



Teaching IP strategy

Although intellectual property is an asset of growing economic and financial importance, it is hard to find universities or business schools that teach courses focusing on this

You probably cannot teach someone to be a genius or a great leader. However, there are many gradations beneath the very top level of skills and abilities where much can be taught. Certainly, there are insights – areas of knowledge and even tricks of the trade – which, if they are just pointed out, can enhance someone’s ability to do a job enormously. Chief IP officers (CIPOs) need not be experts in all of the areas for which they are responsible. Instead, they must be able to ask the right people the right questions – and understand the answers. If one accepts that such skills can be formally taught, are there places where this is being done?

The answer is, not many. Law schools teach IP law, but most fail to teach the business of intellectual property. Very few business schools teach intellectual property at all. Although there are some honourable exceptions, it seems that almost no one is offering courses that attempt to bridge the IP-business gap.

IP strategy is so multi-faceted that it does not fit easily into any particular box. However, just because it might be challenging to teach does not mean that it can be safely ignored. The role of intellectual assets will only grow in the future; thus, the importance of strategic IP management will grow too.

Deciding what an IP strategy course should look like is difficult. It will depend on the target audience. For MBA students, it might be a module as part of a wider course. For IP practitioners, it could be a course which fills in gaps on business-related areas. For finance/accounting professionals, it might be a case of de-emphasising the valuation/finance elements; but for experienced business managers, the more formal legal/accounting/valuation elements could be the focus. For technologists and scientists, the formal apparatus of IP protection and

Selected university and business school specialist IP courses and programmes

| Institution | Course title | Main focus of course |
|---|---|--|
| Queen Mary, University of London | MSc in management of IP | Two streams: business and professional. Aimed at science and engineering graduates looking to become patent or trademark attorneys |
| Imperial College, London Business School | Customised IP courses within the business school | Focus on IP management and strategy, and business-aligned IP portfolio management |
| University of Gothenburg, Sweden, School of Business, Economics and Law | Innovation and IP management (as part of the MBA) | The main field of study is business administration and is aimed at business people; considered one of the best in the world for IP strategy |
| Mannheim Business School, Germany | IP module as part of the open executive MBA course | Designed for in-house lawyers and corporate executives who want to understand how IP can be protected in international markets |
| Harvard University, Harvard Business School | IP strategy | Structured jointly with the law school. Focused on ways to safeguard and exploit IP better, and appears to have a legal bias |
| IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, Illinois Institute of Technology | Master of IP management and markets | Integrates perspectives and skills from business, computer science, design, engineering, and law. One of the leading IP strategy courses in the US |
| Tsinghua School of Economics and Management, China | Innovation – IP – corporate strategy | Aimed at giving students from different business sectors information on how to protect their IP rights and thus support innovation |
| IP Academy, Singapore | A variety of programmes for: public sector; business consultants and SMEs; tech transfer offices and tertiary institutions; patent agents and lawyers | The IP Academy is a leading institution in this field. It provides varied courses for business and legal audiences |

exploitation may come to the fore.

The ideal IP strategy course should be highly modular. It must be taught by experts in the many disciplines which feed into the strategic management of intellectual property. Everything should be built around real-life case studies and data on the outcomes of good or bad practices. IP strategy courses will lead to an accumulated

body of knowledge about what makes best practice. This can only be beneficial to business, as well as to the advancement of innovation and the economy.

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