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INNOVATION SUPPORT SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE TO RESEARCHERS, INVENTORS AND LOCAL INDUSTRY

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I. BACKGROUND

1. As many of my esteemed colleagues have stated earlier in this Workshop, the establishment of goals at the highest levels must precede the development of an effective innovation plan. It has been made clear that effective innovation plans are launched by drawing together organizational managers from industry, government and research centers, and agreeing on the contributions each sector will make so as to develop jointly an effective innovation program. The objective of course is economic growth and prosperity which results from the successful commercialization of innovative products and technology.

2. Based on the premise that you have already developed an innovation plan, it is certain that members of government, industrial and research sectors, as well as independent inventors will, from time to time, require outside expertise to assist in the implementation of an innovation plan. "Outside expertise" takes a number of forms, including:

a) services (reliance on the expertise of a professional consultancy firm outside your organization);

b) products (tools which help develop resident expertise within an organization).

3. It is well known that the important elements of innovation development and commercialization include, *inter alia*, technical, market and business development. Within the overall innovation plan, each of these elements will be addressed according to different priority schedules, and at various levels of importance to the overall innovation plan. Organizations newly entrusted with innovation development responsibilities often lack certain kinds of expertise in one or more of these operational disciplines, and must seek outside assistance or resources to advance innovation initiatives to an appropriate degree.

4. By relying only on services provided by consultants, organizations can become dependent on outside services at the expense of developing internal expertise. On the other hand, while the emerging family of products and software can empower innovation professionals within an organization, they are more appropriately used for data collection, access and analysis. Software tools lack the decision-making intelligence that experienced consultants can provide. Therefore, the most effective innovation programs will create a reasonable balance between services and products.

5. It will be the purpose of this paper to introduce some of the effective and readily available products which, when implemented, can empower staff to become more self-reliant over the long term, and take a more active role in the promotion and development of innovation. All the products outlined in this paper are accessible via the Internet.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

6. Vast differences exist between countries, and even between regions within a particular country, with respect to the economic climate, technical resources, production capacity and end user markets, related to innovation.

7. More specifically, these differences take into account regional patent laws, monetary strength, or access to technical, research or manufacturing resources. Further, since the end result of any successful innovation program is revenue and business expansion, the market in which the innovation will be sold plays a critical role.

8. Therefore, before any assistance resources are employed, clear objectives should be set forth, and the assistance should focus primarily on the areas where an organization is weakest. In other words, knowledge of the local environment for innovation should be readily available, but organizations may be less knowledgeable about products, services and markets outside their local regions.

9. With the advent of the Internet, innovation managers can now extend their reach far beyond their regional borders, instantly accessing the best support services and products available.

III. LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS

10. While language can be an impediment to networking across geographic, social or language boundaries, Internet-based machine language translators are becoming more refined and allow for real-time translation from, and into, more than 50 languages. By first visiting a translation website, a user can input any website address (URL) and automatically read the foreign language website in their preferred language. Language differences no longer limit access to innovation resources online.

11. The following sites offer some of the best online translation possibilities and should be the starting point for foreign innovation support research:

- http://www.freetranslation.com/;
- http://babelfish.altavista.com/;
- http://www.systransoft.com/;
- http://www.tranexp.com:2000/InterTran;
- http://mason.gmu.edu/~aross2/ (complete list of translation engines for 56 languages).

IV. EVALUATING THE NEED FOR INNOVATION RELATED SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

12. Considering that market, technology and business all play a critical role, organizations responsible for innovation development, must evaluate current assets and identify missing components prior to soliciting any outside services or products. This requirements-definition phase can help to identify the services or products that advance the innovation initiatives in the most affordable and efficient manner possible.

13. The following table shows a hypothetical example of three different scenarios in which an organization already has two of the three major components of a commercialization plan in place, yet requires assistance with the third component.

