

Conducting Effective IPR Public Education & Awareness Campaigns for SMEs

1 – 3 APRIL 2009, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



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Practical Session: Marketing “Multipliers” or, How Partnerships Can Help Spread Your Key Messages

Panel Speaker # 2:

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The issue I have been asked to explore is “Risks of partnerships – how to keep your partnership strategy on track” and to deliver one case study. The case study that I shall present focuses on our “IP Basics for SMEs” (or IPAC events) and, in order to answer the question I have been assigned, I must provide you with the history of these events to bring you full circle. We have been without partners and with partners – and we are about to enter a new and experimental phase, with a different kind of partner....



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As part of the United States Government’s (USG) Strategy for Targeting Organized Piracy (STOP) initiative launched in October 2004, the USPTO surveyed small businesses in FY05 which indicated that only **15 percent** of small businesses that do business overseas know that a U.S. patent or trademark provides protection only in the United States.



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In order to address these issues, a series of four free programs were offered to the general public in the major regions of the continental U.S. in FY05. These programs were offered under the name “Conference on Intellectual Property in the Global Marketplace.” Internally, we referred to them as the “IPAC events” (“IPAC” was our acronym for the USPTO’s “Intellectual Property Awareness Campaign.”)



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The purpose of the IPAC events was (and is) to raise general awareness of intellectual property as well as the realities of counterfeiting and piracy. This is in keeping with the USPTO mission under the STOP initiative to “empower U.S. innovators to better protect their rights at home and abroad” and to “work closely and creatively with U.S. industry.”



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The Conference on Intellectual Property in the Global Marketplace, or IPAC event, is targeted primarily to small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and initially consisted of a 2-day program, offered free of charge. The agenda included “IP 101” presentations given by OIPPE attorneys in the areas of patents and trade secrets, patent searching, trademarks, copyright, and enforcement. Day 1 presentations focused on “protection” and Day 2 presentations focused on “enforcement.”



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Initially, we also featured presentations by

- the local U.S. Export Assistance Center (or USEAC) representative (<http://www.export.gov/>);
- local Patent and Trademark Depository Library (PTDL) officials (<http://www.uspto.gov/go/ptdl/>); and
- local United States Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutors.



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The IPAC Events also included, at least initially –

- USPTO executives and/or Congressional speakers.
- a China IP-related presentation.
- a role-playing IP scenario (at program’s end).
- one-on-one consultations (general legal information only; no legal advice).



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From the initial program in May 2005 through September 2006, the USPTO had presented 10 programs to over 1,500 attendees. We were consistently complimented in our written evaluations. One person even said: “This is the best use of my taxes that I have ever seen.” - *USPTO IP Seminar Participant, San Diego, January, 2006*



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The greatest challenge facing the IPAC events was attendance. Yet the program with the lowest attendance returned the highest rating of all IPAC programs.

OIPPE, through Ms. Elizabeth Shaw, IP Research Specialist (to whom much of the credit for our IPAC events must be given) determined that we –



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- needed to change the name of the program;
- make the program a 1-day event;
- engage presenters from state government;
- engage presenter from United States Small Business Administration (SBA) SBA) (<http://www.sba.gov/>);
- post the year’s schedule or, at least, post information about a particular program earlier, particularly on the USPTO website.



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In 2007, the USPTO partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.uschamber.com/>) for the IPAC events. The nature of the message shifted in that the agendas included greater emphasis on counterfeiting and piracy, featuring the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Anti-Counterfeiting and Piracy Initiative. The programs also varied in length, from ½ day to 1 day, and thus generally did not include the full slate of “IP 101” topics.



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Sadly, our successful partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce came to an end and, in 2008, we found ourselves once again looking for a partner (a tax-exempt not-for-profit), on the precipice of the global economic downturn. We did find one partner, for one program, but their leadership changed as did their priorities – and we found ourselves alone again, naturally.



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Late in 2008, primary responsibility for the IPAC events was assigned to me, with able coordination from Ms. Velica Steadman, IPR Specialist, and oversight guidance from Attorney-Advisor Mr. Michael Smith of our Global IP Academy.

We have decided to incorporate Elizabeth Shaw’s earlier recommendations – but we also are going to make another change: **CHANGE OF VENUE**. We are moving from hotels to educational institutions.



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Historically, we have held our IPAC events in hotels. We have decided, though, to move our events to educational institutions. This move is, in part, motivated by cost-savings. But, more significantly, the move to an educational institution has a number of other advantages.



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The advantages of an educational institution partner:

- direct correspondence with institution’s mission (to educate) and agreement on primary message;
- greater promotion of event within community (thereby increasing attendance).



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Another significant –but perhaps not immediately discernible – advantage of partnering with an educational institution: the opportunity to raise *students’* general awareness of intellectual property as well as the realities of counterfeiting and piracy of intellectual property and, we hope, to influence their future actions within the university setting, in building their own businesses, and in respecting others’ IP.



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With appreciation for your time and in anticipation of
your considered responses to this presentation.

--Susan K. Anthony



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1. What is our #1 problem with the IPAC events? What can we do to improve our [#1 problem] that we have not yet considered?
2. You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. How can we make our attendees “drink”? How do we determine whether we actually have made a difference and met our mission [which was]?

