

Importance of IPR in internationalisation of SMEs

In order to sustain competitiveness in global market within the new world of international alliances and networks, companies are extending their business activities at international level, now more than ever. While on one hand, this integration strengthens the companies' position within the network of borderless trading, on the other hand this extension makes the companies to reconsider their business approaches and tools. If a company is willing to enter into new foreign markets, that is so-called internationalisation process; its business strategy should be shaped in a flexible way allowing adaptation to new business and competition environment. How to deal with intellectual property (IP)



matters in internationalisation process and which main steps should be taken to efficiently manage intellectual property rights (IPR), when entering into foreign markets was presented and discussed during the Study visit in West-Mildands region. In order to assist SMEs a special programme was introduced: IPAM - The intellectual Property Asses Management Project.

The Intellectual Property Asset Management project offers a programme of support from initial awareness raising and company engagement activities, to facilitated workshop sessions that improve knowledge levels and address current deficiencies. This includes:

- intellectual property diagnostic actions that help participants understand; their existing asset base and exploitation potential;
- one-to-one company visits, in-company diagnostic and audit across the full range of intellectual assets of the organisation;
- development of an intellectual asset management strategy for the company and the offer of support for small-scale projects that utilise external expertise and the regional knowledge base in support of achieving the business benefits that the strategy identifies.

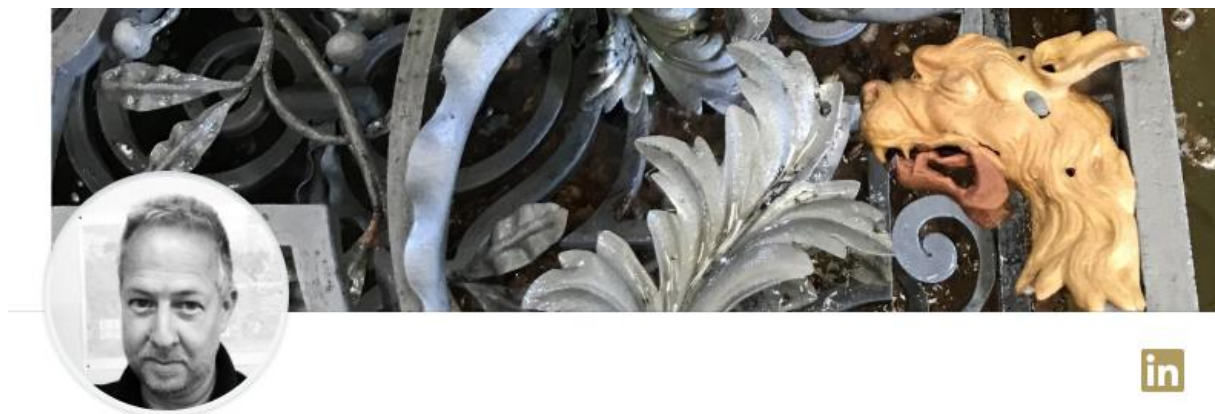


Picture 2: <https://www.surfaceprocessing.co.uk/>

During the Study visit in West-Midlands, the Surfacing Processing Limited (SPL), which is the largest chemical cleaning facility of its kind in the United Kingdom, was showcased. Since 1994, they service a broad range of industries from the automotive sector, storage and pallet racking, specialist pipework and aerospace. They are able to process items from just a few millimetres to up to 8 metres and up to 5 tonnes. Essentially SPL have a unique process, which they needed to protect. The process is able to remove all, paint, sealants, adhesives, noise reduction materials and




underseals. In addition, it effectively removes rust and breaks down filler without attacking the surface in anyway. This process leave the client with a clean steel shell.

Through the IPAM Programme, an IP audit was conducted on SPL, which identified a need to protect their process with an international patent whilst also highlighting that the best method for them to internationalise was through a licensing agreement. Further to this SPL completed an agreement with a Czech company. SPL has also started negotiations with a Polish company.



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Picture 3: <https://www.linkedin.com/>

Adrian McMurray, the Managing Director of SPL said, “I’d not realised how important patent protection was for our company until we started licence negotiations, suddenly we were taken seriously by all cornered”. This case highlighted that licensing agreements enable quick development of International markets and are a precursor to possible future direct investment in foreign markets.

For more information about this Good practice please visit:
<https://www.interregeurope.eu/intra/good-practices/>