

Inventors take centre stage at the Barbican

UNIQUE BUSINESS CONTRIBUTORS HONOURED

THE INVENTEAM of Andy Mullard and Paula Ward were the toast of the town on 8th November, winning the top-category prize when the British Invention Show Awards 2003 were presented at the Barbican Centre, London.

WRTI Chairman David Nicholas also gained an award for his TVC

scheme (see page 4) on a night at which over thirty inventors, designers and innovators were honoured for their unique contributions to the entrepreneurial life of 'UK Plc'.

● **Contact:** www.thebis.org

Right: Alan Wilcher presents Paula Ward with her prize. Inset: Andy Mullard.



INVENTION OF THE YEAR 2003

● Telephone & Internet Blocker by Paula Ward & Andy Mullard

Industrial Awards

- 1 ● Vectis Roads Winter Management software by **Brian Williams**
- 2 ● Bench Rover by **Ian Smith**
- 3 ● Nav-Lights by **Eric Degerland**
- 4 ● Stan Hitch by **Stan Roberts**

Consumer Awards

- 1 ● Instant Florist by **Anne Lloyd**
- 2 ● Envelope by **Steve Capon**
- 3 ● Water Saving Valve by **Milan Hrenovic**
- 4 ● Whole New World by **Steve Compton**

Leisure Awards

- 1 ● Sports System by **Peter Morrison**
- 2 ● Free Lights by **Q Gang**
- 3 ● Trojan 3-D Gym by **David Bean**
- 4 ● Pix-Fix by **Ian Mann**

Best Design Awards

- 1 ● Cheetkey by **Steve Matthews**
- 2 ● Disposable Scalpel by **Edward Goodwin**
- 3 ● Safer Kettle by **Len Hill**

INPEX Best Invention Award

- Aroma Cair by **John Burgess**

Awards were sponsored by Ideas 21, NESTA, Projected Outcome and TDI.

Crystal Globe Awards

- B3 Cutlery by **Marta Lago-Arenas**
- BioLec by **Merlyn Farwell**
- Dimmer Switch by **Steve Singh**
- Flame Retardant by **Mike Keenan**
- Homework Organiser by **Shimon Betib and Charles Clerk**
- J L Candles by **Jenny Madalura**
- Maltron Keyboard by **Stephen Hobday**
- Span Adhesive Applicator by **Alan Spencer**
- Zip Sack by **Lucy Porter**

BIS CATALYST AWARDS 2003

- Peter Martin for the **National Invention Strategy**
- Professor David Nicholas MBE for **The Virtual Company (TVC) scheme**
- Alan Wilcher for the **MSc in Invention programme at Kingston University**

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Institute, East Park Terrace SO14 0RP



VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

OUR DECEMBER MEETING was certainly very different: a visit to the *Institute of Sound and Vibration Research* at Southampton University, hosted by Professor Philip Nelson, the institute's director, ably assisted by Maureen, his PA.

WRTI members were shown around the laboratories, where we were given some fascinating insights into the diverse avenues of research being pursued by Philip's department. These range from the stabilising antennae arrays used in space to cochlea implants which can transform the lives of people who are otherwise totally deaf (at a cost of a cool £35,000 per patient).

There was also a dramatic demonstration to show how aircraft propeller noise can be reduced, and a rather eerie experience of 'virtual sound', where the noise from two closely mounted speakers appeared to come from the remote corners of a test chamber.

To me the meeting also emphasized the difference in approach between the inventor and the scientist. The inventor is creative, intuitive and often uninhibited by his or her lack of scientific knowledge. The scientist, on the other hand, deals only with facts and theory and is always trying to correlate the two. The world needs both, of course.

We have now reached the end of the calendar year, and I believe the WRTI has made real progress. I hope we can continue the trend in 2004 – and let us hope we can also enjoy Peace and Prosperity over these next twelve months.

Sincerely,

PROFESSOR DAVID NICHOLAS MBE, Chairman

INVENTORATOR Joff Wild

Asset management

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY EQUALS ADDED VALUE FOR TODAY'S ENTREPRENEURIAL INNOVATORS

TRADEMARKS AND PATENTS are vital assets to innovating companies and must be fiercely protected, *writes Joff Wild*. But there is also money to be made from licensing ideas – whether one's own or others'.

