

Inventique®

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors December 2004

Shamal's Iraq deal

WRTI INVENTOR HELPS TO REBUILD HIS COUNTRY



Contractor Abdul Kareem Mohamad (far left), a US Army representative, Dr.N.J.Guckian from the British Embassy office and Shamal Barzanji conclude the signing of the pipeline restoration deal in Kirkut.

part of plans to restore and replace 4,000km of irrigation and drinking-water pipelines throughout Iraq. ■

● Shamal, who recently gained British Citizenship, has invented two revolutionary products: the portable Gravity Pump™ (which has no moving parts, is powered purely by the weight of water flowing along rivers or streams, and can pump 5,000 litres of water per day to heights of 25m) and the X-Stream Pump™, an edge-driven device with a wide variety of applications, from slurry pumps to marine bow thruster units. Both projects were supported with DTI SMART Awards and are now being manufactured under licence in Dorset.

● shamalbarzanji@yahoo.co.uk

WRTI MEMBER Shamal 'Sam' Barzanji – a senior design engineer working on Iraq's major irrigation projects before fleeing Saddam Hussein – has returned to Iraq to help rebuild his country's infrastructure.

Representing a local company, Shamal was the pivotal figure in a deal involving the importation of a PVC pipe-making machine from the People's Republic of China.

Valued at £250,000 and the length of a railway carriage, the machine extrudes 6m lengths of pipe in minutes, and is a crucial

Diary date WOMEN INVENTORS can attend free one-to-one consultations with innovation experts on 17 January 2005. Organised by ideas21 (see page 4) and held at The Patent Office, London, subjects include design and prototyping, first steps in marketing, intellectual property, licensing, manufacturing, patent enforcement and steps to commercialisation. Consultations are held between 10am and 2pm and last for 30 minutes.

● Tel: 020 8780 9017 to book an appointment at *Women Invention and Innovation*

**Next WRTI meeting
WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER**

Guest speaker Andy Bateman, from Cenamps (the international centre of excellence for nanotechnology in Newcastle upon Tyne) will give an illustrated lecture in room HC 017, Herbert Collins Building, Southampton Institute, commencing at 6.30pm.

Map: <http://www.solent.ac.uk/location.stm>
● www.cenamps.com

A for Achievement

INVENTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS are five times more likely to be dyslexic than the general population, according to a report on BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme. This may be because dyslexics try harder to improve their communication, creative and problem-solving skills in order to compensate for their condition, the report suggests.

Trevor Baylis, Richard Branson, Jackie Stewart and Alan Sugar are all highly successful entrepreneurs who suffer from dyslexia, which is thought to affect 1 in 10 people.

Oxford professor John Stein, who runs free clinics for children in Oxford and Reading, says his latest research suggests that more than 30% of dyslexics could improve their reading speeds with the aid of cheap tinted spectacles. ■

● **Theories including auto-immune disorders in the womb and high blood pressure attach to dyslexia, an extremely complex condition which is not exclusively about experiencing visual difficulties.**

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Institute, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP



VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

BARRY HOLTON, last month's guest speaker, extended the ultimate accolade to our club when he revealed to us a brand new technology which his company had patented just a few weeks before the meeting.

Plasma Quest Limited is only a small (five-man) company, yet is a recognised world leader in thin-film deposition techniques using plasmas. To date this technology – called 'sputtering', and which is typically used to coat compact disks – has been held back because until now it had only been possible to deposit the micron-thick plasmas onto comparatively small surface areas, typically up to a maximum of 300mm square.

Now, however, Plasma Quest has devised a technique which makes it possible to deposit plasma onto a continuous roll of sheet material. This innovation, of course, opens up a vast array of new and potentially lucrative market opportunities among industries as varied as aerospace and packaging. Remember that you heard it here first! Visit their website for more details www.plasmaquest.co.uk

I took the opportunity last month to ask members what more the WRTI could do to help you? Our newest member, Gary Sallows, took up the challenge, wishing as he did to find out how he could licence the marketing and manufacturing of his security grills.

A number of ideas were put forward, and the subsequent debate generated such interest that this question will be asked more often at future meetings.

