
ENHANCE INNOVATIONS

The Inventor's Guide to Success

Everything that happens between the idea in your head and a product a company will pay to make. Research, patent search, design, manufacturing, and the licensing conversation.

MARKET RESEARCH / PRIOR ART / DESIGN / LICENSING

24

Chapters, in the order
the work happens

4

Stages, from first sketch
to the licensing table

6

Chapters you can act on
before spending anything



Product design and licensing since 2010 · Champlin, Minnesota · enhancepd.com

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this guide

This guide will not tell you whether your invention is a good idea. Nobody honest can tell you that, and the ones who promise they can are the reason the Federal Trade Commission watches this industry closely.

What this guide does instead is show you the sequence. There is a right order to the work, and most of the money inventors lose gets lost by doing the steps out of order. Someone spends nine thousand dollars on tooling for a product that turns out to be covered by a patent filed in 2014. Someone else spends two years perfecting a design for a category that sells four hundred units a year nationwide. Neither of those people made a bad product. They just answered the expensive questions before the cheap ones.

The cheap questions come first in this guide. Chapters 2 through 6 cost you nothing but an afternoon. Chapters 7 through 13 cost a few hundred dollars and save far more than that. Only after those two sections does the guide talk about spending real money on design and engineering.

Read it in order the first time

Each part assumes the one before it. If you skip to the design section because that is the fun part, you will be reading it without knowing what your product has to compete against or whether you can protect it. Read straight through once, then come back to whichever chapter matches the decision in front of you.

A note on what this is not

This is educational material, not legal advice and not financial advice. Patent law is decided case by case, and the value of any product is decided by buyers, not by a guide. Nothing here is a prediction about your invention or a promise about what it will earn. Use it to ask better questions and to know which step comes next.

Who wrote this

Enhance Innovations has designed, engineered, and represented inventor products since 2010, working from an office in Champlin, Minnesota. The team covers industrial design, 3D design and engineering, photorealistic rendering, product animation, marketing materials, manufacturing sourcing, and licensing representation. Every stage described in this guide is one the team has run for real clients, which is why the chapters spend more time on the parts that go wrong than on the parts that go smoothly.

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PART ONE

Know what you actually have

The first six chapters cost nothing. They are also the six chapters that decide whether everything you spend after them is spent well.

- 1 The three beliefs that cost inventors the most time
- 2 Start with the market, not the drawing
- 3 TAM, SAM, and SOM without the jargon
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The three beliefs that cost inventors the most time

Three ideas show up in almost every first conversation with an inventor. All three feel like caution. All three cost months.

Belief one: "I need a working prototype before anyone will talk to me"

This is the most expensive belief on the list, and it is a holdover from a time before photorealistic rendering existed. An inventor decides that nothing can happen until there is a physical object, then spends eight months and several thousand dollars building a hand-made version in a garage that looks hand-made in a garage.

Companies do not license hand-made objects. They license a documented product they can evaluate: a 3D model that shows real geometry and real wall thicknesses, renderings that show the product as it would sit on a shelf, and often a short animation that shows how it works. That package communicates more, more accurately, than a foam mockup, and it can be produced in weeks rather than months.

Physical prototypes have a place. Chapter 18 covers exactly when one earns its cost, because sometimes it does. What is not true is that you need one before anyone will take you seriously.

Belief two: "I cannot tell anyone until I have a patent"

The instinct is sound. The conclusion is not. Disclosure matters enormously in patent law, and telling the world about your invention before you file can affect what you are able to protect. But there is a difference between public disclosure and a confidential conversation with a firm operating under a written agreement.

Enhance signs a confidentiality agreement before the first technical conversation. That is routine, not a favor, and it means you can get a professional opinion on your concept without giving anything away publicly. The inventors who wait eighteen months to talk to anyone are usually not protecting their idea. They are delaying the moment they find out whether it is already patented, which is the one piece of information that would have saved them the eighteen months.

Belief three: "The idea is the valuable part"

Ideas are the cheapest thing in this industry. A company evaluating your product is not buying your insight. It is buying a reduction in its own risk: a design that can actually be manufactured at a cost that works, protection that keeps a competitor from copying it the following season, and evidence that somebody wants to buy it.

Everything in this guide is about converting an idea into those three things. That conversion is the work, and it is what makes the difference between a concept somebody nods politely at and a product somebody signs for.

THE PATTERN BEHIND ALL THREE

Each belief has the same shape. It delays the moment of finding something out. Prototype first delays the market answer. Patent first delays the professional opinion. Idea-as-value delays the work. Speed on the cheap questions is the whole strategy, because the cheap questions are the ones that change what you do next.

Start with the market, not the drawing

The order is not a matter of taste. Market research is the only step that can change every decision after it, and it is also the cheapest step you will ever take.

Here is what market research actually answers, and why each answer changes the work downstream.

How many people could plausibly buy this

Not how many people would like it. How many are in a position to buy it, at the price it would have to sell for, through a place where they already shop. A product for people who own a boat, live in a cold climate, and store the boat outdoors is a smaller product than a product for people who own a boat. That is not a criticism of the product. It is a number that determines whether a large company can be interested, because a large company needs volume to justify the shelf space and the tooling.

What already exists in the same aisle

Products that solve the same problem a different way are your real competition, and they set the price the buyer already has in their head. If everything in the category sells between fourteen and twenty-two dollars, a product that has to sell for forty-nine has a job to do that has nothing to do with engineering.

Which companies would even be candidates

Licensing works when a specific company already sells to your buyer, through your channel, at your price point, and is missing your product from its line. That list of companies is short and knowable, and you can build it from market research alone. Knowing the list early shapes the design, because designing toward a company that sells at mass-market price points is a different exercise than designing toward one that sells at premium.

Whether the category is growing or shrinking

A flat product in a growing category and a clever product in a shrinking one are very different propositions to a licensee. Category direction is public information and takes minutes to check.

WHAT THIS STEP IS NOT

Market research does not tell you whether your invention is good. It tells you the size and shape of the space it would enter. Enhance built its free market tool on that principle deliberately: it reports, it does not judge. Anyone who runs your idea through a process and hands back a score telling you it is a winner is selling you something. Read Chapter 4 for what a useful market report should contain instead.

The cheapest research you will ever do is the research that stops you from building the wrong thing.

TAM, SAM, and SOM without the jargon

Three acronyms you will see in every market report. They are simpler than they look, and the third one is the only one anybody negotiates over.

Think of three circles, each inside the last.

TAM: Total Addressable Market

Everyone who could conceivably buy a product in your category, worldwide, if you had unlimited reach and no competition. For a kitchen gadget, this is the total annual spend on kitchen gadgets. TAM is the biggest number and the least useful one. It exists to answer a single question: is this category large enough for a serious company to bother with?

SAM: Serviceable Addressable Market

The slice of TAM you could actually reach. It narrows by geography, by channel, and by segment. If your product is sold in the United States, through hardware retail, to homeowners rather than contractors, SAM is that intersection. This is the number that tells you whether a specific licensee's existing distribution is a fit.