It is a fact of modern business life that few entrepreneurs, whether working alone or inside a company, get very far without an understanding of intellectual property (IP). If legal rights such as trademarks and patents did not exist, the huge investments necessary to set a company apart through its brands or innovations – two fundamental requirements for success in today's markets – would not be justifiable.

Equipped with a portfolio of registered trademarks, a company can market its products secure in the knowledge that no rival can appropriate its brand names or identities. Similarly, a strong set of patents gives it the right to exclude rivals from potentially lucrative areas it identifies in the course of its research and development.

The billion-dollar quest

Millions of pounds are spent each year on devising and marketing a range of devices – including shapes, colours and sounds, as well as words – to convey messages about a brand's core values and aspirations. Together, it is hoped that these devices, which are protected by trademark law, will encourage a decision to buy.

Likewise, in many industries it is innovation that keeps businesses one step ahead. For this reason, billions of pounds each year are sunk into research and development in the hope that a patentable technology or process will emerge, allowing a company to carve out a

niche for itself. Trademarks and patents have to be registered and paid for. Patents last for 20 years from the date of filing and trademarks are perpetual as long as they are renewed every ten years.

Other rights, such as copyright, exist automatically. Copyright comes into existence upon the creation of a protectable work such as a film, book or computer programme. In Europe copyright can last for up to 70 years after the death of the author, during which time no one else can use the protected work without the owner's permission.

Investing in intangible assets

Such facts explain why investors will only put money into companies that can show they own solid IP rights, and why market-makers place a premium on intangible assets such as IP when assessing how much a company is worth. Without IP rights, the only certainty is that if ideas are good or products are popular they will be imitated or directly appropriated by everybody operating in the relevant sector. ■

Continued next month...

● *Joff Wild is editor of Intellectual Asset Management magazine.*
www.iam-magazine.com

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www.ft.com/entrepreneurship

Next WRTI meeting
WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY
Guest speaker: Richard Little on sales & marketing for inventors, plus a club review.

IPR: ASSIGN OR LICENCE?

INVENTORS AND entrepreneurs tend to misunderstand the concepts of assigning and licensing intellectual property rights (IPR's), writes Dr Rosanna Cooper. These terms are often used interchangeably, but it is crucial for inventors to grasp the differences between an assignment and a licence.

Assignment of IPR

An assignment of IPR means the transfer of those rights absolutely to a third party in return for payment.

On the assignment of your rights to an assignee, the assignee becomes the proprietor of those rights and the ownership of the IPR would transfer to the assignee as beneficial owner. The assignee will usually require an assignment with full title guarantee, which means there are no encumbrances on the IPR such as a charge.

The assignee derives his rights from the transfer of the IPR, and on the signing of the assignment can do all acts in relation to the IPR as though it belonged to him. An example of such acts includes the right to initiate proceedings for infringement of the IPR.

Licensing IPR

As licensor, you may grant an exclusive or non-exclusive right to a licensee to use your IPR in a particular territory, in return for royalties. However, you retain all rights in your IPR.

If you grant an exclusive licence for a territory then you exclude all parties from that territory. In order to conduct any licensing in that territory, as licensor, you will have to grant a sole and exclusive licence. A licence allows the licensee the right to perform certain acts in relation to the IPR which would otherwise be prohibited and thus constitute infringement of those rights.

Unlike an assignment, a non-exclusive licensee has no right against the public. However, an exclusive licensee may initiate

ROSANNA COOPER CLARIFIES THE LEGAL POSITION FOR INVENTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

proceedings for infringement but must join the licensor in the action.

Checking the details

When granting a licence of your IPR, it is important to expressly state in an agreement the terms and conditions upon which you are granting this licence, in order to avoid any dispute later on.

This list includes some of the key points to be included in a licence:

- **Grant (the scope of the licence)** ie whether it is exclusive, sole or non-exclusive.
- **Duration**
- **Territory**
- **Royalty levels**
- **Restrictions on the IPR** including quality provisions and confidentiality.
- **Infringement of IPR**
- **Licensee's obligations**
- **Warranties and Indemnities**
- **Termination** ■

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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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BOOK OF THE MONTH

Lost Moon: The Perilous Voyage of Apollo 13

by Jim Lovell & Jeffrey Kluger (Houghton Mifflin, 1994, ISBN 0-395-67029-2).

