

Case study | Asahi Kasei

Establishing a new IP strategic planning group

Supporting business decisions with IP Landscapes

In April 2018, Asahi Kasei established a new IP Strategy Group within the Intellectual Property Department of its R&D headquarters.

The group's aim is to further the creation of business strategies based on IP information, or the "IP landscape", which the company gives as one of the four pillars of business advancement in its medium-term business plan. Derwent™ has been assisting the

Intellectual Property Department with basic activities for many years, such as patent searches in the Technical Information Group (the precursor to the IP Strategy Group) and regular monitoring for SDIs. Derwent Innovation now plays an even more essential role in the IP Strategy Group's search and analysis operations, and for facilitating the analysis of IP information to support management and operations, including investment strategy, M&A and more.

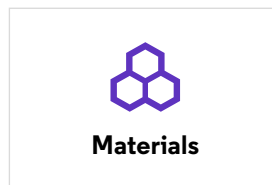
The Challenge: Establishing a new IP Strategy Group and a full-scale IP landscape



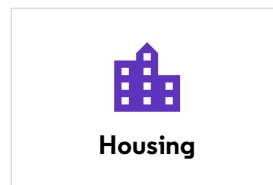
Sakae Nakamura
Principal Expert,
Senior General
Manager

Corporate IP,
Corporate Research
& Development

As one of Japan's largest comprehensive chemical makers, Asahi Kasei has developed a global business in three main areas:



Materials



Housing



Healthcare

The challenges of creating innovative products and boldly expanding into new fields are truly addressed in the company's corporate slogan, "Creating for Tomorrow." Asahi Kasei has a long history of activities related to the acquisition and protection of patents and intellectual property. Sakae Nakamura, the head of the IP Strategy Group as well as chief of the Intellectual Property Department, said:

"The Intellectual Property Department is in charge of developing and undertaking IP operations for the entire Asahi Kasei group. The department also handles infrastructure functions common across IP-related tasks, like clerical work and technical research. But no matter in which business field, unique technology is always the source of competitive edge. Thus, our mission is to patent our R&D results to gain market advantage, as well as to analyze, provide, and utilize patent information that contributes to the creation of new businesses and strategies."

In the world of industry, it is increasingly important for intellectual property to contribute to business decision-making. This is best demonstrated by an approach called the "IP landscape", which comprehensively

and dynamically analyzes internal and external intellectual property to inform business strategies. According to Ms. Nakamura, "Asahi Kasei's medium-term business plan made 'creating business strategies based on IP' one of the four pillars of a digital transformation, which will support business advancement. In the company's view, the IP landscape plays a role in formulating new business strategies, and this is driven by the IP Strategy Group, established within the Intellectual Property Department in April 2018. The mission of the IP Strategy Group is to analyze and report IP information to the heads of business divisions and executives."

The true value of the IP landscape can only be realized by providing IP information which can be used in decision-making, such as with development investment and M&A. Says Ms. Nakamura, "we have been focusing on the importance of analyzing patent information since 2000, especially the really strategic information, and we have continued to develop human resources and foster our members' skills. The IP Strategy Group was started this spring, and we now have an environment where we can concentrate on tasks specific to the IP landscape."

The solution: Derwent Innovation supporting the IP Strategy Group



Reiko Wada
Manager, IP Strategic
Planning Group

Corporate IP,
Corporate Research
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The IP Strategy Group handled more than 10 projects within the first six months of its establishment.

Reiko Wada, who works as leader of the IP Strategy Group, describes the specific activities as follows: "Our plan is to analyze massive amounts of IP information to understand the trends in the companies and patent technologies that occupy dominant positions in specific markets. We need to report to business heads and executives, who can understand intuitively based on their own experience, even if they don't have technical backgrounds."

One approach is to create a visual IP map. An IP map makes it possible to intuitively understand the positions of players in specific fields and the processes through which market leaders have gained control.

Clarifying Asahi Kasei's own competitive position can be used as a basis for strategic investments, M&A decisions, and more.

"There are three points in making an IP map," says Ms. Wada. "The 'bird's-eye view,' which covers the overall market including the competition; the 'fisheye lens,' which looks both at past trends and makes future predictions; and the 'analysis scenario,' which is logical and therefore highly convincing. We combine these with the industry knowledge of the business units to create a highly-accurate IP map."

