

# Comments On The Patent Application Drafting Assignment

## I. General Comments

- A. Great job on the patent applications. Most people are really trying hard and making good progress. Overall, the grades were very good.
- B. It seems like a few people are still being held back by poor word choices that were made early on and/or some structural faults in the application. These will get better with time, but are often difficult to correct because your brain “locks in” on the first thing that was created.
- C. In several instances, the newly added sections were markedly better than the previous sections.
- D. In order to maximize your gain from this exercise, take 20 minutes or so and really think about how you could have done it differently. What worked? What did not work out so well? What choices were you not happy with – and why did you make them – and how can you avoid making them in the future? It may be helpful to write out these insights and then refer to them before you start drafting your next patent application.
- E. In a larger sense, consciously thinking about how you could have made your product better is really one of the only ways you will improve because your feedback in the law firm will likely be pretty infrequent.

## II. Background

- A. Many people may have found it more difficult to write the background than the DD because ICOA gives you a structure/outline and a starting point for your efforts. It’s much more difficult to get started when you have no structure, right? Feedback with regard to the experience?
- B. Do not recite your invention in the background. Outside of the Field of the Invention (first paragraph) no mention of “the present invention” or

the “present system. Additionally, the Field of the Invention is just the Field for classifying the invention – NOT the point of novelty. Just think about “What field would the PTO classify this invention as?”

- Multiple students disclosed the PON in the Background section. Any mention of controlling a VNS stimulator based on detected HRV. That is the PON of your invention.

- Especially post *KSR*, the Background can be taken as admitted prior art. Do not admit your PON is prior art.

- Remember that we no longer want to recite “long-felt needs” or other “motivational” statements in the Background because Examiners are using them against us.

C. Additionally, think about what you are writing and whether it would give the Examiner something that they can say is a “motivation” for combination. For example, describing the prior art as being directed towards a problem – and a similar one that you are directed towards might be a problem. Additionally, if you get too specific about what the prior art fails to do, you start disclosing your invention.

D. Also, avoid giving the Examiner easy admissions phrases that the Examiner can use in the Office Action.

- Don’t use terminology from your specification when discussing the prior art – if the prior art uses different terminology, then use that – or else it can be used by the Examiner as an admission.

E. Most people need better descriptions of the prior art’s limitations in order to make their advocacy more effective – **DISCLOSE THE PRIOR ART IN TERMS OF ITS LIMITATIONS.**

Good words to start limiting phrases for describing the prior art: only, limited to, requires

- Several students did a good job with this. See 2211 for example.

- 929 was well-written with regard to basic science

- F. When discussing prior art, use the “X reference teaches” not the “X method”.
  - G. In many cases, recognition of disadvantages is itself an important part of the invention – or at least a motivation for one. Thus, don’t put it in the Background.
- III. Detailed Description
- A. Validation – This is your last opportunity to point out the differences between your invention and the prior art that you will have before the Examiner looks at your claims. Make it powerfully persuasive. Link back to the Background. Be specific about limitations that are in your embodiments, but not in the prior art. Don’t skip the validation section. You can include more exciting, “marketing-type” language and link it back to the description of the Figures. It is also your opportunity to review the invention disclosure and include all of the “sales” language that the inventor wrote.  
  
NOTE: The validation section is where you can put all the stuff about the VNS causing the release of serotonin - which is good for alleviation of depression. You can include all of the “why” or “impact” of your invention rather than just the invention itself.
  - B. Why include a validation paragraph?
    1. As a check to make sure you include all commercially valuable features identified by the inventor.
    2. Explicitly point out to the Examiner all commercially valuable features. (May help persuade Examiner or later jury). Otherwise, the Examiner may have just glossed over it during the previous 30 pages. This is something that you can point to in a later 102 or 103 rejection.
    3. Emphasize improvements over the prior art / pre-argue obviousness rejection.

4. Discuss fundamental improvement to computer-related technology to help combat 101 rejection.
- C. We need a positive recitation of the structure or function that accomplishes the great new features, not just a blanket statement that “thus the invention satisfies need X”. However, you can refer to the previous figures and the Background, so this should be straightforward.
- D. Sometimes this is hard for people to write because they feel like they just described everything in the previous 30 pages, why should they summarize it here?- Pretend that the Examiner did not read the spec (or did not read it thoroughly) and is just skipping to the end. Not that they would ever do that, right? No, of course not. (Sarcastic) Convince the Examiner of how great the invention is and he will likely be more helpful.
- E. It is also helpful because you can clearly point out distinct elements of the system or method that you regard as novel over the prior art.
- F. Only six students included even a minimal a validation section.
- G. Boilerplate paragraph – some people omitted it. It might do much in the US, but it can have a large impact in some foreign countries – and if it is omitted from the specification as filed, it can NOT be added later. Be sure to keep it.

#### IV. Summary

- A. You don't have to summarize each of your independent claims. You want a clear, understandable Summary of your invention. It will often be similar to your independent claims, but some independent claims use language that is so vague/broad that you can't really tell what is going on.
- B. The summary can be quite short. One page is plenty.

#### V. Abstract

- A. Generally pretty good. Remember that “said” only belongs in the claims, so re-word the claims slightly.
- B. Remember 150 word limit.

VI. Figures

- A. Remember not to put numbers on top of other structural elements.
- B. Remember 1 inch margin requirements
- C. Text and Numbers 1/8 inch high (12-point maybe, 14-point OK)
- D. Brief Description of Figures – Remember not to include reference numbers.

VII. General Issues

- A. Did you include all of the disclosure? Was it enabled? This is the biggest potential liability issue.
  - You would want to recognize earlier in the process that you desired more information and then ask the inventor. If you don't have it, then try to walk through the system step-by-step so that at least you are enabling something.
  - If the Examiner signs the Declaration, then she/he is alleging under penalty of perjury that what is in the spec is her invention. If they did not read it and later try to blame it on you, you can point to the signed declaration. However, if whatever you added is not enabled, then they will try to put it back on you.