

IP PRAGMATICS

Patent Landscape Analysis

Background:

At IP Pragmatics, we use patent landscaping tools to help us to analyse the patent situation across a particular technology field. Our clients have used landscaping to understand Freedom to Operate issues, to identify in- and out-licensing opportunities, to examine competitor strengths and weaknesses, or as part of a more comprehensive market analysis.

We worked with an international chemical company which has a core product range based around a group of related chemicals. Although the company had some knowledge of competitor research into similar products for their traditional applications, they asked IP Pragmatics to identify and analyse the intellectual property landscape for both their core application area, and also for other fields of use.

Objectives:

The chemical company was looking for a patent landscape analysis which covered compounds, combinations, use and formulation, delivery and manufacturing. The aim was to understand:

- What are the overall trends in patenting in this field over time, territory, application area?
- Which are the major companies and universities patenting in this chemical class?
- How does their patenting strategy compare with that of their major competitors?
- Which application areas are these chemicals used for?
- Which fields are being exploited by which companies?
- Where are there potential in-licensing opportunities to strengthen the patent protection of the client?
- Where are there out-licensing opportunities to generate additional revenue for the company?

Approach:

IP Pragmatics has access to a range of proprietary and subscription patent databases and landscape analytical tools. These deliver a visualisation of the technology sector, using patent landscape maps and an analysis of the trends and key attributes in the field.

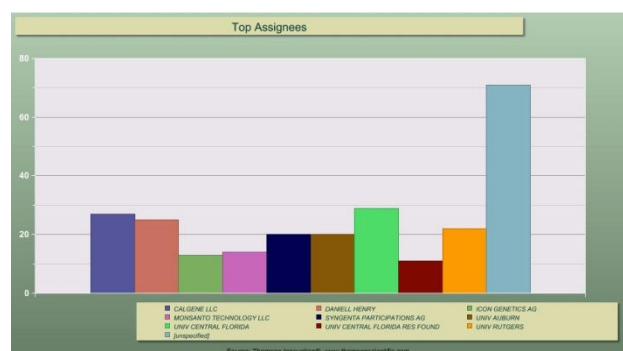
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Search Strategy

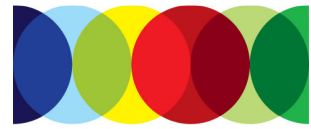
Following a review of the technology area with the client, we identified a series of key words to define the broadest and yet most relevant patent set. We used these to search the Thomson Innovation database, a subscription database with full text patent and bibliographic data from territories worldwide, and augmented indexing.

Result:

The set of patents identified by the search was first reviewed for patent trends by year and by country. We identified the top patenting companies in this field, and compared their patenting strategies with the client's. We also showed which technology areas were of most importance to the key competitors.



Example of a chart showing the top patenting companies, universities and individuals



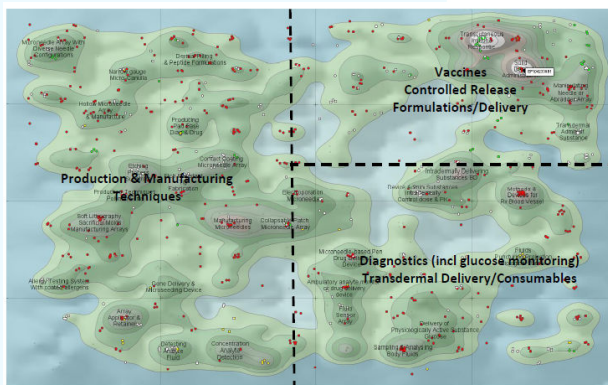
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By studying the patents which had cited a key early patent covering this chemical class, we were able to find other companies and groups with an interest in this area.

Landscape maps

For the mapping, we use Thomson Innovation's proprietary ThemeScape™ mapping tool. ThemeScape™ uses term frequency and other algorithms to cluster documents based on shared language. The text from one record is compared with the text from all other patent records within the search collection. The outcome of this analysis is a visualisation of the patent space with each patent (dot) represented once in the map, with patents in close proximity sharing more phraseology than those located apart. The patents are grouped into map "contours" to show areas of high and low patenting activity organised into common themes. The illustration shows these contour lines, with the "mountain peaks" representing a concentration of patents. Each peak is labelled with the key terminology concepts contained in the patents within the cluster.

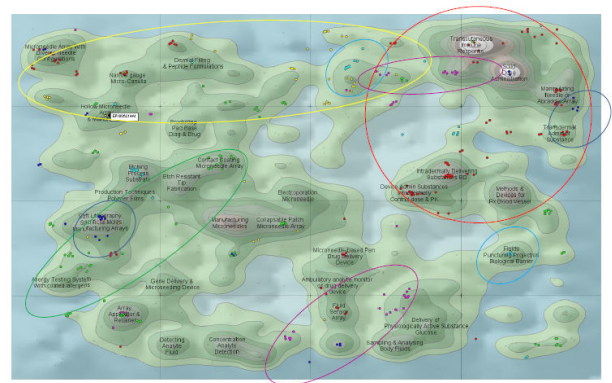


Example of a patent landscape, with red dots identifying the patents held by the client

The full set was later subdivided into different application areas to allow for a more in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the company's patents in different fields.

These maps can be examined in detail to find patents which may be valuable in-licensing opportunities to complement the clients existing holdings. They can also pin-point companies which may be interested in taking a licence to patents in the clients portfolio.

We also looked at the positions of their key competitors on the landscape maps:



Example with different coloured circles highlighting the patents belonging to particular key competitors

Through this mapping, we identified some competitors which have become increasingly active in the last few years, but which were not well known to our client beforehand. We were able to demonstrate the particular application fields where these competitors were focusing their research.

The report provided critical competitive business intelligence in any easy to digest format for reporting to non patent-professional staff. Importantly, we interpreted all this information in the context of the client's patent and business strategy, providing recommendations for how the company should best position itself within the overall technology and business landscape.