PATENT LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS IN 6 SIMPLE STEPS
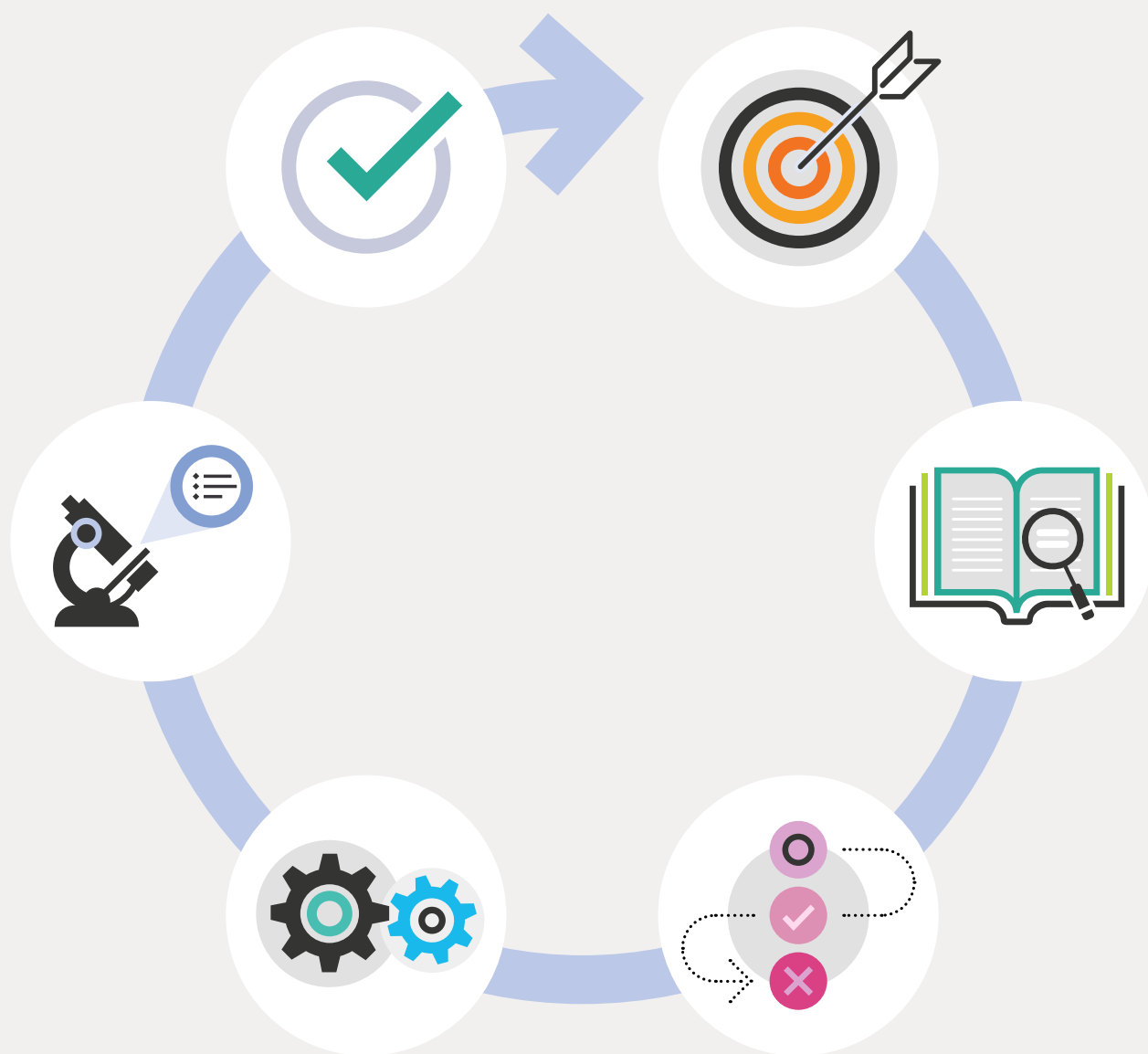
PATENT LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS IN 6 SIMPLE STEPS

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WHAT IS A LANDSCAPE SEARCH?

Patent landscape reports are a popular search report that are intended to give an overview, or landscape, of the patents covering a particular type of technology. These are also sometimes called "state of the art," generally take 1-2 weeks to complete and can cover between hundreds to thousands of patent families. They are a critical step in any company's patent lifecycle and have a variety of uses.

Some common uses for a patent landscape:

- Defining and discovering whitespace

- Understanding the current competitive landscape

- Predicting where your market is heading

- Identifying acquisition, licensing, targets or collaboration opportunities

- Spotting trends in your space to aid investments

- Finding inventors active in a particular area, for headhunting and recruiting purposes

Patent landscape reports (PLRs) provide a snap-shot of the patent situation of a specific technology, either within a given country or region, or globally. They can inform policy discussions, strategic research planning or technology transfer. They may also be used to analyze the validity of patents based on data about their legal status.
Source: WIPO

For some examples of completed landscape reports, visit WIPO's published reports.

