BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Intellectual Property Awareness and Project Commercialisation within a University environment.

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Why is teaching IPR important?

- Shift in manufacturing and production to low cost areas.
- Change in emphasis in company structure.
- Companies increasingly aware of protecting their assets.
- UK Spec 2004 explicitly sets standards of IP competence and awareness.
- Vital for tomorrows engineers and entrepreneurs

What do students need to know?

- Developing Entrepreneurship requires capability in business, legal, IPR and good engineering or design skills
- What are copyrights, patents, trademarks?
- Where do I find relevant information?
- When do I call in an expert?
- How to communicate with an expert

A Bit of History

- In 1988 Bournemouth University started a BSc in Engineering Business Development, a unique course that integrated Business, Manufacturing, Electronic and Mechanical Engineering.
- The aim was to facilitate the generation of entrepreneurial designers who had an understanding of the commercial and technical issues.
- The lecturing staff were a drawn from a number of departments and Law lecturers presented material on Intellectual Property

Some more History

- One of the first graduates from the course , Phil Brewster designed a “Speaking Microwave Oven for the Blind” which won a Design Council Prize
- Since then we have included Intellectual Property in the curriculum of the following courses
  - BSc and BA product Design
  - BSc Computer Aided Product Design
  - BSc Design Engineering
- This is now taught by a mix of Practicing Engineers and Designers, Financiers and Lawyers

The IPR content

- Within undergraduate programmes this is found in a variety of units such as:
  - Professional Design Issues — Yr 2 Product Design
  - Engineering Management — Yr 2 Design Engineering
- These units to provide students with a knowledge and understanding of the principles and application of the law and how it relates to intellectual property rights, product liability, contracts and product design.
- This is taken further in final year projects

Methodology

- Course designers (mainly Engineers) recognised from the outset we needed to include IPR in an already crowded curriculum –and work with the experts!
- The approaches used were
  - Case study method
  - Problem solving using the students own designs
  - Actually going through the process of filing a patent for the students own project

What else do we do now

- IP generated by a student as part of their course, being a by-product, generally speaking, is not managed as such. Often not protected by the way of Patents or Registered Designs and not exploited by the student, Bournemouth University or business as a general rule although there are some exceptions.
- Staff at Bournemouth University have looked closely at this and concluded that a number of student projects had commercial potential.

Test Case

- Phil Robinson's "Post Pump" shown at Bournemouth University Design show in 2001 has been developed with DTI support
- Phil set up Zorin Innovations and worldwide manufacture, marketing and sales have been agreed with Dahon
- Geoff Bell from the University supported Phil in the development and protection of his invention

IP Generation with a University – The next steps

- Continue and enhance the delivery of Intellectual Property awareness.
- Start in Year 2 with patent search project and exploration of how designs are protected.
- Pair IP Law students with Final Year Product Design students to act as legal advisors and assist patent application
- We propose all students go through the process of preparing a patent application and registering their design for their individual project.