



A new global IP team with a tailored strategy for success

How global domestic appliance business Versuni accelerated its IP processes by optimizing its IP team and increasing automation.

Having to "do more with less" is a universal business challenge. It is also a conundrum Versuni's new IP team had to grapple with from day one when their business was spun out from the 130-year-old Dutch company, Royal Philips.

After many successful years operating within the larger group with defined roles, systems, and processes,

the newly formed IP team was comprised of just 20 staff who originated from the parent organization.

This tighter team, which focused solely on the complex and fast-moving world of domestic appliances, faced a new problem. They needed to reshape their roles, processes, technology, and data to align with a new commercial business strategy and the smaller setup.

Versuni took it as an opportunity to improve, fine-tune, and ensure the organization was designed to support the business in a highly competitive marketplace. But achieving this would require careful analysis and essential changes. Fortunately, they were up for the challenge with help from the Clarivate™ IP Diagnostic Consulting team.

Customer profile

Company:
Versuni

Industry:
Domestic appliance

Established:
2021

Challenge:
Versuni's IP team needed to reshape their roles, processes, technology, and data to align to a new commercial business strategy and a smaller setup

Challenge

Suboptimal process speeds

Headquartered in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Versuni is a consumer appliance innovator and manufacturer with an IP portfolio of 900 patents. Their offerings span kitchen appliances — the company successfully brought the Airfryer category to market — climate care, garment care, and floor care products like the cordless wet and dry vacuum.

The domestic appliance IP world is highly brand and design-focused, with consumer products needing to go through legal approvals efficiently so they can get to market rapidly. Likewise, patent infringement challenges need to be addressed swiftly.

The Versuni IP team, which has offices in the Netherlands, China and India, was successfully using a variety of Clarivate solutions, including

IP management system Unycom™, patent intelligence software Derwent Innovation™ and incoPat, as well as litigation data through Darts-ip™.

However, their process speeds were not meeting business requirements or go-to-market needs. This was partly due to Versuni operating a smaller team than before, using legacy processes that required multiple approvals, which added friction. There was also a hiring freeze in place that impacted the speed of patent and trademarking activities.

"Product lines and priority deadlines keep coming, everything goes on, and all the work needs to continue. But we faced insufficient capabilities to deal with daily matters, such as the people and procedures to do the required filings or searches," explained Birte Vanrobaeys, Head of Trademarks and Designs at Versuni.

The business urgently needed to find additional resources and ways to become more efficient.



Solution

Spotlighting the issues

To understand their options, Versuni carried out a benchmarking initiative and spoke with a variety of IP operations teams from external organizations of comparable size. These included divested companies, one firm that outsources extensively, and an even leaner business than their own.

Armed with these insights, Clarivate conducted an IP Diagnostic, a detailed audit of Versuni's current IP practices.

The goals were to identify strategies to achieve key business priorities, evaluate the team structure and

technology in place, check the right people were handling the right tasks, and verify whether the processes were appropriate.

Versuni's IP team worked closely with a multi-disciplinary Clarivate team, on the ground at the business, working hand-in-hand with their staff to gather data over several weeks.

Dries Duijnste, Chief Legal Officer at Versuni observes, "I really liked Clarivate's approach of interviewing everybody in an intensive and open way with very candid discussions about how they did their work and what was on their mind. I could see that our people enjoyed it and didn't see it as threatening, and it also gave us a lot of insight."

IP Diagnostic: consulting and change management services

An IP Diagnostic is a collaborative engagement where Clarivate helps organizations identify opportunities to maximize people, process and technology. We customize the breadth and depth of the project to support the exact needs. For every project, we assemble a multi-disciplinary team aligned with unique requirements, leveraging our extensive industry experience that has been refined through working with hundreds of customers across the globe.

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Dries Duijnste,
Chief Legal Officer, Versuni.