Sincerely,

David

PROFESSOR DAVID NICHOLAS MBE, Chairman

INVENTORATOR Linda Oakley

Invention to business

TURNING IDEAS INTO PRODUCTS OR PROCESSES

LAST MONTH I mentioned how inventors too often confuse an 'idea' with an invention – the technical application of an idea to provide a new product or process.

Does the invention work?

A business will be shortlived if it is built around an invention that doesn't work or which does not meet a customer's needs or expectations.

Making a prototype ensures that an idea actually works, and will identify technical problems – which might mean going back to the drawing board, making changes as needed, testing and re-testing to get the bugs out.

Refining an invention from paper to a workable model can take time: James Dyson made 5,127 prototypes over 5 years.

Designing an invention

Design is too often an afterthought, but it is the vital connection between prototyping and manufacturing: an invention can often be obscured by poor design. A good design can reduce manufacturing costs by optimising the materials used, for example, or by re-defining how the invention looks or is used. In today's consumer market, functionality alone is not always enough to encourage people to buy a product.

Manufacturing an invention

The difference between an idea and a product is manufacturing: a great idea makes no money until it is produced and sold in multiple units at a realistic price. Understanding how an idea can be manufactured can affect budgets and therefore the sale price.

Maintaining quality is a key factor in the long-term success of a product and, as the idea is engineered, new ways may be found to patent and protect it.

Same thing, different market

A university research chemist was working on hydrogels – polymeric materials which absorb many times their own weight of water, causing them to swell. The results were encouraging, and proposed uses for the material were considered.

One use was in the automatic operation of an irrigation valve by blocking it with swollen hydrogel: when the material dried out, it shrank and opened the valve to allow water onto both the crops and the hydrogel – which expanded and again shut off the flow.

Another proposal was for treating animals such as cows, by inducing them to swallow drug-infused hydrogel contained in a small mesh bag. The hydrogel expanded on contact with the fluids in the cow's first stomach, thus preventing the now inflated bag travelling any further. The drug was then released and the hydrogel dissolved, enabling the shrunken bag to pass through the newly treated animal.

Yet another use turned out to be much simpler: mixing hydrogel into the soil surrounding potted plants. Before the owner goes away on holiday, the soil can be over-watered: the hydrogel absorbs the excess and swells. As the plant uses the water up, more is released from the hydrogel, keeping the soil moist and the roots watered. ■

Concluded next month...

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● Linda Oakley is co-founder of ideas21 (see page 4).

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This is an edited extract from an article which first appeared in A Handbook of Intellectual Property Management, published by Kogan Page.

www.kogan-page.co.uk

NEGOTIATING A LICENCING AGREEMENT-2

THE MAIN CONTRACTUAL TERMS OF A COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT

IN DISCUSSING HOW negotiations with third parties regarding the exploitation of any invention should be conducted, I touched upon confidentiality and intellectual property rights (IPR) last month, *writes Rosanna Cooper*.

This month, we shall consider IT considerations, terms and jurisdiction. In order to use a realistic model, this article focuses on contractual terms that would typically be included in a software licencing agreement.

Term and Termination

The agreement should specify the duration of the contract. This may be by means of a fixed term or continuing term, until certain events occur or notice of termination by the parties takes place.

The agreement should clearly specify the procedure for either party to terminate the agreement, by setting out how notice is to be given, time periods for the notice, and the address and method of service of such notices.

The termination clause should specify the events that would trigger termination of the agreement, such as insolvency and breach of agreement, for instance.

INPEX 2005

DO YOU HAVE AN INVENTION or licence to market, or are you looking for new products? *INPEX 2005*, the USA's largest invention trade show, will be held at the Greater Pittsburgh Expomart, Monroeville, Pennsylvania, from 8th to 11th June next year.

Croydon Round Table of Inventors succeeded in gaining seven Gold Medals and the ultimate Grand Prix Award at *INPEX 2004* in May, triumphing over 1,500 inventors from 32 countries in the process. Art Fry, Inventor of Post-it Notes, delivered the keynote address.

