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## Contact Us

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## Helping Start-ups and SMEs...

Over the past few months I have been developing relationships with start-ups and SMEs providing support for entrepreneurs wanting to investigate the potential for creating a patent portfolio from their ideas. Earlier this year the IPO issued the following (press release 31/3/2011):

The 'Intellectual Property Awareness Survey of Business' has shown that only 15 percent of small companies have ever sought advice on safeguarding their ideas. Only 11 percent of firms overall assign responsibility for managing intellectual property (IP) rights. This is compared to 43 per cent of larger companies, meaning that smaller enterprises risk missing out on valuable income from their creativity.

IP Scope provides a much needed service to support IP decisions, for example:

- whether it is cost effective to even begin a patenting process;
- valuable insights into prior art and competitors' activities relative to your own ideas;
- strategic considerations taken in conjunction with your organisation's business and technical roadmaps (which, of course, you should also have in place!).

I have found it has been useful to use the CamJelly co-working space (usually Friday afternoons at the Hauser Forum, Cambridge) and this provides a good place to come in contact with start-ups, many of them already using the IdeaSpace facility.

Give me a call if I you want to explore any ways I can help with your own IP needs and I hope you enjoy the rest of this newsletter.

## Understanding Patents - Part 2

There are several questions that repeatedly pop up when people are asking me about the patenting process and managing a patent portfolio. In this second article I will address the question of why a prior art search is so useful. (Previous articles can be found on my website under Phil's Patent Posts.)

Prior art is the expression used to describe any published material that describes your invention and pre-dates your own disclosure of the invention in your patent filing. It often comes in the form of an earlier patent but with the huge amount of data on the internet, it can equally well come from a journal article, a blog or press release, etc. Many inventors feel that they do not need to do a prior art search and feel that it is not money well spent especially when the patent office is going to do their own search to find out if the invention is novel.

My answer to this has three parts.

Firstly, it is unlikely that you will know all the prior art in your subject area, there is just too much to keep track of. Drafting a patent without this knowledge may lead to a description of the invention which lacks a clear definition of how it differs from the prior art and could result in claims which will be rejected and will need significant revision. Just occasionally, you may find that your invention is already fully described and you have wasted time, money and effort on drafting and filing the application when you could have been working on other things.

Secondly, the search you get from the patent office will take several months and if there is prior art, all you get will be a listing of just enough of the prior

art to satisfy the examiner that the invention is not novel or lacking an inventive step. It will still leave you without a full knowledge of all the potential prior art and if you want to re-draft your application you will almost certainly need to do another search to fully understand the patent landscape. Understanding this patent landscape early in the process will actually help you to develop your invention and may even help define your final design so that it is clearly differentiated from the prior art.

Finally, if you are looking for venture capital or other forms of investment, you will find that there will be an expectation that you have done due diligence in understanding the prior art for any ideas you need funding for. A patent search report or patent landscape is the best way to provide supporting evidence for this and a landscape report will provide good visualisations of the patent trends, inventors and assignees who are active in the technology space.

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## Phil's Patent Picks

You may remember that I regularly post articles describing current patent applications that are particularly related to printed or plastic electronics. Here is an extract from the latest post on *Phil's Patent Picks*.

### Printed Electronics Patents granted in 2011

I recently reviewed the patents that are granted in the field of printed electronics and a recent search indicated that during 2011 there have already been nearly 100 granted patents in this technology sector. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview in this format but over my next few posts I will provide brief details of a few of the patents that caught my eye. (If anyone is interested in a more thorough analysis or any particular technology field then please leave a comment or get in touch with me and I can provide details of how to obtain the data.)

#### US7879688 - Methods For Making Electronic Devices With A Solution Deposited Gate Dielectric

**Issued:** 1st Feb 2011

**Inventors:** James C. Novack, Dennis E. Vogel, Brian K. Nelson

**Assignee:** 3M Innovative Properties Company

**Abstract:** A method of making an electronic device comprises solution depositing a dielectric composition onto a substrate and polymerizing the dielectric composition to form a gate dielectric. The dielectric composition comprises a polymerizable resin and zirconium oxide nanoparticles.

See the full article here: [blog post](#)

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Note: You are more than welcome to send the contents of this post to colleagues and friends; please forward it in its entirety, rather than "cut-and-paste".

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