



A Step-by-Step Guide for Using Google Patent Search for Competitive Analysis

1. Type the name or ID of the patent that you are investigating in the Google Patent search bar (without including “non-patent literature from Google Scholar”, if you want to focus on patent literature alone) and hit enter. In case you are not starting with a specific patent, then enter the technology domain for which you would like to conduct a landscape analysis. You will get a list of patents, go through a few of them and select a patent that you feel is the most related to the technology you’re interested in. The remaining steps are the same.
2. Once you’ve opened the patent, the table on the right gives details such as patent ID, inventor, assignee as well as priority and publication date. The two icons named “find prior art” and “similar” are the most important for you to obtain information on prior art and relevant patents that may be close to your patented or patent-pending technology in one way or another.
3. On clicking “similar”, you will get hundreds (or even thousands, which is not unusual) of hits*, depending on how much patent literature in the same space is out there in public domain. Without changing the default settings, i.e., sort by relevance; group by none; deduplicate by family; 10 results per page, download this entire list of results in an XLSX file by clicking on the download dropdown menu on the right. This can serve as your master excel file, containing titles, IDs and other details such as patent assignee, inventor/author, priority date, publication date, etc. of this entire list of patents organized in columns. At this point, you can perform basic Excel functions and start screening the patents that you’re interested in based on your criteria, for example, sort them by “assignee” or by “priority date” if you’re only looking for patents by a specific company or those published after a specific date.
4. Go to the bottom of this page* and you’ll see segmentation of the results by assignees, inventors, and CPCs (cooperative patent classification: a system by which the USPTO and EPO jointly classify patents). You will see the entire list of major assignees and inventors (and their respective percentage of patents in descending order) with competing patents in your technology domain. Use Google Translate for assignees mentioned in non-English languages to identify both repeat assignees and other companies operating in international markets.
5. Clicking on any of these assignees or inventors will give you a list of their patents that you can review and download as separate excel files. For repeat assignees, the data can be merged to create a list of unique entries for that assignee by removing duplicate entries. In each assignee’s list of patents, you may find new assignee names which could be subsidiaries of the parent company (known by different names in other countries) or startups acquired by that company. Once you have an excel file for each assignee/inventor, use relevant keywords to identify a narrower set of patents that you need to study in more detail (for example, go through the scope and claims of their invention, etc.).
6. This analysis, combined with supplemental Google searches about each company, their websites, products/offerings, and white papers, as well as non-patent literature, industry reports, and fundraising and acquisition data on Crunchbase etc., will help you identify the major companies/institutes/universities/experts/inventors with relevant patents in your technology domain that need to be investigated further for a comprehensive competitive analysis. Similarly, you can also do “prior art” search and use different keywords in the search bar to get to a narrower set of patents to gain insight into any novelty and/or infringement issues upfront.