The power of unbiased, third-party evaluations

Through group discussions, interviews and observations, several procedures and ways of working were identified that were impacting business efficiency, productivity and capacity, increasing outsourcing costs and limiting portfolio control.

For example, various stages of the IP lifecycle had bottlenecks due to gaps in capacity and skillsets. Consequently, there was a need for additional administrative assistance to give attorneys more time for strategic thinking. Reduced capacity also meant portfolio reviews could not be prioritized as intended.

Communication challenges between IP Coordinators and the rest of the IP team were identified as an opportunity for greater automation, to increase alignment and decrease processing inconsistencies across business lines.

Team members were very interested in training on the tools but lacked the time to do so. The existing tools were not tailored for the new setup and were not being used optimally.

Lastly, in terms of personnel, the high workload and small team size meant the IP team was using several outside agents, which incurred unnecessary cost and reduced their control over processes.



Outcome

Creating a tailored strategy

Based on analysis of the data collected, Clarivate presented an IP Diagnostic report which proposed a range of initiatives and recommendations. It was structured in three phases to help Versuni make both immediate and long-term changes. The IP team was excited at the prospect of adapting their roles and structure, honing their processes, and accelerating operations.

- **Phase one** centered on optimizing the team structure and increasing automation of existing tools to deliver rapid efficiency gains.
- **The second phase** would enhance the function of the IP team and IP portfolios.
- **Phase three** would make final adjustments for the most advantageous results.

Some of the most impactful initiatives in phase one involved reconfiguring and recruiting personnel. By appointing an Excellence Manager IP, it was possible to increase strategic planning time for IP Counsels. The addition of a Trademark Attorney increased the volume of trademark work processed in-house.


Additionally, the role of IP Coordinators was extended to make them part of decision making by co-locating them with their respective business lines. Their enhanced role included assisting with patent litigation and liaising with external attorneys.

Duijnstee notes, "Clarivate observed we had too many layers, with a lot of managers with a limited number of reports. Their solution matched perfectly with the high-level instructions I had."

Versuni also began to utilize the Clarivate team as an extension for their administrative patent

work which included patentability searches and European Patent Validations. This eased bottlenecks and improved the product risk assessment process.

In terms of technology and automation, Versuni utilized a single-entry mailbox for use with IPMS smart docketing to improve docketing automation; trained on patent intelligence tools to increase return on investment and implemented functionality within the IPMS to increase efficiency and automation.



With the phased plan in full swing and the right skills, structure, processes and technologies in place, Versuni's IP team is now well positioned to work in a more agile manner that is both faster and more flexible.

Future gains

Moving forward, Versuni plans to continue making efficiencies through phase two and three of the IP Diagnostic program. These two phases will further enhance the IP team's functionality and portfolios.

Phase two includes continued use of connected Clarivate patent, trademark and case law data, providing business stakeholders with actionable insights. Additionally, portfolio reporting and reviews will increase collaboration and IP portfolio transparency.

Phase three will focus on service provider Service Level Agreements (SLAs), contracts, price agreements and business reviews to ensure agent processing and incurred cost are controlled.

During their restructuring, Versuni recognized the importance of empowering their brand and trademark personnel, particularly since the new business's focus was different from that of their

parent company. The solution was to appoint an additional person in-house to deal with trademarks and designs.

Commenting on the experience of the project and the final report, Duijnstee said: "Clarivate came to us with a good and clear solution. I read their report with a lot of interest, and it was a real eye opener for me. As a result of the changes we've made, we have increased speed, solved a number of challenges, and reduced quite a lot of stress for people."

With the phased plan in full swing and the right skills, structure, processes and technologies in place, Versuni's IP team is now well positioned to work in a more agile manner that is both faster and more flexible.

Suitably equipped, Versuni's IP experts are looking forward to enjoying smoother and more efficient IP operations as the company blazes a trail into the future.

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Dries Duijnstee,
Chief Legal Officer, Versuni.

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To learn how Clarivate can help your IP department become faster and more flexible, contact us today:

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