SOM: Serviceable Obtainable Market

What one product, from one company, could realistically capture in its first year. It is a small fraction of SAM, and it is the number that royalty conversations are built on. When a company runs its own math on your product, this is the figure it is estimating.

CIRCLE	WHAT IT MEASURES	WHAT IT IS USED FOR
TAM	Total category spend, worldwide	Deciding whether the category is worth entering at all
SAM	Your geography, channel, and segment	Matching your product to a licensee's actual distribution
SOM	Realistic first-year capture, one product	The number behind royalty and volume conversations

The mistake to avoid

Inventors quote TAM in pitch meetings. "This is a four billion dollar market." Every buyer has heard that sentence a thousand times and it moves nobody, because a four billion dollar market with fifty entrenched brands is harder to enter than a two hundred million dollar market with three. What a buyer wants is the SOM reasoning: which segment, at what price, through which retailer, at what unit volume, and why that estimate is defensible.

WORKED EXAMPLE

TAM: all pet water bowls sold worldwide. **SAM:** raised pet bowls sold in United States pet specialty retail. **SOM:** one product, in one national chain, in one year, at one price point. The first number is a headline. The third number is a business case.

Run your idea through the free Market Overview Tool

Enhance built a free tool that takes a plain-English description of your product and returns a structured picture of the market it would enter. It takes about two minutes and costs nothing.

The tool is at tam.enhancepd.com. You type what your product is, who it is for, and roughly what you think it would sell for. It returns a report covering the following.

SECTION	WHAT YOU GET
Market overview	A plain description of the category your product sits in
TAM, SAM, SOM	All three sizes, with the reasoning and named reference points behind each
Category trends	Growth rate and what has shifted in the category over the last two years
Channel breakdown	Where the category sells, with approximate share by channel
Customer segments	Three to five sub-groups, sized, with the trigger that makes each one buy
Primary customer	Age, income, motivation, and where they already shop
Competitive picture	Who is in the category, how they position, and at what price
Open positions	Gaps observed in the category, described rather than recommended
Pricing tiers	Mass, mid, and premium bands with named brand examples
Your price point	Where your number sits in those bands, and typical margin at that price
Demand signals	Search volume, social mentions, retailer product counts, review velocity

What it deliberately does not do

No score. No verdict. No recommendation. The tool does not tell you the category is crowded, or that your idea is strong, or that you should proceed. Those words are stripped out of it on purpose, because an invention firm telling you your idea is a winner is exactly the behavior the Federal Trade Commission warns inventors about. The tool describes the space. You decide.

How to read the output

- 1. Start with the pricing tiers, not the market size.** Find the band your product would sell in. If your target price is above every named brand in the category, that is the first thing to understand about your product, and it affects everything from material choice to which companies to approach.
- 2. Read the customer segments before the competitive section.** Segments tell you who is buying and why. Competitors tell you who is already serving them. In that order, the competitive section reads as a map. In the other order, it reads as discouragement.
- 3. Treat SOM as the number to defend.** If you cannot explain to a stranger why the first-year figure is reasonable, you are not ready to pitch.

- 4. Check the demand signals against the market size.** A large category with weak search volume usually means the category sells on impulse in a physical aisle rather than by search. That is a distribution fact, and it tells you the pitch has to go to a company with shelf space.

A LIMIT WORTH KNOWING

The report is a directional overview built from broad category knowledge, not a commissioned market study with primary data behind it. It is the right tool for deciding whether to keep going and where to aim. It is not the document you would take to a bank. Use it early, use it fast, and use it before you spend anything.

What to do with the answer

If the numbers hold up and the price band works, the next step is finding out whether the product already exists. That is Part Two, and it is the step where most concepts either get sharper or get abandoned. Either outcome is a win at this stage, because both cost you a few hundred dollars instead of a few thousand.

Reading demand signals honestly

Four public signals tell you whether people are actively looking for what you have made. Each one lies in a different direction, so read them together.

Search volume

How many people type a phrase into a search engine each month. High volume means the problem is one people already know they have and are actively trying to solve. That is the easiest kind of product to sell, because you do not have to teach anybody anything.

Low volume is not a verdict. It splits two ways. Either nobody has the problem, or people have it and have no words for the solution because it does not exist yet. Those two cases look identical in the data and are opposite in meaning. The way to tell them apart is to search for the problem rather than the product. If people are describing the frustration in forums and reviews without naming a solution, the second case is likely.

Retailer product counts

How many distinct products a large retailer stocks in your category. A high count means the category is proven and competitive. A count of zero means either nobody wants it or nobody has built it, and again you need the problem search to tell which.

Review velocity

The most underrated signal on the list. Look at existing products in your category and read the one and two star reviews. Not for satisfaction scores, but for the specific complaint that repeats. Ten thousand reviews accumulating quickly means active demand. The repeated complaint inside them is the opening your product may be filling, described in the buyer's own words. Those words are the ones that later belong on your sell sheet.

Social mentions

The noisiest signal and the one to weight least. A product going around on video platforms tells you something about attention, not about repeat purchase. Categories can spike and collapse inside a season. Use it as supporting evidence, never as the case.

READING THEM TOGETHER

- High search, high product count: proven demand, hard entry. You need a real differentiator and protection.
- High search, low product count: worth understanding why nothing exists. Sometimes regulation, sometimes cost, sometimes nobody has tried.
- Low search, high product count: an aisle purchase. The pitch goes to a company with shelf space, not to an online seller.
- Low search, low product count: either early or empty. The one and two star reviews of adjacent products are how you find out which.

Price, channel, and the margin that decides everything

Retail price is not a marketing choice made at the end. It is a constraint set at the beginning that determines what your product can be made of, how it can be made, and who can sell it.

Work backwards from the shelf

Start with the price a buyer would pay, then subtract. A rough consumer-product chain looks like this, and the exact multiples vary by category and by retailer.

STAGE	TYPICAL FIGURE	WHAT IT MEANS
Retail price	\$24.99	What the shopper pays
Wholesale to retailer	Roughly half of retail	What the retailer pays the brand
Brand's landed cost target	Often a quarter to a third of wholesale	Product, packaging, freight, and duty, delivered
Factory unit cost	What is left after freight and duty	The number your design has to hit

Run that chain roughly against your own product before you design anything. It is a sanity check, not a costing exercise, and the rough version is enough to catch the problem worth catching. If the arithmetic leaves you two dollars and forty cents to manufacture something with a motor, a battery, and a molded housing, you have learned something important on an afternoon rather than after tooling. The real number comes later, from a quote against a 3D model, and it is regularly some distance from the estimate.

Channel changes the math

The same product sold three ways has three different cost structures. Mass retail buys at the deepest discount and demands the highest volume. Specialty retail pays more per unit and moves fewer. Direct online selling keeps the retail margin but hands a large share back in advertising, fulfillment, and returns. A product engineered for one channel is often unviable in another, which is another reason the channel question belongs at the start.

