

The UK Patent Office

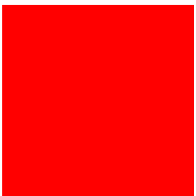
*Support provided by IP Offices to SMEs
Warsaw, 20 November 2003*

New ideas, new firms?

Helping small business use the
intellectual property system – a UK view

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New ideas, new firms

SMEs in the UK economy

Working with small businesses:

- Patent Office
- UK Government

Working for small business



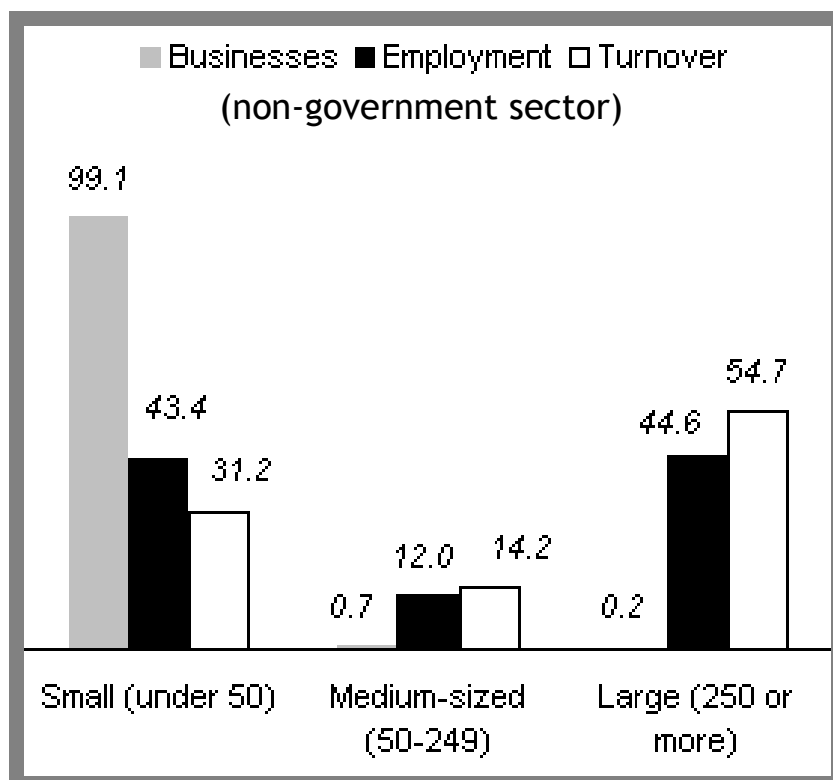
UK Patent Office

- Agency of UK Department of Trade and Industry
- Covers patents, trade marks, designs and copyright
- Employs approx. 1000 staff
 - including 300 patent examiners
- Includes UK and European applications
- Annual income of £50 million* (€75m)

*2003/04 forecast



Small businesses in the UK, 2001



Source: UK Small Business Service, 2002



Small firms, big business

- SMEs key to UK economy
- 3.7 million active businesses in UK:
 - Only 35000 businesses employ more than 50 people
 - Only 7000 businesses employ more than 250 people
- SMEs employ 55% of workforce, produce 45% of output (outside government)



Small firms, bigger economy?

- Easier to grow
- Free to innovate
- Fewer barriers to new ideas

BUT...

- New companies often fail
- Risky and expensive to expand
- May protect rather than develop IP



Why work with SMEs?

- Economic benefits
- Creating IP literate community
- Supporting innovation in small business – not leaving it to large companies
- Supporting competitive businesses
- Cost of agents
- Difficulty enforcing and exploiting rights



Starting point

- Competitive fee structure
- Range of advice available
- Financial support available from range of bodies
- Private Applicants units
- Straightforward information, forms, web guidance



Services and support

- Search service helps avoid unnecessary costs
- Patent applications:
 - Free to file
 - £200 (€300) to register
 - Less than £1000 (€1500) for ten years' registration
- Trade Mark applications:
 - £200 (€300) to apply & register for ten years



Beyond the Patent Office

- Range of government and non-government support for small firms
- Includes grants, loans, other funding and advice
- Based on partnership with business
- Small Business Service
- Regional structure
- Local provision



Regional services



New ideas, new firms? UK Patent Office



Working for small businesses

- Aim is to ‘think small’ – consider small business needs in all policies
- Build awareness
- Create effective partnerships
- BUT – remember that small businesses not all the same or have same needs



Law and Enforcement

- Small business often less able to defend own IP
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Improvements to enforcement to avoid court
- Range of consultation with business
- Aim to modernise and improve system



Partnership

- Small business/government relationship not always simple
- Need to choose key partners for discussion/consultation
- Regular contact with private sector, public sector and local organisations
- Devolved nature of UK government (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)



Keeping up with changes

- Keeping IP in spotlight
 - in government
 - in business community
- Workshops with business
- Joining wider government activities
- Supporting and working with networks
- Web and printed briefings and updates



Summary

- UK has long recognised importance of SMEs to economy
- Range of services from Patent Office and others
- Also about awareness and effectiveness
- Partnership is key

The UK Patent Office



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