ROSANNA COOPER
CLARIFIES THE LEGAL
POSITION FOR
INVENTORS AND
ENTREPRENEURS

Jurisdiction

The agreement should specify which law is to apply to the agreement. This is particularly important when business is conducted over the internet, as several jurisdictions may become involved. Such a clause will avoid any initial dispute over which law should be applied to the agreement. An inventor based in England or Wales should ensure that the jurisdiction expressed in the agreement is the English Courts and that English law is applied to the agreement.

Arbitration: Dispute Resolution

Dispute Resolution is a means of resolving disputes through an independent third party. The third party may suggest a solution but cannot impose the solution on

either party and the parties may withdraw from the negotiations at any time. If at any stage the parties agree a solution, this should be in writing and signed by both parties (at which point the agreement becomes a binding agreement).

In the event of a dispute arising, litigation through the courts can often be costly, lengthy and very public. Many agreements therefore provide for disputes to be resolved by means of arbitration or dispute resolution.

The arbitration clause in the agreement will specify how the arbitrator would be appointed. (RT Coopers has expertise in conducting intellectual property litigation on behalf of clients.)

IT and internet considerations

Any business relationship must consider such information technology issues as:

- **Clearly displayed website terms and conditions** – if transactions are to be entered into in this way.
- **Domain name registration.**
- **e-mail policies.**
- **IT personnel.**
- **Software and hardware packages to be employed.** ■

Concluded next month...

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- *Dr Rosanna Cooper is a partner at RT Coopers, a commercial law firm focusing on inventors and business start-ups.*

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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE ideas21

Twenty-one today...

ONLY TWO YEARS OLD AND ALREADY A LEADER

THE UK's FASTEST-GROWING network devoted to invention and innovation, ideas21 is supported by government, industry and private companies to inform and educate its members on all matters relating to the successful progression of an invention, from initial idea to commercialisation.

ideas21 began life as a group of inventors, patent agents and people simply interested in innovation who met in a pub on the last Tuesday of every month. They swapped horror stories and gave each other valuable support and advice – but, most of all, had fun.

Today, those regular monthly meetings continue, but are now held at The Patent Office in London and the Renaissance Hotel in Manchester,

with presentations by guest speakers followed by social gatherings in (you guessed it) a nearby pub; these meetings bring together people from different areas of the invention and innovation industries in an informal, friendly and vibrant atmosphere.

Supported by the British Library, NESTA, Dyson, The Patent Office and the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, idea21's website comprises a first-class reference point for anyone wishing to take an innovative idea forward, meet like-minded people, or simply be inspired by the wealth of creative vision and entrepreneurial spirit contained within its pages. ■

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HUMORESQUE from Dave Chalice dchalice@bournemouth.ac.uk

This was a test devised by a famous American psychologist:

While at the funeral of her mother, a woman met a man with whom she fell instantly, crashingly in love. She thought he was absolutely amazing – her life's partner – but forgot to ask for his phone number and couldn't find him after the funeral. A few days later the woman killed her sister.

QUESTION: What was the woman's motive in killing her sister? (Read on before you check the correct answer at the foot of this panel.)

Many convicted murderers took part in this test and answered the question correctly. If you didn't answer the question correctly, good for you, because you're normal. But if you DID answer it correctly, go and see a psychiatrist – because you think like a psychopath.

ANSWER: She was hoping the man would reappear at the second funeral.

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.desktop.google.com

A free, easy-to-use utility that searches documents and e-mails on your PC. It works in the same way as performing a Google search on the web, finding those files whose names you can't remember or where you put them...

Website supplied by Mike Overy.

MEMBER SERVICES

Entries in this column are free to WRTI Members, who should mail their details to the Editor (see panel at foot of page).

CHARTERED MARKETER and electrical engineer will sell for you for a mix of low-cost retainer and results achieved. CV and references available. Contact: Alan Finn, 01420 80642
alan.finn@btconnect.com

CONCEPT TO MANUFACTURE. Help with presentation, prototyping, technical & manufacturing issues. Contact: Innovate Product Design, 01722 410 295

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