Where inventors go wrong on price

- **Pricing from cost upward.** Adding a margin to what it costs you produces a number the market has no reason to accept.
- **Pricing from perceived value.** "It saves people an hour, so it is worth fifty dollars" ignores what the buyer is comparing it to on the shelf next to it.
- **Ignoring packaging.** On low-priced products, packaging is regularly a meaningful share of unit cost, and retail packaging requirements are not optional.
- **Forgetting freight on bulky items.** Air is expensive to ship. A product that does not nest or fold can carry a shipping cost that eliminates its margin entirely.

THE DESIGN CONSEQUENCE

Every one of these is a design decision, not an accounting decision. Part count, material choice, whether a product nests, whether it needs a battery, whether the housing is one piece or three: these set the unit cost, and unit cost sets the price, and price decides who will sell it. This is why Enhance runs cost thinking through the design stage rather than after it. Chapter 20 covers how that works in practice.

PART TWO

Find out whether it has already been done

This is the part inventors skip, and it is the part that decides whether anything after it is worth doing. It costs a few hundred dollars and it answers the question everything else depends on.

- 7 Prior art, and why it comes before the drawings
- 8 What a patent actually protects
- 9 What a real patent search covers
- 10 Where self-run searches go wrong
- 11 The \$399 Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability
- 12 The provisional patent and the twelve month clock
- 13 Confidentiality before you talk to anyone

Prior art, and why it comes before the drawings

Prior art is everything that already existed before your filing date. If it describes your invention, you cannot patent your invention. That sentence is the whole reason this chapter is here.

What counts as prior art

Far more than most inventors expect. All of the following can be used to reject a patent application:

- Any issued patent, anywhere in the world, in any language, at any age. A 1974 patent that expired decades ago still blocks a new patent on the same thing.
- Any published patent application, including ones that never issued.
- Any product that has been sold or publicly offered for sale.
- Printed publications, academic papers, technical manuals, and trade catalogues.
- Public demonstrations, trade show displays, videos, and crowdfunding campaigns.
- In many cases, your own public disclosure. Talking about it publicly before filing can start a clock or eliminate rights entirely, particularly outside the United States.

The two ways prior art defeats an application

The first is straightforward. Under United States law, if a single earlier reference describes everything your claims describe, the application is rejected for lack of novelty. Your invention is not new.

The second is the one that surprises people. An application can also be rejected as obvious, meaning that combining two or more earlier references would have been an obvious step for someone skilled in that field. You invented a bicycle mount with a magnetic quick release. There is a patent on the bicycle mount and a separate patent on the magnetic quick release in a different application. An examiner can combine them and reject your claims. Nothing identical to your product exists anywhere, and it still fails.

This is why a search that only looks for an exact match is close to worthless. What matters is what the pieces of your invention already look like separately, and whether putting them together was a step anybody would have taken.

THE ORDER THAT COSTS MONEY

The expensive version of this story is always the same. An inventor spends nine months and real money on design, engineering, and sometimes tooling, then runs a search and finds a patent filed years earlier that covers the core mechanism. Everything spent on the design is now spent. A search before the design work would have cost a fraction of one percent of that, and would have either cleared the path or redirected the concept toward something that could be protected.

Finding out is the point

A search that turns up a blocking patent is not a failed search. It is the cheapest possible outcome after a clean one, because it arrives before you spend anything meaningful. It also frequently reshapes the invention rather than ending it. Knowing precisely what is claimed in the earlier patent tells you where the open space actually is, and designing into that space is ordinary work rather than a setback.

What a patent actually protects

A patent does not protect an idea, a name, or a product. It protects a specific set of written claims, and the claims are the only part that matters in a dispute.

The claims are the invention

Open any patent and skip to the numbered paragraphs at the end. Those are the claims, and they define the exact boundary of what is protected. Everything before them, the drawings and the long description, exists to support and explain the claims. A patent with a beautiful description and narrow claims protects very little. This is why claim drafting is specialist work and why two patents on similar products can have wildly different value.

The three kinds you will hear about

TYPE	PROTECTS	PRACTICAL NOTES
Utility patent	How something works: function, method, structure	The strong one. Roughly twenty years from filing. Takes years to issue and involves back and forth with an examiner.
Design patent	How something looks: ornamental appearance only	Faster and cheaper. Protects the specific look, not the function. A competitor can change the styling and work around it.
Provisional application	Nothing on its own	Not a patent. It sets a filing date and buys twelve months. See Chapter 12.

What a patent does not do

- **It does not give you the right to make your product.** It gives you the right to stop others. Those are different. Your product can be patentable and still fall inside someone else's broader patent.
- **It does not enforce itself.** A patent is a right to bring an action. Enforcement is your responsibility and your expense, which is one reason licensees value protection: they usually take that on.
- **It does not cross borders.** There is no worldwide patent. Protection is country by country, and each country has its own filing, its own fees, and its own timeline. Anyone who tells you they can get you a global patent is describing something that does not exist.
- **It does not make a product sell.** Protection is one of several things a licensee weighs. A protected product nobody wants is still a product nobody wants.

Why licensees care so much about it

Put yourself on the other side of the table. A company is being asked to spend on tooling, packaging, and a slot in its line. If the product succeeds and a competitor can copy it the following season, the company has paid to prove a market for everybody. Protection is what makes the investment defensible. It is the single most common reason a licensing conversation moves forward or stops.

What a real patent search covers

A search is not typing your product name into a database and reading the first page. A useful search is a structured process that finds what a patent examiner would find, before the examiner finds it.

Breaking the invention into its elements

The first move is to stop thinking about the product and start thinking about its parts. A search runs against functional elements, not the product name. A collapsible pet bowl with a magnetic lid becomes a set of separate searchable ideas: the collapsing mechanism, the sealing method, the magnetic closure, the material behaviour, the mounting. Each is searched independently, because each is where an obviousness rejection comes from.

Searching the terms of art, not your words

Patents are written in the language of patent attorneys, not the language of shoppers. Your "clip" is a "resilient retaining member." Your "handle" is a "manually engageable elongate grip portion." Searching for the words you would use finds almost nothing, and the nothing feels like good news. It is the single most common false clear.

Classification codes

Every patent is filed under a classification code that groups it with technically similar inventions regardless of the words used. Searching by classification finds patents whose wording shares nothing at all with yours. This is how examiners work, and a search that skips classification is missing the exact material the examiner will use.

Beyond issued United States patents

- **Published applications.** Applications publish before they issue. A pending application you never see can block you later.
- **Foreign patents.** A German patent from 1988 counts as prior art in the United States even if it was never sold there and was never translated.
- **Expired patents.** An expired patent no longer stops you from making the product, and it absolutely stops you from patenting it.
- **Commercial prior art.** Products for sale on marketplaces and in catalogues, patented or not. If it is publicly on sale, it is prior art.

What the output should tell you

A search that ends with a list of patent numbers has not done its job. What you need to know is: which references are actually relevant and which are noise; where each one overlaps your invention and where it does not; whether the overlap is a novelty problem or an obviousness problem; and what would have to be different for your version to be distinct. That analysis is the deliverable. The list is just the raw material.

