

Case study | Pierre Fabre

Streamlining the invention process through connected reach and teams

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Challenge

Pierre Fabre is one of the world's largest developers of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

Headquartered in France, they employ over 10,000 people across 45 countries. With research and IP teams distributed across the world, they set out to create collaborative communities that would streamline their invention processes.

The results of this initiative are now empowering and connecting researchers, patent engineers and search specialists across the globe.

With research teams operating across the globe and a centralized IP management team based in France, it's important for Pierre Fabre to

collaborate effectively across borders to sustain efficiency. Historically the IP team had utilised a variety of IP intelligence tools, but as they looked to enhance collaboration and devolve greater responsibility to the research teams for certain tasks, they realized that a more intuitive and collaborative solution would be required to succeed.

Over a 12-month period, an evaluation team—including experienced search specialists and patent engineers—tried several solutions before deciding to implement Innography®.

Commenting on the decision Luc Petitpas, Patent Intelligence Manager at Pierre Fabre said, "We decided to implement Innography because it was the best tool for achieving the work we need to do. We evaluated four or five different solutions and whilst each one had its strengths; we wanted a single tool that could be used by our global community of researchers and patent experts. Ultimately Innography provided the richest capability set that would enable us to achieve our objectives.

We placed particular emphasis on the quality of the data within the tool, the collaborative capabilities and how user friendly the solution was to adopt."

Project objectives

- Reduce wasted investment in R&D by identifying novelty or freedom to operate (FTO) concerns much earlier in the R&D process
- Enable virtual teams to collaborate on projects, exchange data, mark-up documents and make decisions within a single, secure online environment
- Implement a more rigorous process around FTO as it is crucial to avoiding conflict with competitors
- Empower research teams with direct access to patent information to make them more efficient

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**Luc Petitpas,
Patent Intelligence Manager, Pierre Fabre.**



Pierre Fabre

10K+

people are employed across 45 countries by Pierre Fabre.

"Whilst we wanted a tool that could be used by professional searchers, it also needed to be something that patent engineers and researchers could use too. And not only for research, but also to create virtual teams, share information and collaborate on projects."

Pierre Fabre has two main operating units: pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. For several reasons, the project team decided to begin with the cosmetics division:

- R&D cycles are typically far shorter in the cosmetics field compared to pharmaceuticals, with typical projects lasting months rather than years. The team therefore wanted to prioritize this area, providing researchers with direct access to patent information to quickly evaluate novelty and competitive search on their current topics as early as possible in the ideation process
- This accelerated pace of innovation in cosmetics also means that the ability to exchange patent information and initiate the collaboration between individuals and functions as early as possible is vitally important
- Though it was already common practice within the pharmaceuticals division, teams on the cosmetics side of the business were making less use of patent alerts to proactively update them on new activity in their specialist fields
- An existing initiative within the cosmetics division titled Extended Patent Intelligence Community (EPIC) had already brought together a team of scientists dedicated to testing and implementing new tools and processes



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Solution

Implementing Innography

This would be the first time that the global R&D community within the cosmetics division would be provided with access to a tool like Innography, so the project team at Pierre Fabre therefore decided to take a three phased approach:



Phase 1 – Deployment

The central IP and R&D teams were set up with access to Innography and training on the new systems and processes were then conducted. To aggregate feedback from users and support the roll-out, 'champions' were appointed within the two main research teams and patent engineer group.



Phase 2 – Adoption

As this represented a significant change for the researchers, both in terms of new technology and processes, the project team at Pierre Fabre understood that achieving the change would need to be supported. To drive adoption and process adherence the team utilised a mixture of regular training, collaboration with local champions and support from their Clarivate customer success team.



Phase 3 – Consolidation

With the ultimate goal being to have all of the relevant IP stakeholders within Pierre Fabre following consistent processes and utilizing a single tool, the final phase of the project focusses on expanding the user base.



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Outcome

Historically the research teams would initiate a project and then approach the IP department after a few weeks or months to investigate the novelty or FTO position.

Now they can quickly conduct basic preliminary competitive and prior art checks themselves in Innography before investing too much time into a project.

Researchers can then escalate to the IP team to check whether the competitive or prior art search has been correctly done or to request a more detailed search or FTO analysis, and opinion from the specialists.

This sharing, communication and review process occurs completely within Innography, which avoids unnecessary delays in projects whilst waiting on results from the professional searchers, helps prevent wasted research effort invested ahead of an FTO opinion, and also helps the research and central IP teams collaborate effectively when a higher degree of confidence is required.

"Innography can help us exchange patent information and initiate collaboration early in projects. This removes communication

barriers between researchers and patent engineers and helps them to identify any IP issues or competitive concerns as early as possible," said Antoine Dumoulin, Research Leader, at Pierre Fabre.

"We wanted more links between the different parts of the process," said Luc Petitpas. "Between documentary search, patent engineers and researchers. We wanted to empower collaboration. We are distributed across so many locations, even in France, so it is not always easy to share information.

To work effectively together we wanted a tool to share information, share remarks and share patent information more easily than before. Innography enables the teams to assemble information into projects that are easy to share and collaborate upon. We can also maximize the use of alerts to check new patents, avoid potential infringements and stay abreast of what other industry competitors are working on."

"A researcher can now conduct an initial competitive check themselves. Their exact search can then be shared with the IP engineer who can check for accuracy, extend the search if required and provide confirmation back to the researcher, all within a single tool. It's more productive and more efficient too."

**Antoine Dumoulin,
Research Leader, Pierre Fabre.**

"We have tried to implement a process that is sympathetic to the direction information exchanges need to be done," added Antoine Dumoulin. "Information flows from the researchers to the patent engineers and vice versa, so we hope to support this dynamic conversation between the different stakeholders within Innography.

"For example, a researcher can now conduct an initial competitive check themselves. Their exact search can then be shared with the patent engineer who can check for accuracy, extend the search if required and provide confirmation back to the researcher, all within a single tool. It's more productive and more efficient too, as many of these daily conversations and exchanges would previously have

taken place over email. With the mark-up allowed by the tool, the multiple discussions in between scientists and IP engineers can be tracked, keeping the traces of the global IP and scientific strategies always linked."

Finally, on working with Clarivate Antoine Dumoulin commented, "We have really appreciated the support of the Clarivate team throughout the implementation. As questions have emerged as we have gone through the process the speed of response and quality of support have been outstanding. The nature of this project meant we really needed a supplier who could offer close support throughout the implementation, and Clarivate have been very supportive."

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