NAME: EKPAH STEPHEN UNEKWUOJO

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1. **PATENT:** A **patent** is a form of [intellectual property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual_property) that gives its owner the legal right to exclude others from making, using, selling and importing an [invention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invention) for a limited period of years, in exchange for publishing an [enabling public disclosure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufficiency_of_disclosure) of the invention. In most countries patent rights fall under [civil law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_law) and the patent holder needs to sue someone [infringing the patent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent_infringement) in order to enforce his or her rights. In some [industries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_industry#Major_industries) patents are an essential form of [competitive advantage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Competitive_advantage); in others they are irrelevant.

The procedure for granting patents, requirements placed on the patentee, and the extent of the exclusive rights vary widely between countries according to national laws and international agreements. Typically, however, a patent application must include one or more [claims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patent_claim) that define the invention. A patent may include many claims, each of which defines a specific property right. These claims must meet relevant [patentability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patentability) requirements, such as [novelty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novelty_%28patent%29), [usefulness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utility_%28patent%29), and [non-obviousness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inventive_step_and_non-obviousness).

Under the [World Trade Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Trade_Organization)'s (WTO) [TRIPS Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRIPS_Agreement), patents should be available in WTO member states for any invention, in all fields of technology, provided they are new, involve an inventive step, and are capable of industrial application. Nevertheless, there are variations on what is [patentable subject matter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patentable_subject_matter) from country to country, also among WTO member states. TRIPS also provides that the [term of protection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Term_of_patent) available should be a minimum of twenty years.

2. **COPYRIGHT:** **Copyright** is the [exclusive right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exclusive_right) given to the creator of a [creative work](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_work) to reproduce the work, usually for a limited time. The creative work may be in a literary, artistic, educational, or musical form. Copyright is intended to protect the original expression of an idea in the form of a creative work, but not the idea itself. A copyright is subject to [limitations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limitations_and_exceptions_to_copyright) based on public interest considerations, such as the [fair use](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use) doctrine in the United States. Some jurisdictions require "fixing" copyrighted works in a tangible form. It is often shared among multiple authors, each of whom holds a set of rights to use or license the work, and who are commonly referred to as rights holders. These rights frequently include reproduction, control over [derivative works](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derivative_work), distribution, [public performance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performing_rights), and [moral rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_rights) such as attribution.

Copyrights can be granted by public law and are in that case considered "territorial rights". This means that copyrights granted by the law of a certain state, do not extend beyond the territory of that specific jurisdiction. Copyrights of this type vary by country; many countries, and sometimes a large group of countries, have made agreements with other countries on procedures applicable when works "cross" national borders or national rights are inconsistent.

Typically, the public law [duration of a copyright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright_term) expires 50 to 100 years after the creator dies, [depending on the jurisdiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries%27_copyright_lengths). Some countries require certain [copyright formalities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright_formalities) to establishing copyright, others recognize copyright in any completed work, without formal registration.

**3. TRADEMARK:** A **trademark** (also written **trade mark** or **trade-mark**) is a type of [intellectual property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual_property) consisting of a recognizable [sign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sign_%28semiotics%29), [design](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design), or [expression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expression_%28language%29) which identifies [products](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_%28economics_and_accounting%29) or [services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_economies) of a particular source from those of others, although trademarks used to identify services are usually called [service marks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_mark). The trademark owner can be an individual, [business organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_organizations), or any [legal entity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juristic_person). A trademark may be located on a [package](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Packaging_and_labeling), a [label](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Label), a [voucher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voucher), or on the product itself. For the sake of [corporate identity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_identity), trademarks are often displayed on company buildings. It is legally recognized as a type of [intellectual property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual_property).

The first legislative act concerning trademarks was passed in 1266 under the reign of [Henry III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_III_of_England), requiring all bakers to use a distinctive mark for the bread they sold. The first modern trademark laws emerged in the late 19th century. In France the first comprehensive trademark system in the world was passed into law in 1857. The [Trade Marks Act 1938](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_Marks_Act_1938) of the United Kingdom changed the system, permitting registration based on "intent-to-use”, creating an examination based process, and creating an application publication system. The 1938 Act, which served as a model for similar legislation elsewhere, contained other novel concepts such as "associated trademarks", a consent to use system, a defensive mark system, and non claiming right system.

The symbols ™ (the [trademark symbol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trademark_symbol)) and ® (the [registered trademark symbol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Registered_trademark_symbol)) can be used to indicate trademarks; the latter is only for use by the owner of a trademark that has been registered.

**4. TRADE SECRET:** The precise language by which a trade secret is defined varies by jurisdiction, as do the particular types of information that are subject to trade secret protection. Three factors are common to all such definitions:

A trade secret is information that

* is not generally known to the public;
* confers economic benefit on its holder *because* the information is not publicly known; and
* where the holder makes reasonable efforts to maintain its secrecy.

In international law, these three factors define a trade secret under article 39 of the [Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRIPS_Agreement), commonly referred to as the TRIPS Agreement.

Similarly, in the United States [Economic Espionage Act of 1996](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Espionage_Act_of_1996), "A trade secret, as defined under [18 U.S.C.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Title_18_of_the_United_States_Code) [§ 1839](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1839)(3)(A),(B) (1996), has three parts: (1) information; (2) reasonable measures taken to protect the information; and (3) which derives independent economic value from not being publicly known.

Trade secrets are an important, but invisible component of a company's [intellectual property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual_property) (IP). Their contribution to a company's value, measured as its [market capitalization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Market_capitalization), can be major. Being invisible, that contribution is hard to measure. Patents are a visible contribution, but delayed, and unsuitable for internal [innovations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innovation). Having an internal [scoreboard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dashboard_%28management_information_systems%29) provides insight into the cost of risks of employees leaving to serve or start competing ventures.