WHY THIS IS WORTH PAYING FOR

The elements above are the reason a professional search costs money and a free database query does not. Element decomposition, terms of art, classification searching, and reading claim scope are learned skills, and the cost of getting them wrong is measured in months. Chapter 11 covers what Enhance's search includes and what it costs.

Where self-run searches go wrong

Almost every inventor runs their own search first. That is reasonable. The problem is that a self-run search fails in a specific direction: it almost always comes back clean, and the clean result is almost always wrong.

The five failures, in order of frequency

1. **Searching product words instead of technical language.** You search "foldable dog bowl." The blocking patent says "collapsible receptacle having a flexible sidewall movable between an extended and a retracted configuration." Zero overlap in wording, complete overlap in substance.
2. **Stopping at the first page.** Patent databases sort by relevance algorithms that were not built for this. The reference that matters is regularly on page four, and it is regularly worded in a way that makes it look unrelated in a snippet.
3. **Reading the abstract instead of the claims.** The abstract is a summary written for readability. The claims are the legal boundary, and they often cover considerably more than the abstract suggests. Judging relevance from the abstract produces confident wrong answers.
4. **Ignoring obviousness entirely.** This is the big one. You confirm nothing identical exists and conclude you are clear. But the rejection that stops most applications is a combination of two earlier references, and you will not find that combination by searching for your product.
5. **Skipping the commercial check.** Not everything on sale is patented. A product being sold openly on a marketplace is prior art whether or not anyone ever filed on it, and it is invisible in a patent database.

THE COST OF A FALSE CLEAR

A false negative on a patent search does not stay small. It sits underneath every decision that follows: the design spend, the engineering hours, the renderings, the pitch package, sometimes the tooling. When the blocking reference finally surfaces, and it usually surfaces during an examiner's review or during a licensee's own due diligence, every one of those decisions was made on a wrong premise. The search itself is a rounding error against that.

What a self-run search is genuinely good for

Two things. First, a quick sanity check before you get emotionally committed, because occasionally you will find your exact product on the first page and save yourself the trouble. Second, familiarity. Reading a handful of patents in your category teaches you how claims are written, and that makes every later conversation easier. Just do not treat a clean result as an answer. Treat it as the absence of an answer.

The \$399 Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability

This is the first paid step Enhance recommends, and it is deliberately the cheapest one. It exists so that nobody spends thousands on design before knowing whether the concept can be protected.

What the search covers

- Decomposition of your invention into its functional elements, so each is searched on its own.
- Searching in the terms of art an attorney or examiner would use, not the words a shopper would use.
- Classification-based searching, which finds technically similar patents regardless of wording.
- Issued United States patents, published applications, and foreign references.
- Commercial prior art: products already on sale, patented or not.
- An obviousness assessment, meaning combinations of references, not just exact matches.

What you receive

An Opinion of Patentability. Not a list of patent numbers, but a written assessment covering:

- The references that are actually relevant, separated from the noise.
- For each one, exactly where it overlaps your invention and exactly where it does not.
- Whether the issue in each case is novelty or obviousness.
- What is distinct about your version as currently conceived.
- Where the open space is, if there is open space, and what would need to be different to reach it.

PATENT SEARCH AND OPINION OF PATENTABILITY • \$399

Set against a design engagement that runs from four thousand dollars upward, or against tooling that runs well beyond that, this is the least expensive question you can ask and the one with the largest consequence for what you do next. It is also a real deliverable rather than a promise, which matters in an industry where the Federal Trade Commission has spent years pursuing firms that charged upfront fees and delivered nothing tangible.

How to read your opinion

1. **Read the overlaps before the conclusion.** The specific overlap descriptions are where the useful information is. The conclusion is a summary of them.
2. **Separate novelty problems from obviousness problems.** A novelty problem usually means the concept as described is taken. An obviousness problem is often solvable with a genuine functional difference, and that difference is design work.
3. **Look for what is distinct, then ask whether it is worth anything commercially.** A distinguishing feature that no buyer cares about will get you a patent and not a licensee. The best distinguishing features are the ones that also answer a complaint you found in the reviews back in Chapter 5.
4. **Treat a bad result as a redirect, not a stop.** A substantial share of concepts come back with relevant references and are then reshaped into something protectable. That reshaping is one of the things a design firm is for.

What happens next

If the opinion is favourable and you want to establish a filing date before you start showing the product around, the provisional application is the usual next step. That is the next chapter. If the opinion turns up a problem, the conversation with Enhance turns to whether the concept can move into open space, which is a design conversation rather than a patent one.

The provisional patent and the twelve month clock

The most misunderstood document in this whole process. A provisional application is not a patent, it grants no rights you can enforce, and used properly it is one of the most useful tools an inventor has.

What it actually does

A provisional application establishes a filing date at the United States Patent and Trademark Office and starts a twelve month period. Within those twelve months you can file a full utility application and claim the earlier date. If you do not file within twelve months, the provisional expires and the date is gone. It cannot be extended.

During those twelve months you may mark the product "patent pending," which is accurate and meaningful to a licensee. It signals that a filing date exists and that a full application is coming.

What it does not do

- **It is never examined.** No examiner reads it. Nobody assesses whether your invention is patentable. It sits on file.
- **It never becomes a patent by itself.** A provisional cannot issue. Only a full application can.
- **It grants nothing enforceable.** You cannot stop anyone with a provisional.
- **It only covers what it describes.** This is the part that catches people. A thin provisional protects a thin filing date. If the full application later claims something the provisional never described, that part does not get the earlier date, and anything published in the meantime becomes prior art against it.

THE CHEAP PROVISIONAL TRAP

Online services offer provisional filings for very little, and inventors file two paragraphs and a hand sketch believing they are covered for a year. They are covered for exactly what those two paragraphs describe, which is usually far narrower than the product they end up with. The document has to describe the invention with enough technical detail and enough variation to support the claims you will eventually want. That is the entire value of the filing.

How Enhance handles it

Enhance prepares and files provisional applications at **\$1,499**. Because the same team is producing the 3D design and the technical documentation for your product, the provisional is written against real geometry and real mechanism descriptions rather than a sketch. The description and the design stay consistent with each other, which is the practical reason to keep both under one roof.

Using the twelve months on purpose

The window is a working period, not a waiting period. A well-spent twelve months looks like this:

MONTHS	WORK
1 to 3	Industrial design and 3D design. The product takes real form.
3 to 5	Renderings and animation. The pitch package comes together.
5 to 9	Licensing outreach and conversations with candidate companies.
9 to 12	Decision point. Convert to a full application, informed by what the market told you.

That sequence has a real advantage. By month nine you know considerably more about what matters commercially than you did at filing, and the full application can be shaped around it. Talk to Enhance before month ten so the conversion is not a scramble.

Confidentiality before you talk to anyone

Disclosure rules are real and they matter. They are also narrower than the fear surrounding them, and the fear is what keeps inventors sitting on concepts for years.

The rule in plain terms

In the United States, publicly disclosing your invention starts a one year clock to file. Miss it and you can lose the right to patent your own invention. In most other countries the rule is stricter: public disclosure before filing can eliminate foreign rights immediately, with no grace period at all. If international protection might matter, treat public disclosure before filing as something to avoid entirely.

