Key factors for the successful evaluation and screening of managers of the intellectual property rights speciality

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1. Introduction

Intellectual property (IP) rights are invisible properties, differing from tangible possessions not only in their ways of usage but also their evaluation. As the world’s economy is gearing toward becoming a knowledge-based one, knowledge workers hold the key to IP rights (the creations of minds). Hence, there arises a brand new management task: how do companies turn their employees’ knowledge into their intellectual property? In the 1970s, a company's visible property accounted for 80% of its value while, in the 21st century, 70% of it may come from its invisible property (Davis & Harrison, 2001). The fruit of knowledge is what we call intellectual property (Lou, 2003).

IP rights have long been handled as a legal issue (Adams, 1987). With the society becoming ever more knowledge intensive, the prosperity of a company depends increasingly on a systematic integration between IP rights and R&D results. The development and maintenance of IP rights can help companies to increase their revenue as well as retain their competitive edge (Borg, 2001). As the link between IP rights and profit is proven to be positive, managing IP rights naturally becomes a crucial aspect of business strategy. Such management can be implemented through IP development, protection and commercialization, with the aim of strengthening a company’s competitiveness and sustainable progress (Xu, 2004).

The technology service providers for IP rights work in an interdisciplinary way to deal with issues of management, legal affairs and technology. As expertise or technology dependent as they are, their products and services are knowledge-based (Bilderbeek, Hertog, Marklund, & Miles, 1998). Currently, in Taiwan, IP rights management is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important topics by industry, the government and academia alike (Lou & Hwang, 2004). Facing the present economic climate, in which innovation and knowledge capital are deemed to be of great significance, companies should take immediate action to promote research and innovation, as well as the effective management of IP rights. This naturally leads to the increasing demand for talent in the field of IP rights management. These professionals are able to provide technological development forecasts and carry out the procedures of patent registration and technology commercialisation. They can also work closely with the R&D teams to enable the utmost worth of any IP rights to become the secret weapon of a company (Xu, 2004).

The core of IP rights management is the search for suitable talent, as successful management is decided by various factors, both internal and external. To overcome the internal challenges,
professionals from legal, technological and managerial backgrounds have to collaborate, and equally important and difficult is the training of such professionals (Lou & Hwang, 2004). The shortage of talent at the moment is a direct result of the small number of training organizations and staff. Therefore, how to cultivate the most needed talent is currently a pressing issue for IP rights management.

Studies on the theories of intellectual property (IP) rights management, technology trading and revaluation abound. Many scholars have also expressed opinions on the technical side of IP rights management, such as the government policies, market regulation and technology trading systems (Lou, 1990). In comparison, there is insufficient quantitative research focusing on the selection of IP rights management personnel. To address this issue, this study is designed with the following aims in mind:

1. To establish the relative weight and deciding factors of the vetting of IP rights managers.
2. To offer concrete suggestions on the training of IP rights managers.
3. To provide information for related industries and aspiring IP rights managers about the requirements of IP rights management as a profession.

2. Definition of the managers of intellectual property rights

2.1. The meaning of competency

According to the online platform of technology trading, Taiwan technology market (www.twtm.com.tw, 2006a), launched by the Industrial Development Bureau, Ministry of Economic Affairs, services related to IP rights management fall into five categories: (1) services to establish IP rights management and implementation systems; (2) services to increase the value of IP rights; (3) IP rights evaluation; (4) legal services; and (5) services to plan and implement IP rights, R&D results and corporate strategies, as well as IP rights integration, education and training. The definition here not only highlights the responsibilities of IP rights managers, but also their significance to the industry. Effective management is able to bring forth tactical correlations among internal IP rights in a way that boosts a company’s strategic operation and competitive edge.

In recent years, the technology industry in Taiwan has made promising advances in its R&D capability. However, accompanying such a trend is an increase in the number of lawsuits over IP infringement raised by international companies. A missed step in the field of IP rights management services to establish IP rights management and implementation systems; (2) services to increase the value of IP rights; (3) IP rights evaluation; (4) legal services; and (5) services to plan and implement IP rights, R&D results and corporate strategies, as well as IP rights integration, education and training. The definition here not only highlights the responsibilities of IP rights managers, but also their significance to the industry. Effective management is able to bring forth tactical correlations among internal IP rights in a way that boosts a company’s strategic operation and competitive edge.

In recent years, the technology industry in Taiwan has made promising advances in its R&D capability. However, accompanying such a trend is an increase in the number of lawsuits over IP infringement raised by international companies. A missed step in the field of IP management services listed on the Taiwan technology market (2006b), this study concludes that there are six sub-indicators of professional competency, including patent inventory, locating the core patent group, applying patents inland and overseas, evaluating IP rights, deciding on the best timing to patent, and calculating the chance of patents being granted.

2. Basic competency: Basic competency refers to an ability that can be applied extensively to any work situation and also one that can act as an aid to the expression of professional competence (Coomer, 1998). In this study, the five basic functions of IP rights professionals, as proposed by Chang, Yang, and Shen (2007), are used as the sub-indicators, including observation competence, data collection competence, communication and coordination competence, problem-solving competence, and English proficiency competence.

3. Personality: Personality refers to a combination of individual characteristics and behaviors that promote excellence in work performance. These are the underlying features in Spencer & Spencer’s iceberg model (1993). This study referred to the work of Chang et al. (2007) to list five personality-related features as the sub-indicators of personality. These are also based on industry services, and include professional confidence, a sense of responsibility, a sense of morality, an ability to adapt, and a team spirit (Wood & Paynee, 1998).

3. Method

3.1. Structure

Because each evaluation criterion obtained by this research is qualitative in nature, it is difficult to quantify them for practical application. Therefore, this research deploys a two-stage expert
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