



PATENT MAPPING FOR IAM STRATEGY AND VALUE

Patent mapping and the review of patent landscapes in technology areas and analysis of competitor patents can assist greatly in determining the intellectual asset management (IAM) strategy of a business and extracting value from its intellectual property (IP).

Competitor analysis

Most businesses should realise they are not working in a vacuum and staying one step ahead of their competition will assist in the success of the business now and into the future. Various sophisticated tools can be used for conducting comparative reviews of the patent portfolios of competitors, including patent landscape maps, citation trees and automatic watch alerts. Towards the end of 2009 Watermark acquired an Analyst subscription to the top level of the patent searching platform of Thomson Innovation™ which provides such sophisticated tools.

Patent landscape maps

A patent landscape map analyses a collection of patents and groups patents relating to the same technology sub-areas into clusters. Those clusters which have a large number of patents are represented as peaks or mountains on the landscape map, whereas technology areas where there are few closely related patents are represented as deserts or islands in an ocean. Figure 1 below is a patent landscape map called a ThemeScape™ map generated using the Thomson Innovation™ software for the solar energy field of technology.

Collections of patents for generating patent landscape maps may be obtained in different ways, eg by collating the patents of known competitors in a particular technology, by conducting subject matter searches in patent databases using various combinations of keywords and/or international patent classifications, and/or from citation trees based on key patents in a particular technology (discussed below).

Each dot on a patent landscape map represents an individual patent, and patents of different owners can be shown in different colours to distinguish them. This helps to identify particular technology sub-areas in which different competitors are concentrating their R&D and patenting activity.

The patent landscape maps can also be time-sliced, eg to show how a technology area has developed over time and to show how some businesses have changed their patenting focus over time.

Further advantages of analysing patent landscape maps can include identification of hot technologies, opportunities in adjacent or related markets, discovery of new players in the field and potential partners or acquisition targets.

Figure 1 – ThemeScape™ map for solar energy