CURRENT INNOVATION ASSETS:	NEED ASSISTANCE:
Technology, Production Capacity	To Access Foreign Markets
Local Market, Production Capacity	To Find or Acquire New Technologies
Technology, Strong Sales Channels	To Find Capable Manufacturing Resources

14. By identifying the weakest commercialization elements within an innovation group, managers can effectively align their requirements with the necessary external resources. Organizations should not allocate resources to strengthen existing capabilities until the critical missing components are addressed.

V. RESEARCH SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

15. Once managers clearly identify the most important requirements, i.e. the missing components of a successful innovation program, they can concentrate on selecting the most robust products and services that will lead them to the information.

16. The following tools will provide the manager with access to technical data, data analysis, and collaboration and licensing resources that can augment outside services. Of course, there are many other websites that contain useful information related to innovation, but the focus here is more on data access rather than general information access.

Assistance: Tools for	Found in: **www.2xfr.com**	Found in: **www.ipsearchengine.com**	**Other Products**
PRIOR ART RESEARCH	Pending applications not yet published	Patent and Technology Search Search Defensive Publications	WIPO: http://ipdl.wipo.int/ http://gb.espacenet.com/
PATENT PROTECTION	Provisional Patent Software (US)		Patent services quote www.feebid.com
MARKET RESEARCH		Demographics and Census Databases	http://virtualpet.com/industry/rdindex2.htm
PATENT VALUE AND ANALYSIS	Patent Value Predictor Calculator		www.patentratings.com www.wisdomain.com
LICENSING	Licensing Exchange Patent Listings	Research Potential Licensees based on Int'l Patent Class	www.pl-x.com www.yet2.com
TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT	License Available Technologies		www.firsttofile.com www.foundationip.com www.quinnpatent.com/

17. In addition to these targeted products, more specific products such as docketing software, patenting software, licensing tools, and professional services can be found in the directory listings (http://www.patentcafe.com/directory/directory.asp).

VI. APPLYING THE TOOLS TO YOUR INNOVATION PROGRAM

18. Many of the tools are directed toward commercialization in or with the United States of America. While patent analysis and other software will interface with the US patent database, their underlying valuation methodology can certainly be applied to any region.

19. Analysis tools will provide patent family mapping, patent trends and patent value (based upon some economic measure such as Gross Domestic Product). However, for any analysis system to be the least bit effective, it must have access to the most current and complete set of data possible.

20. If a government organization is considering the development of patent analysis tools, it should take care to build the underlying database such that the important fields for analysis are available for the analysis software. Certain data points must be searchable and available, those data points being patent issue date, international patent classification (IPC), local patent classification, patent owner (assignee) name, priority date or any number of other important data points which the organization feels it is important to compare and analyze.

21. Also, while many of the tools have been developed for other countries, they are often available to leading agencies for localized versions. For instance, the patent licensing exchange (www.2XFR.com) is a licensing database that is built on a modular software structure that can be customized for any region, country, or major technology organization. In other words, the investment has already been made in the software tools, so the adaptation of those tools to other regions, or their display in other languages, is quite an easy and inexpensive consideration.

22. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider asking the software tools publishers to provide a customized version of a particular product. By implementing a localized version of software or Internet-accessible tools for use by innovation organizations in a particular region, the innovation process can be accelerated and at a lower cost than investing in the development of comparable tools.

VII. CONCLUSION

23. Products that promote the acceleration of innovation development and commercialization continue to be introduced into the market through the Internet. As each of these tools becomes available, its applicability to regional innovation programs must be continually evaluated.

24. Once it is clear that any of these tools can extend the internal capabilities of an organization, they should be adopted.

25. Products can provide data such as trends, valuation, licensing opportunities and more. While products can provide these important data, they cannot replace human knowledge and decision-making on the data. Therefore, products should be used in conjunction with knowledgeable intellectual property and innovation professionals.

26. Over time, by using outside innovation services as required, combined with the effective use of Internet-based data management software products, an innovation group can begin to build a solid pool of talent and innovation skills within an organization, thereby reducing its dependence on external assistance.

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