What counts as public

- Posting it on social media, a website, or a video platform.
- Showing it at a trade show or a public event.
- Selling it or publicly offering it for sale, including a crowdfunding page.
- Describing it in a published article, a talk, or a paper.

What does not count

- A conversation under a written confidentiality agreement.
- Discussing it with a firm bound by a signed agreement, which is how Enhance works.
- Private conversations with people who owe you a duty of confidentiality.

HOW THIS WORKS AT ENHANCE

A confidentiality agreement is signed before the first technical conversation. It is routine and it is not something you have to ask for. That is the whole reason you can get a professional opinion on your concept early rather than waiting until you have filed. The inventors who lose the most time are the ones who treat every conversation as a public disclosure and therefore have none.

Practical habits worth keeping

- **Date your work.** Keep dated records of sketches, notes, and revisions. It is not a substitute for filing, and it is useful documentation.
- **Do not post progress publicly.** Building an audience while you develop feels productive and it is a disclosure.
- **Get the agreement in writing before the detail.** A general description of the problem you are solving is low risk. The mechanism is not.
- **Do not let the fear freeze you.** The cost of moving carefully is a signed agreement. The cost of not moving is measured in years.

PART THREE

Build it

Development is where an idea becomes a product a company can evaluate. It is also where the cost decisions get locked in, usually before anyone realises they are making them.

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- 15 Industrial design is a commercial decision
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- 17 3D design and engineering: the virtual prototype
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From concept to design brief

A design brief is the document that turns "I have an idea for a thing" into a set of constraints a designer can work against. Skip it and you will pay for revisions that are really disagreements about what the product was supposed to be.

What a brief has to answer

QUESTION	WHY IT CONSTRAINS THE DESIGN
Who buys it	Sets styling, size, and the level of instruction the product needs to carry
What it must do	The functions that are not negotiable, separated from the ones that are
Retail price target	Sets the manufacturing cost ceiling, which sets materials and part count
Where it sells	Packaging format, shelf presence, and shipping constraints
What it competes with	The visual and functional bar it has to clear on a shelf
Regulatory exposure	Children, food contact, electrical, and medical categories carry requirements that change the design
Protection position	What the patent search said is distinct, so the design protects that difference rather than erasing it

Must-have versus nice-to-have

Write two lists and be honest about which is which. Every feature on the second list adds parts, and parts add cost, assembly time, failure points, and tooling. The strongest products in most categories do fewer things better than their competition, and the discipline to cut features is worth more than the creativity to add them.

The brief is where the patent search pays off again

Your Opinion of Patentability told you what is distinct about your version. That distinction is the thing the design has to preserve and strengthen. Designs that drift away from the protectable difference during development are common, and they arrive at the licensing conversation with nothing defensible left. Keep the opinion open on the desk while the brief is written.

WHAT TO BRING TO A FIRST DESIGN CONVERSATION

- Sketches or photographs of what you have, however rough.
- The problem in one sentence, and who has it.
- Your target retail price, even if it is a guess.
- Your market overview output from Chapter 4.
- Your Opinion of Patentability if you have run the search.
- Two or three existing products you would sit next to on a shelf.

Industrial design is a commercial decision

Industrial design is often described as how a product looks. That is the smallest part of it. Industrial design is where cost, manufacturability, usability, and shelf appeal get resolved against each other.

What the industrial designer is actually deciding

- **Part count.** Fewer parts means less tooling, faster assembly, fewer failure points, and lower unit cost. Combining two components into one moulded piece can move the economics of an entire product.
- **Material.** Different plastics carry different costs, different strengths, different finishes, and different moulding behaviour. Material choice is made early and is expensive to reverse.
- **Form and proportion.** Whether the product reads as premium or budget on a shelf, next to competitors, under retail lighting, at arm's length.
- **How it is understood.** A product a buyer cannot figure out in three seconds in an aisle does not get bought. Affordance is a design problem before it is a packaging problem.
- **Packing efficiency.** Whether units nest or stack changes freight cost per unit, which changes margin, which changes who can sell it.

Designing toward a licensee

If you have identified the kind of company you want to license to, the design should reflect their line. A product that looks foreign next to a company's existing range is a harder conversation, regardless of how good it is. Companies buy products that extend what they already sell, because that is what their buyers, their packaging, and their shelf space are set up for.

Where inventors and designers collide

The most common conflict is over a feature the inventor loves and the designer wants to remove. It is usually a real disagreement worth having, and the way to resolve it is with the cost consequence on the table. "That feature adds a part, a second tool, and a dollar ten of unit cost, which moves your retail price out of the band your category sells in." That is a decision you can make. "I think it looks better without it" is not.

Almost every cost decision in a product is made during design, and almost none of them can be recovered later.

Renderings and animation are what companies see

A licensing decision is made by people looking at a document. What they are looking at is renderings. This is the part inventors underestimate most consistently.

Why photorealistic rendering replaced the model shop

A rendering generated from your 3D model shows the product in its real material, with real surface finish, at real proportions, lit the way a product photograph would be lit. It can show the product in six colours, in a retail context, in a hand, on a counter, from any angle, and it can be revised in an afternoon.

A hand-built physical model shows one version, in whatever material could be fabricated, with visible construction marks, and changing it means building another one. For evaluating and communicating a design, rendering is both faster and more accurate. This is why the licensing path is virtual first, and why the belief in Chapter 1 costs people so much time.

What a rendering set should include

- Hero images of the product on a clean background, front and three-quarter.
- Colour and material variants, because buyers think in assortments rather than single items.
- In-use images showing scale and context, which answers "how big is it" without a sentence.
- Exploded views showing construction and part count, which tells an engineering reader what they are looking at.
- Packaging concepts if the product will sit on a shelf.

What animation adds

A short product animation shows motion and mechanism. For anything that folds, extends, rotates, latches, or transforms, it does in fifteen seconds what three paragraphs of description does badly. It also survives being forwarded internally, which matters more than it sounds: the person you pitch is rarely the person who decides, and your animation gets watched in a meeting you are not in.

Animation is the gate between Gold and Platinum. Platinum at **around \$9,500** includes it, and it can be added to Gold as an upgrade at **around \$2,500**.

THE QUALITY BAR IS NOT YOURS TO SET

Your renderings sit next to the product photography a company's own marketing team produces. That is the comparison being made, whether or not anyone says it out loud. Amateur renderings read as an amateur product, and the judgement happens before anyone reads a word of your description.

3D design and engineering: the virtual prototype

3D design turns a concept into a manufacturable definition. Renderings, animation, prototypes, quotes, and tooling all run off that model, which is why it is worth understanding before you commission any of them.

What a proper 3D model contains

Not a shape. A manufacturable definition: every part modelled separately with real wall thicknesses, draft angles so parts can release from a mould, ribs and bosses where structure is needed, tolerances where parts have to fit together, and an assembly that demonstrates the pieces going together in a real sequence.

