

Service quality in IP Management

Securing success, with norms!

In markets driven by innovation, without question intellectual property such as patents, trademarks, and registered designs are pivotal to business success. The systematic process of creating, implementing and exploiting "intellectual property" (IP) is now encapsulated in the term "IP Management". In most companies it features more and more in the innovation process. Despite this, there is no standard for assessing the quality of IP Management services. Steinbeis Transfer Institute for Intellectual Property Management set about changing this – with DIN, the German Institute for Standardization.



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As well as performing an important role in economic terms, IP Management has led to the development of a broad spectrum of services designed to help companies reap the benefits of IP. On the one hand, these services provide companies with innovative options for leveraging IP and holding their competitive ground. On the other, they provide business with specialist support which, without them, would mostly be unavailable in-house, or at least not available to a sufficient degree. Small and medium-sized

enterprises (SMEs) in particular are heavily dependent on quality services to exploit the full potential of IP. Unfortunately, the services they need to do this differ greatly in terms of format and quality, not only in Germany but also the rest of the world.

The problems customers have judging quality – as well as the problems providers have communicating quality – are of course not restricted to services. In fact it is an issue prevalent in all sectors of industry. So we

have standards or norms. According to an estimate made by the US Congress in 2005, some 80% or 7.3 billion dollars of global trade is directly affected by norms and similar specifications.

The Steinbeis Transfer Institute for Intellectual Property Management at Steinbeis University in Berlin has embarked on a project with DIN with the aim of creating a standard for the quality of services in IP Management. The project is being funded by the Federal

Ministry of Economics and Technology as part of an initiative called "Innovations with Norms and Standards" (INS). The aim of the initiative is to create a "Publicly Available Specification" (PAS) in partnership with companies and service providers. This would then provide a quick and practical starting point for a DIN standard to act as a guideline for IP Management services. To achieve its aims by the completion date in 2009 and the date of the PAS publication, a working group will be set up with companies, customers and providers involved in IP Management services. The Steinbeis Transfer Institute is responsible for managing the content and format of the PAS.

The PAS concept has already proven its worth on a previous project run by the Steinbeis Transfer Institute and DIN. PAS1070, which laid the "General Principles of proper patent valuation" received a warm welcome from industry. In fact the project was so successful that the results were presented by Professor Alexander Wurzer, Head of the Steinbeis Transfer Institute, during the G8 summit in Heiligendamm. It is currently undergoing fine-tuning for a possible development into a worldwide ISO standard.

This innovative approach towards standardizing service quality is designed to capture the different types of IP Management services, the quality benchmarks to be used, the skills and knowledge the providers of the solution should possess, and the processes they should follow. As well as providing the effective means to foster the commercial success of companies, this will add impetus to the German and international market for IP Management services. Especially in SMEs, marrying IP Management services to the company's innovation processes defined specific service methods and aims for the PAS.

In the early stages of innovation processes in research and development, this basically encompasses the provision and utilization of technical information, whereby patent in-

formation is the most valuable, core source of information. Patent information-based research and analysis services are a key success factor in innovation, especially if they help reduce development times and costs, and avoid problems such as unnecessary parallel developments.

During the later stages of the innovation process, when technology exploitation and market launch become the main priority, the key task is to safeguard the returns on the innovation and provide support in the form of services for selecting and combining IP. At this point methods and options for transferring technology play an increasingly important role for individual companies as well as the business as a whole, necessitating licensing and trading platform services, as well as implementing and defending protective rights. Another important part of IP Management services relates to the design, creation, and management of IP portfolios with respect to the competition, technology and market trends.

For all types of services, the better the quality of the service and service provision, the more likely the company benefiting from the service is to translate its knowledge into a commercial success. The way services currently stand, they are not captured systematically enough, let alone standardized. One reason for this is that there are so many different service providers operating in different areas and disciplines. In the IP Management field, there are patent agents for drafting and enforcing property rights. Then there are innovation intermediaries such as the Steinbeis network and consultants specializing in jurisprudence, business and technology. This heterogeneity creates major differences and problems with the quality of IP Management services. Interdisciplinary training programs such as the CEIPI's "Master of IP Law and Management" and "Intellectual Property Management" run by Strasbourg University in partnership with the Steinbeis Transfer Institute for Intellectual Property Management are just one

way to meet these multidisciplinary quality requirements.

The aim of the joint project with DIN is therefore to capture quality standards for a variety of IP Management services in the innovation process, and to lay down appropriate quality benchmarks and assessment criteria for service providers and customers of such services. Further, it will be necessary to define quality requirements and measures for safeguarding the quality of services and procedures. Another aim of the project is to use the PAS as the basis of a proposed standard which should subsequently be adopted as a DIN standard, or ultimately become a standard applicable on an international level (CEN and ISO).