

KIRKPATRICK *Crossover*

Protecting your intellectual property rights

In today's global marketplace, ensuring your intellectual property (IP) rights are protected is more important than ever. Which is why large international corporates can spend large sums defending their trademarks or patents over considerable periods of time. The value of the trademark or brand to the organisation is sometimes as great or even greater than the company's own name.

It is these specialist IP monitoring, protection and enforcement services that Kirkpatrick sa, based in La Hulpe, provides for its clients. Founded in Belgium by a Scottish engineer in 1852, the company's 40 multilingual engineers and lawyers provide advice on all issues related to patents, trademarks, designs, copyrights, licenses, domain names and other IP matters.

A global marketplace

Kirkpatrick contributes at all stages of the IP creation and development process: strategy, acquisition and creation, registration, administration, management, valuation, audit, licensing, assignments, conflicts and more. The firm is capable of acting directly on its clients' behalf in the courts of Belgium, the Benelux and the EU, as well as in other jurisdictions via its international partners.

'Our market works in two directions,' explains managing director Dominique Hubart. 'For our local clients we look after IP matters in Belgium, the Benelux and the

EU as a whole, and from there we can defend their interests worldwide. However we also have customers in the US and in the Far East who ask us to look after their intellectual property rights in Europe, be it Belgium, the Benelux or the EU.'

Number two on the Belgian market, Kirkpatrick is well-positioned to offer good service to its clients. Indeed the company prides itself on offering a high-quality service. Moreover it is the first Belgian IP firm to be ISO 9001-2000 certified (in March 2004).

Focus on quality and clients

This focus on quality is very important to the company, says Hubart. 'We try to ensure that the advice we give to our clients is the most appropriate to their needs. For example, the cost of filing for a European patent, including drafting, prosecution and validation and maintaining it for 8 years in, say, eight European countries, will be around 35 thousand euros minimum. With a new

technical invention that may have only a short lifespan or a narrow market niche, it might be better to recommend an alternative approach to filing.'

He continues, 'We will give that advice if it is appropriate, considering the strategy or the financial capabilities of the inventor. It may mean we lose out on the patent filing fees, but we gain on customer loyalty and peer recommendation. That is why we need to understand the priorities and strategies of our clients – so that we can make sure the advice we give is what is best for their needs.'

⇒ Philip Hunt

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