What a factory needs in order to quote accurately

You cannot get a real manufacturing quote from a sketch. A factory quoting your product needs geometry, materials, tolerances, and finish specifications. Send drawings and you get a guess. Send a proper model and you get a number you can build a business case on. This is also why quotes gathered before a 3D model exists are close to meaningless and are regularly off by a factor that changes the entire product.

What engineering catches that design does not

- Wall sections too thin to mould or too thick to cool evenly.
- Undercuts that would require a side action and add significant tooling cost.
- Parts that cannot be assembled in any order without a third hand.
- Stress points that will fail after a few hundred cycles.
- Fasteners, snaps, and hinges specified in ways that do not survive real use.

Where 3D design sits in Enhance's packages

Enhance's packages differ in how much 3D design work they include and in whether you receive the design files themselves. The current scope and pricing for each package sits in the services table near the end of this guide. Which one fits depends on what you intend to do next: a set of renderings is enough to open a licensing conversation, while a manufacturing quote or an engineering review on a licensee's side is a conversation about design files. Worth settling before you commission the work rather than after.

OWN YOUR FILES

Whatever route you take, be clear at the outset about which design files you receive, not only exported images. Rebuilding a model because you only have renderings is paying for the same work twice.

When a physical prototype earns its cost

Physical prototypes are not obsolete. They are situational, and knowing which situation you are in saves months.

When you do need one

- **Mechanism risk.** If the product depends on something moving, latching, flexing, or sealing, and the behaviour is genuinely uncertain, that mechanism is worth prototyping on its own. The whole product rarely is.
- **Ergonomics.** Grip, weight, and balance cannot be evaluated on a screen. If the product lives in a hand, at some point it has to be in one.
- **Testing and certification.** Regulated categories require physical samples. There is no way around it.
- **Late-stage licensee due diligence.** A company preparing to sign may want a working sample, and by then the request is a good sign rather than a hurdle.

When you do not

- **To show what it looks like.** Renderings do this better and cost less.
- **To feel like progress.** This is the real reason many prototypes get built, and it is an expensive feeling.
- **Before the design is settled.** Prototyping a design that is still changing means paying to build every revision.
- **To open the first conversation.** The first conversation runs on renderings and a clear description of the problem being solved.

SCOPE THE PROTOTYPE TO THE QUESTION

The useful prototype is the smallest one that answers the specific uncertainty in the design. If the open question is the hinge, the hinge is what gets built. A full appearance model that answers nothing a rendering had not already answered is the most common way inventors spend four figures on reassurance, and it is the thing worth asking about before any prototype is commissioned.

Enhance scopes and coordinates physical prototyping when a project needs it, as an addition to the design work rather than a default stage, and the scoping conversation starts from which question the model has to settle. The default deliverable remains the virtual prototype package, because that is what the licensing conversation runs on.

Design for manufacturability and sourcing

Design for manufacturability means designing a product so it can actually be made, at volume, at a cost that works. Products that skip it get quoted at a number that ends the project.

What DFM changes

- **Draft angles.** Moulded parts need slight tapers to release from the tool. Missing them means a part that cannot be made without redesign.
- **Uniform wall thickness.** Uneven walls cool unevenly, which causes warping and sink marks. This is one of the most common reasons a first sample looks wrong.
- **Undercuts.** Features that trap the part in the mould require side actions, which add real money to tooling. Sometimes a small geometry change removes the need entirely.
- **Part consolidation.** Every part eliminated removes a tool, an assembly step, and a source of variation.
- **Standard components.** Off-the-shelf fasteners, springs, and motors cost a fraction of custom ones and carry no tooling.
- **Assembly sequence.** A product that has to be assembled in one impossible order costs labour on every unit forever.

Domestic and overseas sourcing

CONSIDERATION	DOMESTIC	OVERSEAS
Unit cost	Higher	Lower at volume
Tooling cost	Higher	Often substantially lower
Minimum order	Usually smaller	Usually larger
Lead time	Shorter	Longer, plus ocean freight
Communication	Simpler	Time zones and language add friction
Oversight	Easier to visit and inspect	Needs a process and often a local agent
Duty and freight	Minimal	Real, and volatile

The right answer depends on volume, product type, and how much variation you can tolerate. Enhance handles manufacturing sourcing both ways as part of the development work, which matters mainly because sourcing questions feed back into the design. A factory's capability set changes what the design should be, and that conversation is easier when the same team holds the 3D design.

IF YOU ARE LICENSING RATHER THAN LAUNCHING

You may never place a manufacturing order yourself. Manufacturability still matters, because a licensee's engineering team will assess it, and a design that cannot be made at a sensible cost is a design they will not take. A quote from a real factory attached to your package answers the question before they have to ask it.

Tooling, unit cost, and the numbers behind a product

Two numbers decide whether a physical product works: what the tooling costs once, and what each unit costs forever. The second one is the one people underestimate.

Tooling

An injection mould is a machined steel tool, and it is the largest single upfront cost in most plastic products. Cost varies enormously with part size, complexity, number of cavities, and whether side actions are needed. A simple single-cavity tool and a complex multi-cavity tool with side actions are different orders of magnitude.

Tooling is also why design changes get expensive at a specific moment. Before the tool is cut, a change is drawing work. After it is cut, a change is steel work or a new tool. This is the reason engineering review happens before tooling and not after, and the reason a rushed design is the most expensive kind.

Unit cost is more than the factory quote

COMPONENT	FREQUENTLY FORGOTTEN BECAUSE
Materials	Quoted on today's resin price, which moves
Moulding and assembly labour	Assumed to be trivial until part count rises
Packaging	Treated as an afterthought, then found to be a large share of a low-priced item
Freight	Bulky products ship air, and air is expensive
Duty	Rate depends on classification and can move with policy
Quality control	Inspection and rejects are a real per-unit number
Defect allowance	Nothing runs at one hundred percent yield

Volume changes everything

Unit cost falls with quantity, sometimes steeply. A product that is unviable at one thousand units can work at fifty thousand. This is one of the strongest arguments for licensing over self-launching: an established company orders at volumes an individual inventor cannot reach, which changes the unit cost, which changes the retail price, which changes whether the product sells at all.

THE NUMBER TO CARRY INTO A PITCH

Landed cost per unit at a realistic volume, with the assumptions written down. A licensee will run their own numbers regardless. Arriving with a defensible figure and a quote behind it moves you from a person with an idea to a person with a product, and that shift is worth more in the room than any single feature.

PART FOUR

Take it to market

Two roads out of development. One hands the risk and the work to a company that already sells to your buyer. The other keeps both.

- 21 License it or launch it
- 22 The pitch package
- 23 What a licensing conversation actually looks like
- 24 Timeline, cost, and what nobody can promise you

License it or launch it

Licensing means a company pays you a royalty to make and sell your product. Launching means you do all of it. They are different businesses, not different sizes of the same one.

