

BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS – R&D and I.P. Management

AN ADEQUATE R&D POLICY, ASSOCIATED WITH AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES CAN OFFER OPPORTUNITIES AND PROVIDE PROGRESS EXPANSION AND COMPETITIVENESS OF ANY BUSINESS

The removal of substantial formal barriers, exchange of goods and capitals, and increasingly developed and widespread telecommunications systems are making markets globalisation more real every day, so that not even medium-sized companies can escape it. To the same extent with which the global market offers us greater and more accessible opportunities for occupying markets' shares that, until yesterday, were too far off and inconceivable, it exposes our markets to the competition of countries that, until now, have been less active or absent.

It is believed that one of the most effective ways by which developed economies can maintain their competitive advantage is to guarantee their continuous progress, supporting growing efforts in terms of means and resources devoted to research in order to attain privileged positions on the market, together with a sustainable and constant development. We therefore encounter, on the one hand, more and more challenging phenomena of innovation and diversification, while on the other hand the technologies and products present on the market are becoming more and more quickly obsolete. It is therefore very crucial to be able to cut down the time intervals between R&D activity, and the industrial exploitation of the findings; this with the aim of maintaining the acquired competitive advantage. As a consequence of the above, whether companies be large or small, they can no longer cope with this competition exclusively on the basis of their own means of innovation. The acquisition of new technologies to modernise their line of products or diversify the company's activities, respecting innovation rates that are often incompatible with "in-house" research activities, becomes, therefore, of great importance.

The assets generated with R&D, suitably managed and protected, thus make it possible to achieve a dual result: the innovation of processes and products which, when introduced into the production cycle, allow an improvement of competitiveness, and the enriching of the company's assets with intellectual property which, if not of strategic interest to the proprietor, may be transformed into a liquid asset by granting its use under licence or by assignment.

The above gives a clear idea of the problems to be faced, both, to the resources that can dedicate to R&D as to the activities connected with the operations involving the transfer of technologies, their economic assessment and consequent negotiation.

At this point another fact linked with the company ethic concerning the acquisition of technologies must be stressed: we refer particularly to their reluctance, concerning the use of technologies not developed "in house". This is a blow to the pride of people who have been operating in the sector for years and feel they have been overtaken by a more dynamic market; further more other people think that a licensing agreement constitutes a form of "slavery" with respect to the patent holders.

The professionalism involved in IP management issues, requires extensive negotiation skill and multidisciplinary knowledge of, among other, technical & scientific matters, strategic marketing, often associated with financial legal and commercial aspects of international trading.