

Legal Hacks for Creators, Inventors and Entrepreneurs

Issue 2, August 2022

Welcome back to my very short and informal newsletter, sharing a bit of what I find interesting, quirky, or just fun about Intellectual Property Law and Patents. I publish this once a month or so to share with you at least one idea that I think you will find both engaging and useful.

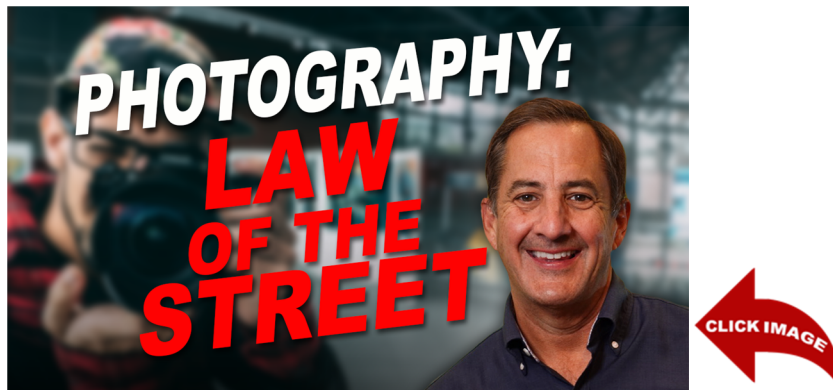


#1 3 Minute Patent: How To Quickly Read And Understand A Patent

I love reading patents. Over the past thirty years as a patent attorney in Silicon Valley, I have read a lot of them. More than 10,000 patents have my name on them, although, sadly none as the inventor. I am sure I have read tens of thousands more doing patent searches, evaluating infringement, and fighting patent lawsuits. Making a living with patents: it's a cool job.

But there is no doubt that patents can be tedious. Reading and trying to understand every word often takes hours. Many are poorly written, and others are just incomprehensibly detailed. But when reading patents for fun or general information it's important to keep in mind that the whole point of the patent system is to record and teach new ideas and inventions. We don't need to go down every written rathole of logic and detail to appreciate the genius and novelty of a newly recorded concept. With nearly twelve million U.S. patents issued, spending a lot of time on each is not a useful strategy.

Over the years I have developed a methodical approach to reading and understanding the inventions taught in patents without getting lost in the weed. I jump around the document a bit, but with this technique I can quickly and easily get a solid understanding of the invention described – often in less than 3 minutes. Check it out in my [video](#) and leave me a comment if you have ideas you can share.



#2 Is it Legal to Take and Post Pictures of People in the Street?

A few years ago, I read a story in a San Francisco newspaper where a resident of the locally infamous (leaning) Millennium Tower, photographed a drone that appeared to be taking photographs through his window many floors above street level. Although it was determined later that this was a legit (but creepy) survey drone looking for cracked windows, it raised a debate whether it's legal for a drone to take photographs through a window of your home, of whatever fun might be going on in your kitchen or pot solarium.

Even more benignly, what about people in the street with smart phones? Is it legal to take photographs of the faces of others in public and post them online? In this [short video essay](#), I explore the law of taking photos in public and address some of my practical and moral guidelines when taking my own street photographs. I hope you will also add your thoughts in the comment section of the video.

Thank you for reading, watching, “liking” and subscribing – it does make a difference as YouTube will then serve these videos to others who are looking for them. Have a wonderful and creative month.

Warm wishes,

-john

John Ferrell is a founder and patent attorney at the Silicon Valley law firm of Carr & Ferrell. The author of two books and a growing YouTube channel on Intellectual Property, John’s passion for creating and protecting patent monopolies is reflected in his representation of many of the world’s most important companies and inventors - some 5,000 so far. Founded in 1992, Carr & Ferrell has filed more than 10,000 patent applications covering nearly every imaginable technology. John is admitted to practice in California; in numerous Federal jurisdictions, including before the Supreme Court of the United States; and in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

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