	LICENSING	LAUNCHING
Your capital	Design and protection costs	All of that plus tooling, inventory, and marketing
Your return	A royalty on sales	The full margin, if it sells
Your risk	Time and development spend	Everything, including unsold inventory
Your role	Ends at the deal, mostly	Becomes your job
Distribution	Theirs, already built	Yours, built from zero
Speed to shelf	Depends on their cycle	Depends on your capital

Licensing suits you if

- Your product fits neatly into an existing company's line.
- The category is dominated by established brands with retail relationships you cannot replicate.
- You do not want to run a business, you want to invent things.
- The capital required to launch is beyond what you are willing to risk.

Launching suits you if

- The category sells direct to consumers and does not depend on retail shelf space.
- You have or can raise the capital for tooling and inventory.
- You want to build a brand rather than a product.
- No obvious licensee exists, which happens in genuinely new categories.

How royalties work, and how not to think about them

A royalty is a percentage of a defined sales figure, usually the wholesale price rather than the retail price, paid on units sold. Rates vary widely by industry, by product type, by how much development work is already done, and by how much protection you hold. Some deals include an advance against future royalties or a minimum annual payment.

Two things worth being clear about. First, a royalty percentage on its own tells you very little, because the base it applies to matters as much as the rate. Second, nobody can tell you what your product will earn, and any figure presented to you as an expected return should be treated as a sales tactic rather than information. Enhance's licensing representation works on contingency with no upfront fee, which aligns the incentive rather than removing the uncertainty.

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND

The development work is the same either way. 3D design, renderings, protection, and a manufacturing quote are what a licensee evaluates and what a launch requires. Deciding the road later costs you nothing, which is another reason to do Parts One through Three properly first.

The pitch package

What a company actually receives when you approach them. It is short, it is visual, and it is built to be forwarded to someone you will never meet.

The sell sheet

One page. Occasionally two. It exists to get a second conversation, not to close a deal, which is why almost every sell sheet an inventor writes alone is too long and too proud.

The page has to do four things at once, and the difficulty is that each one draws on work done earlier rather than on writing skill. It has to place the product in a category the reader already understands. It has to state the buyer's problem in the buyer's own words, which is why the review reading in Chapter 5 matters months later. It has to show the product convincingly enough to sit beside a company's own product photography, which means the imagery comes out of the 3D model rather than out of a phone. And it has to state the protection position precisely, because that is the line the reader's eye goes to first.

A sell sheet is a marketing deliverable, and Enhance produces it as part of the design packages. That is deliberate: the same team already holds the renderings, the market reasoning, and the patent position, so the page is assembled from work that exists rather than described from memory. What you should expect to receive is a page that reads as though it came from a company, because the reader is comparing it to pages that did.

What goes behind it

The sell sheet opens the door. When there is interest, the fuller package follows: the animation, the complete rendering set, the design files or a summary of them, the manufacturing quote, and the patent documentation. Sending all of that first is the most common mistake. A twenty page document to a buyer who has not yet decided to be interested does not get read.

Who receives it

Companies vary. Some have a formal submission process and will not look at anything outside it. Some route new products through a category manager, some through product development, some through an executive who has done it for twenty years. Finding the right person and the right route is most of the work in licensing outreach, and it is a large part of what Enhance's licensing representation does, on contingency and with no upfront fee.

COMMON PACKAGE FAILURES

- Leading with the invention story instead of the buyer's problem.
- Amateur renderings alongside professional competitor imagery.
- No price context, so the reader cannot place the product in their line.
- Unclear protection status, which stops the conversation cold.
- Too long, so nobody reads past the first page.

What a licensing conversation actually looks like

Slower and more procedural than inventors expect. Understanding the sequence is what keeps a long silence from being read as a rejection.

The usual sequence

The first three stages are the ones Enhance's licensing representation runs on your behalf, on contingency with no upfront fee. They are listed here so you know what is happening while nothing appears to be happening, not as a set of instructions.

1. **Candidates get identified.** Companies already selling to your buyer, through your channel, at your price band, with a gap where your product would sit. Usually a short list rather than a long one, and building it well is a function of knowing who is actually buying in a category this season.
2. **The route in gets found.** The submission process, or the person. This is the slowest and least visible part of the work, and it is the part that relationships shorten.
3. **The sell sheet goes out.** One page. The goal is a reply.
4. **Then everyone waits.** Weeks is normal. Companies review new products on their own product cycle, not on yours.
5. **First conversation.** Usually questions about protection, cost, and whether it fits their line.
6. **Internal review.** Their engineering, marketing, and finance people all look. You are not in these meetings, which is why the package has to work without you.
7. **Due diligence.** They examine the patent position, sometimes commission their own search, and evaluate manufacturability.
8. **Terms.** Rate, base, exclusivity, territory, term, minimums, and what happens if they stop selling it.
9. **Agreement and launch.** Their product cycle governs. A retail launch date can be a year or more out from signature.

The questions you will be asked

- What protection do you have, and what exactly does it cover?
- Who else have you shown this to?
- Why does this sell better than what we already have in the line?
- What has to change for this to work in our range?

Every one of those is answerable with the work in Parts One through Three. That is the argument for doing them in order.

Silence, and what it means

Most approaches get no response. That is the base rate in this business and it is not a signal about your product. The response rate is a function of volume and fit, which is why licensing representation is a numbers exercise run over months rather than a single well-crafted email. Nobody can promise you a deal, and anyone who does is telling you something about themselves rather than about your invention.

Timeline, cost, and what nobody can promise you

A realistic picture of what the path costs and how long it takes, with the parts that vary marked as varying.

A representative sequence

STAGE	TYPICAL DURATION	NOTES
Market research	An afternoon	Free, and it changes everything after it
Patent search and opinion	Days	The decision point before spending
Provisional filing	Days to a few weeks	Starts the twelve month clock
Industrial design and 3D design	Weeks to a few months	Depends on complexity and revision rounds
Renderings and animation	Weeks	Runs from the 3D model
Manufacturing quotes	Weeks	Needs the 3D model to be meaningful
Licensing outreach	Months, ongoing	Governed by other companies' cycles
Full patent application	Years to issue	Examination is slow by design

What Enhance charges

SERVICE	PRICE
Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability	\$399
Provisional patent preparation and filing	\$1,499
Sapphire Lite: renderings, patent search, lighter marketing set	\$4,000 to \$4,500
Sapphire: expanded rendering set, no CAD	\$5,979
Gold: adds the full CAD model	\$6,979
Platinum: adds product animation	Around \$9,500
Animation upgrade, standalone	Around \$2,500
Website design and hosting	Free, then \$200 per year
Licensing representation	Contingency, no upfront fee

Every design fee buys a defined deliverable: renderings, a 3D model, an animation, a filed application, a written opinion. That distinction matters. The Federal Trade Commission's long-running concern with this industry is firms that charge upfront to promote an idea and deliver nothing you can hold or use.

What nobody can promise you

- That a patent will issue. Examination is a process with an outcome nobody controls.
- That a company will license it. That decision belongs to companies with their own priorities.
- That it will sell. Buyers decide that, after everyone else has finished deciding everything else.
- That any specific amount of money will result. Any firm quoting you an expected return is describing a hope, not a projection.

