



European IPR Helpdesk

Case Study

TAPOINTEL: Managing innovation in an SME

December 2015

Company details

Name : Tapointel, S.L.

Business sector : Packaging

Type of company : SME



1. Background

Juan González is the CEO of Tapointel, a Spanish SME operating in the packaging industry.

In July 2014, he contacted the Enterprise Europe Network to present an idea of a new product development and commercialisation.

The idea initially emerged from a real technical problem faced by the company in the course of its activities. In particular, the packaging company had not been able to find on the market an opening system that could currently meet the specific needs of a client: a mechanism to open bottles without any external tool. After hours of hard work, the R&D division of Tapointel had come up with an innovative system, for which Mr. González sought advice of the Enterprise Europe Network.

2. Actions undertaken

In the first meeting, Estrella Alcon¹ interviewed Mr. González. She analysed the idea and advised him on the whole process of protecting inventions.

She explained that before filing a patent application it is of utmost importance to verify the current state of the art. Indeed, analysing the existing patents in the technical field is necessary to assess the patentability and the freedom to operate in a certain market.

After performing a patent search it was concluded that none of the already patented opening systems offered the original solution that the company envisaged.

As a consequence, Tapointel started working on the development of an enhanced prototype of the innovative opening system.

3. Results

Tapointel filed a national patent application with the Spanish patent office. The Enterprise Europe Network expert explained that once a patent is applied for, the company would have had a 12-month period to claim its first filing date (i.e. priority date) when filing subsequent patent applications² for the same invention in other countries.

This period was used by Tapointel to assess the success of the new product in different countries in view of a possible extension of the patent protection in other territories. During the same period, the company also started adapting its production lines and machinery to produce new bottle lids.

In addition, in order to exploit the invention, the company also entered into negotiations with European companies for licensing-out of its technology.

4. Lessons Learned

Every day there are many good ideas and research results that are put aside due to inappropriate innovation strategies.

Before starting the development of a new technology or research project, entrepreneurs must carefully review the state of the technology, by using patent

¹ IPR expert at Enterprise Europe Network and the European IPR Helpdesk Ambassador.

² If a priority of an earlier application is claimed, when filing subsequent patent applications for the same invention in other countries, the latter applications will be deemed as filed on the same date of the earlier application.

databases³, to check if the solution developed is new and whether any conflicting patents or patent applications actually block patentability and commercialisation of the invention.

Furthermore, being aware of the different laws regulating the protection of intangible assets at the international level can be crucial for the definition of an effective strategy in the internationalisation process⁴.

The free of charge services offered by the Enterprise Europe Network and the European IPR Helpdesk are specifically created to ensure that European SMEs can have access to all necessary information for the successful management of intellectual property rights.

³ You can read about patent searches in the European IPR Helpdesk fact sheet "How to search for patent information", available [here](#).

⁴ For further information on the management of intellectual property rights in the internationalisation process, please refer to the European IPR Helpdesk fact sheet on "Intellectual property relevance in internationalisation" available in our online library.

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