access to your proposal is limited and thus it is not publicly available.

In other words: you are free to apply for grants – and to either commercialize or sell or license the rights to your invention through your patent.

Imagine: A patent on your great invention may provide funding for your own research!

Conclusion

Patents are a tool for commercializing inventions and may provide a source of income for future research. Why limit yourself to publishing a one-of scientific article when a good invention may also be eligible for patenting? Why only get fame, when you can get fame and a fortune? Patent and Prosper goes hand in hand with Publish or Perish – as long as you remember to patent BEFORE you publish.



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