What can be committed to is the work: a real search, a real opinion, a real design, real files, real quotes, and a real effort to place the product. Judge any firm you speak to, including this one, on whether they describe what they will deliver rather than what your product will be worth.

The A to Z checklist

The whole path in order, split into the decisions that are yours and the work Enhance carries. Do not skip forward, particularly not past the second block.

BEFORE YOU SPEND ANYTHING

YOUR SIDE

- ☐ Write the problem in one sentence, and name who has it
- ☐ Name three products a buyer would consider instead of yours
- ☐ Set a target retail price, even as a guess
- ☐ Run the free Market Overview Tool at tam.enhancepd.com
- ☐ Read the pricing tiers first, then the segments, then the competitive section
- ☐ Read one and two star reviews on competing products and write down the repeated complaint
- ☐ Run the retail price backwards as a rough sanity check
- ☐ Decide whether that cost target sounds achievable for what you are describing

BEFORE YOU DESIGN ANYTHING

YOUR SIDE

- ☐ Read the overlaps in your opinion before the conclusion
- ☐ Confirm the distinct part is something a buyer would actually care about
- ☐ Decide whether to file a provisional and start the twelve month clock
- ☐ Sign the confidentiality agreement before the first technical conversation

ENHANCE'S SIDE

- ☐ The free market overview itself: category sizing, segments, channel share, pricing bands, demand signals

This stage is deliberately almost all yours, and it is free. Nothing here needs to be bought from anyone.

ENHANCE'S SIDE

- ☐ Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability, \$399
- ☐ Element decomposition, terms of art, classification searching, foreign and commercial prior art, obviousness assessment
- ☐ Identifying what is distinct about your version and where the open space is
- ☐ Provisional preparation and filing, \$1,499

DURING DEVELOPMENT

YOUR SIDE

- ☐ Bring the market overview, the patent opinion, and your price target to the first design conversation
- ☐ Separate must-haves from nice-to-haves, and hold the line on the difference
- ☐ Agree up front which design files you receive
- ☐ Check the landed cost still supports the retail price you set in Part One
- ☐ Decide whether animation is worth it for how your product behaves

GOING TO MARKET

YOUR SIDE

- ☐ Decide licensing or launch, with the numbers in front of you
- ☐ Expect silence, and read it as the base rate rather than as a verdict
- ☐ Answer the diligence questions honestly when they arrive
- ☐ Convert the provisional before month twelve

ENHANCE'S SIDE

- ☐ The design brief, written against your inputs
- ☐ Industrial design and 3D design files, as scoped in your package
- ☐ Design for manufacturability review before anything is quoted
- ☐ Manufacturing sourcing and real quotes against the model
- ☐ Landed cost per unit at a realistic volume
- ☐ The rendering set: hero, variants, in-use, exploded
- ☐ Product animation
- ☐ Physical prototyping, scoped only to a question that needs settling

ENHANCE'S SIDE

- ☐ The one page sell sheet and the full pitch package
- ☐ The candidate company list, built from the market work
- ☐ Finding the submission route or the right person at each company
- ☐ Running the outreach over months, on contingency with no upfront fee

Glossary of terms you will hear

TERM	MEANING
Claims	The numbered paragraphs at the end of a patent that define exactly what is protected. The only part that decides a dispute.
Prior art	Everything that existed publicly before your filing date. Patents, applications, products on sale, publications, demonstrations.
Novelty	The requirement that your invention be new. Defeated by a single earlier reference describing the same thing.
Obviousness	The requirement that your invention not be an obvious combination of things that already existed. The most common reason applications fail.
Utility patent	Protects how something works. Roughly twenty years from filing.
Design patent	Protects how something looks. Ornamental appearance only.
Provisional application	Not a patent. Establishes a filing date and gives twelve months to file a full application.
Patent pending	A statement that an application has been filed. Accurate during the provisional period.
Opinion of Patentability	A written assessment of what the prior art means for your invention, and where the open space is.
TAM, SAM, SOM	Total, serviceable, and obtainable market. Three nested measures of market size. See Chapter 3.
Industrial design	Resolving form, materials, usability, and cost into a product that can be made and sold.
CAD	Computer-aided design. The manufacturable three-dimensional definition of your product.
Rendering	A photorealistic image generated from the 3D model.
Virtual prototype	The 3D model, renderings, and animation together. What a licensing conversation runs on.
DFM	Design for manufacturability. Designing so the product can be made at volume at a workable cost.
Draft angle	The slight taper that lets a moulded part release from the tool.
Undercut	A feature that traps a part in the mould. Requires extra tooling to resolve.
Tooling	The machined steel moulds used to produce parts. The largest single upfront manufacturing cost.
Landed cost	Total cost per unit delivered, including product, packaging, freight, and duty.

MOQ	Minimum order quantity. The smallest run a factory will accept.
Sell sheet	The one page document used to open a licensing conversation.
Royalty	A percentage of a defined sales figure paid to you by a licensee on units sold.
Advance	An upfront payment made against future royalties.
Exclusivity	Whether a licensee is the only one permitted to sell the product, and where.

What Enhance Innovations does

Design, engineering, marketing materials, and licensing representation under one roof, from an office in Champlin, Minnesota, since 2010.

The reason the stages in this guide sit together is that they feed each other. The patent search shapes the design brief. The design brief shapes the 3D design. The 3D design produces the renderings, the animation, and the manufacturing quote. Those become the pitch package. Splitting that across separate freelancers means every handoff is a place where information gets lost and where somebody has to be paid to rebuild what already existed.

STAGE	WHAT ENHANCE PROVIDES
Market research	Free Market Overview Tool at tam.enhancepd.com
Protection	Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability, \$399. Provisional preparation and filing, \$1,499.
Design and engineering	Industrial design, 3D design, and engineering across four packages from \$4,000
Visual assets	Photorealistic renderings and product animation
Manufacturing	Design for manufacturability and domestic or overseas sourcing
Marketing	Sell sheets, pitch packages, and product marketing materials
Licensing	Representation on contingency, no upfront fee

Start where it costs least

Run the market tool. It is free and it takes two minutes. If the picture holds up, the \$399 patent search is the next step, and it is the one that determines whether anything after it is worth doing. Every conversation begins under a signed confidentiality agreement.

EVERY CONVERSATION STARTS THE SAME WAY

A confidentiality agreement is signed before the first technical discussion. You do not need to have filed anything to talk.

TWO STEPS, IN THIS ORDER

01 Run the free Market Overview Tool

Two minutes. No cost. Market size, segments, pricing bands, and demand signals for the category your product would enter.

tam.enhancepd.com

02 Order the Patent Search and Opinion of Patentability

\$399. A real search across patents, applications, foreign references, and products already on sale, with a written opinion on where the open space is.

enhancepd.com/patent-search

Or Start with a conversation instead

Under a signed confidentiality agreement, before you have filed anything.

enhancepd.com/contact



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This guide is educational material. It is not legal advice and it is not financial advice. Patent outcomes, licensing outcomes, and product sales depend on facts and decisions outside any firm's control, and nothing here is a prediction or a promise about any particular invention. Pricing is current as of publication and is subject to change.