WHO REMEMBERS ED SMILIE?

No, neither did I until I re-read this book, writes David Nicholas.

The world held its breath in 1970 when three astronauts transferred to the two-man lunar module *Aquarius* and struggled to return from their aborted space mission alive.

The problem was that they were trying to operate on minimal power with a number of failing systems. The air scrubbing units were really causing concern, because if these

failed the crew would die from a build-up of carbon dioxide.

Enter Ed Smilie, who with his team demonstrated American ingenuity and inventiveness at its best. They cobbled together a series of hoses and plastic bags, held together with duct tape, which reduced the carbon dioxide concentration level from 13mm Mercury to below 2mm (15mm is fatal). This device enabled the crew of *Aquarius* to return safely to earth.

So remember Ed Smilie! ■

HUMORESQUE from Dave Challice dchallice@bournemouth.ac.uk

A large corporation recently hired several cannibals.

"You're all part of the team now," said the MD. "You get all the usual benefits and you can go to the canteen for something to eat, but please don't eat any of the other employees". The cannibals promised they wouldn't.

Six weeks later their boss remarked: "You're all working hard, and I'm very pleased with you. However, one of the secretaries has disappeared. Do any of you know what happened to her?" The cannibals all shook their heads.

After the boss had left, the chief cannibal turned to the others: "Which one of you idiots ate the secretary?" A single hand was hesitantly raised.

"You fool!" said the chief. "We've been eating managers for six weeks and nobody's noticed a thing. But n-o-o-o, you had to eat somebody important!"

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE Business Link Wessex

Business, as usual...

LINKING THE INVENTOR WITH THE ENTREPRENEUR

IT IS ENTIRELY appropriate that one of the most significant events in recent UK innovation history took place at the offices of Business Link Wessex, the local hub of the national network which specialises in helping innovators and entrepreneurs across Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight develop their ideas and grow them into viable businesses.

The event, of course, was that moment on 23 February 1998 when David Nicholas 'sold' the rights to his brainchild – The Virtual Company, or TVC – to Business Link Wessex for the princely sum of... £1.

Shock, horror

That's right. The concept of surrounding an inventor with business, financial and technical experts, who would each work for nothing but take 'virtual' shares in the idea until it took off as a business – at which time they became *real* shares, worth real money – was sold to the nation for the price of a packet of sweets.

David Nicholas (that's Professor David Nicholas MBE to the likes of us) is now a household name, at least among the business fraternity. But more importantly for inventors,

Business Link

he is also Innovation & Technology Counsellor at Business Link Wessex.

And as is now beginning to be more widely recognised, business start-ups are often borne out of the gleam in an inventor's eye.

Business Link Wessex in general and David Nicholas in particular have helped inventors in the South secure approximately £7 million worth of funding in the last three years alone.

"I developed TVC as a tool for lone inventors who want to turn an incredible idea into a credible business," David said. "So far the scheme has helped set up over 30 micro businesses in Wessex and is now being rolled out nationally."

From new rural businesses to international trade, Business Link Wessex seems to hold all the aces.

And that £1 for the TVC idea? "I still haven't received it,"

David chuckled. "I could do with the money!"

● **Contact: Business Link Wessex (Offices in Fareham, Poole, Gillingham and Newport, IoW.)**

Advice Line: 08454 58 85 58

Events Line: 08454 58 85 57

info@businesslinkwessex.co.uk

www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

www.brainboost.com

BrainBoost is a 100% automated search engine. The website employs cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence technology rather than human editors to locate answers to questions asked in plain English.

Test it with questions such as:
How many kilometers is Earth away from the Sun?

Which gaseous element was first isolated in 1886 by Henri Moissan?

Website provided 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).

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

ELECTRONICS CONSULTANT with 30 years experience, specialising in wireless and positioning technologies. Contact: Mike Overy, 01420 562378 **mike.overy@zen.co.uk**

ELECTRONICS ENGINEER Concept to proof of principle. Ex- scientific civil servant. Own lab. Contact: Mike Wright, 01428 722833 **mike@fwright21.freemove.co.uk**

INNOVATION CONSULTANT and trainer specialising in TRIZ, author of *How to Invent (Almost) Anything*. Contact: Graham Rawlinson 01403 871 321 **Graham@dagr.demon.co.uk**

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