For many years, Derwent World Patents Index™ (DWPI) has been supporting Asahi Kasei's patent information-related activities, including the analysis of patent information by the IP Strategy Group.

"Asahi Kasei has been using DWPI since it was provided as a book of abstracts. The abstracts included with DWPI are showing great power in the IP Strategy Group's analysis work."

Benefit: Using DWPI's abstracts to analyze patent data



Jo Sagawa
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DWPI provides enhanced patent records from 59 patent issuing authorities worldwide.

The database's global reach, technical field coverage and data reliability distinguish it from other sources of patent data. Jo Sagawa, Section Chief of the IP Strategy Group, says:

"The first thing I do is to create a population for patent information analysis," he says. "DWPI is excellent because it covers all technical fields in 50 countries, which allows me to configure populations with very reliable data. It's also important for us to be able to use the abstracts, which are edited and organized in units of patent information, in our analysis."

In addition to basic information such as the applicant, inventor, and classification, DWPI abstracts also include information to ascertain the novelty, use, advantage and other aspects of the patent, organized concisely for each item.

Satomi Toda handles analysis work alongside Mr. Sagawa. She explained that "the ability to not only immediately ascertain the technical details, but also make analyses accurately and efficiently, is the greatest benefit of the abstracts.

They organize the essence of the information that we really need. The conventional abstracts that come with patent documents don't provide the level of accuracy we require for analysis. Meanwhile, analyzing entire patent documents can only produce fragmented results and it is difficult in practice."

The coverage and reliability of the database and abstracts greatly affect the analysis quality, and that is exactly why Asahi Kasei continues to use DWPI. Derwent has built a global team with 900 people dedicated to the abstracts, and the team continues to expand the database with highly reliable and well organized DWPI content providing more than 3 million patents issued each year.

"We also use Derwent Innovation™, which is a patent search and analysis tool, to see the changes in the number of applications, applicant trends, and more in a clear format," says Mr. Sagawa. "This is very useful for us to understand market trends when we handle a certain technical field for the first time."

The Challenge:

- Establishing IP Strategy Group and full-scale use of IP landscape
- Provide IP information-based resources to executives for management decisions
- Use IP to contribute to the creation of innovative products and expand into new fields

Solution:

- Derwent Innovation Patent Intelligence Software
- Derwent World Patents Index (DWPI)

Outcome:

- Use of IP landscape results in next medium-term planning discussions

Outcomes and expectations: IP intelligence and insight

The landscape created by the IP Strategy Group was used as a basis for discussion when the next medium-term business plan was actually created.

According to Ms. Wada, "there's a real sense that we are in an environment where IP analysis is central to operating a business. The IP Strategy Group is expected to use IP information to assist in formulating business strategies and to contribute to management and business in tangible ways, so we need to strengthen our role in meeting management expectations by providing the ideas and advice from an IP department perspective.

Our goal is to become the team that can combine IP information with other business information to provide 'information intelligence' to the entire company."

Analysts responsible for information intelligence practices must have the ability to formulate analysis scenarios, a keen interest in technology and business, the flexibility to handle all fields, and the ability to continuously provide detailed analysis. Developing human resources with such qualities will become more and more important.

Ms. Nakamura concludes: "creating an IP map itself is not the aim of our IP landscape. What is important for us is to find a sweeping view of information on patents filed with strategies in mind and provide those results to our top management, which helps them develop new insights. This leads to further strategies and allows us to contribute to management and business by supporting strategic decision-making. Derwent is helping us in this mission. DWPI is the global patent database that we trust most, and we look forward to the higher value it can bring to us."

About Clarivate

Clarivate™ is a global leader in providing solutions to accelerate the lifecycle of innovation. Our bold mission is to help customers solve some of the world's most complex problems by providing actionable information and insights that reduce the time from new ideas to life-changing inventions in the areas of science and intellectual property. We help customers discover, protect and commercialize their inventions using our trusted subscription and technology-based solutions coupled with deep domain expertise. For more information, please visit clarivate.com.

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