STEP 1:
DEFINE GOALS

It's important to understand why you may want to do a patent landscaping activity, and define the goals in advance. Depending on what the end goal is, you may want to address some or all of these key questions while conducting your search.

Some key questions

- Is this a growing area of interest?

- What are the fields of current interest?

- Who are the key players?

- Where are the key players filing their inventions?

- Who are the "key opinion leaders" in this field?

- What is the legal status of the families in this area?

STEP 2:
BROAD
OVERVIEW

Doing some general research around the subject matter is essential to get started.

Basic online research searching a few overall keywords, or for companies known to be active in an area, can uncover helpful articles and background information to help prepare for a comprehensive search strategy. Furthermore, having a clear understanding of the area you're investigating is critical when analyzing the final landscape and answering the key questions above.

Preparing by studying some basic literature will generally allow you to gather some high level keywords, as well as identifying key patents that are associated with the technology you're landscaping.

STEP 3:
DEFINE YOUR INITIAL SEARCH STRATEGY

After your preparation phase, you'll need some time to devise a comprehensive search strategy. Generate general keywords used for the specific technology, and build on that.
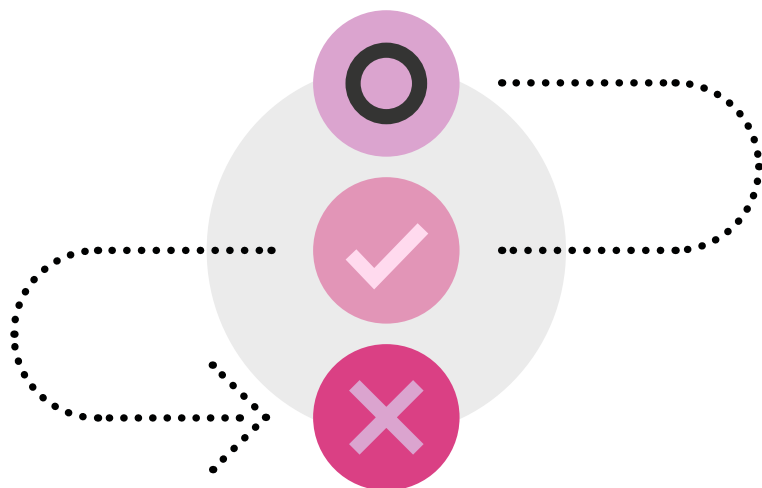
You'll ultimately be looking for:

• Keywords

• Classifications

• Active assignees and inventors

Note: International Patent Classification (IPC) and Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) codes are internationally-used codes used to classify every patent's technology area.

Searching some basic keywords in your patent database in the title, abstract and claims will identify additional relevant keywords, inventors and active assignees (generally the company who has filed for the patent) for your initial search. Additionally, a statistical analysis of the IPC and CPC codes used to classify the initial answer set will help to identify relevant classifications to add to the search strategy.

After developing a comprehensive search strategy, encompassing keywords, classification codes, assignees and inventors, the search results should be focused to the subject matter of interest by a number of limitation steps. This process is difficult and needs to be checked at every step, in order to be sure that relevant records are not eliminated.

Limiting by geographical area, removing utility models and design patents, removing irrelevant patent families identified by acronyms which are used in multiple technology areas, and limiting by publication years are all examples of ways you may limit your search.

STEP 4:
RUN INITIAL SEARCH

After you've compiled a solid search strategy, it's time to run your initial search.
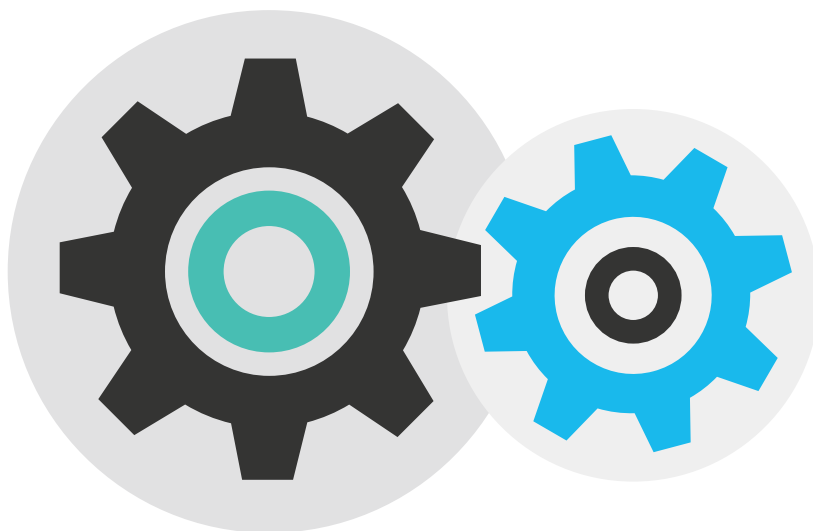
What your search string actually looks like will depend on the database you're using. However, it should encompass: keywords, key assignees, key inventors, full text searches, IPC codes, etc.

When your results come back, take a quick review. At this point, you'll be able to see what percentage of your answer set reveals relevant answers to determine if it's enough for a reliable patent landscape analysis. Typically if it's 80% or more your search strategy is sound.

At this point you should also confirm that the most important patents in the area are included, and sort your answer set by the most cited to further confirm the most cited publications in the area you're landscaping.

Assuming your initial set doesn't meet your criteria, you'll need to adjust your search accordingly.

STEP 5:
ANALYZE AND OPTIMIZE YOUR SEARCH STRATEGY

After you've completed the initial search you'll need to identify additional keywords, relevant classification codes, active assignees and inventors in the area and exclude additional potential sources of irrelevant results, enabling a more comprehensive and clean final landscape search.
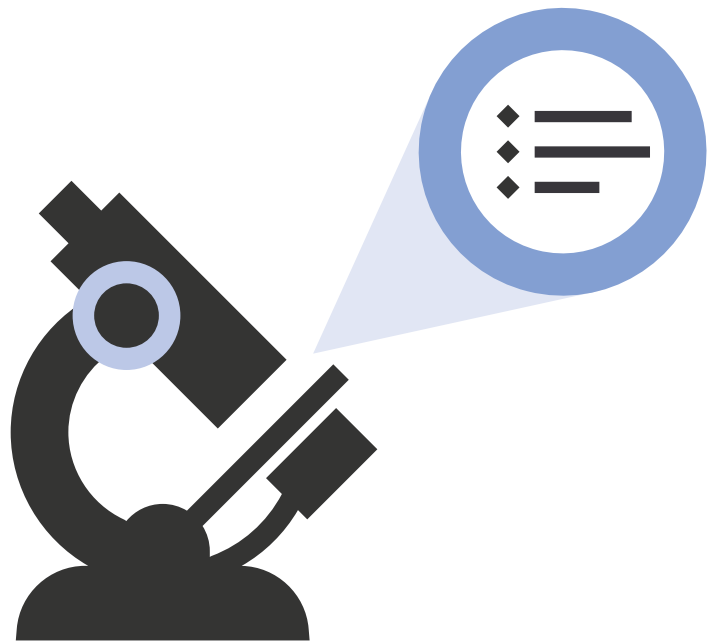
Some tips to do that:

1. Review classification code definitions for additional keywords.

2. Review the title and abstract of key patents for additional keywords.

3. For CPC and IPC classifications use the codes from the basic keyword answer set to focus your landscape.

4. Identify the most frequently occurring assignees and inventors, ensure that areas in which they are working are relevant by investigating their patent portfolio and websites and then be sure to include their patent portfolio in your final landscape.

5. Use advanced features in your patent database, such as analytics, advanced keyword highlighting and text-mining to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the review of patents within your landscape search.

STEP 6:
CLEAN UP, VISUALIZE AND REVIEW

Once satisfied with the answer set, clean it up by grouping assignees together, removing patents in areas that are irrelevant and de-duplicating the answer set to focus on patent families within which all publications describe the same invention.

Next, generate statistical graphs to visualize your landscape search. Viewing the data from a number of angles (jurisdiction, year, assignee, inventor, etc.) and at multiple levels (families, priorities, applications, grants, etc.) can quickly reveal the answers to key questions and easily draw some conclusions:

Is this a growing area of interest?

This can be easily identified by viewing the breakdown of the number of patent publications, patent families or granted documents over time.

What are the current fields of interest?

The fields of current interest can be identified by identifying the top IPC and CPC classification codes which will signify the areas in which most patents are being filed. An alternative is to review the most frequently occurring keyword concepts which can quickly identify key fields being actively pursued.

Who are the key players?

Analyzing the landscape for the most occurring patent assignees can identify the key players and can identify potential collaboration or acquisition opportunities.

Where are the key players filing their inventions?

Simply identifying the key jurisdictions in which the top players are filing their inventions allows you to identify the key markets where patent protection is being sought.

Who are the "key opinion leaders" in this field?

Analyzing the landscape for the most occurring inventors allows you to identify the key opinion leaders who could be your next employee or partner in developing a technology.

What is the legal status of the families in this area?

By simply reviewing the landscape by legal status, you can quickly identify if this area is being actively pursued, where most of the patents are in force or being actively prosecuted. If the area is of lesser interest, you can see where most patents have expired or been withdrawn.

Tying back your visualization and report to your goals ensures you stay focused on your goals.

NEXT STEPS

Selecting a comprehensive database allows you to execute a comprehensive landscape search more efficiently and accurately.

PatBase, the online patent database, allows you to optimize the way you search and review patent literature. PatBase is a trusted primary search tool used by top corporations and law firms worldwide. Our users rely on PatBase to offer them a robust platform from which to search, review, share and analyze business-critical patent information.

- 110+ million patent and related documents from over 105 countries, updated weekly.

- Organized into 57+ million patent families saving time and eliminating duplication.

- Dynamic indexing systems ensure rapid, precise searching.

- Quality control and checks result in better quality searches.

- Data is adjusted and supplemented with missing information as needed.

- User-friendly interface available in English, Japanese and Chinese.

- Express interface version including PatBase Analytics available in 7 languages.

- Discover hidden patents with the Semantic Search Module.

- Non-Patent Literature searching strengthens the foundation of knowledge in fields of interest.

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