THE NEW INNOVATION IMPERATIVE

BY SIMON WEBSTER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CPA GLOBAL
INTRODUCTION

Little over 20 years ago, the first computers were connected to the internet, changing business forever and creating the fourth industrial revolution. It will most likely take 100 years before the world can understand its full impact. What is clear is that access to information has already been transformed and the pace at which business takes place has fundamentally changed forever.

BUSINESS SPEEDS UP

In 1955 the first McDonald’s restaurant opened in the United States. It took more than 12 years before the company opened its first overseas restaurant, and even then, it was to the nearest country – geographically and culturally – to its home market: Canada. 12 years provided the brand with plenty of time to establish itself in its home market, plan a strategy of growth and execute.

In a digital environment, this timescale is unthinkable – companies and industries are destroyed in a fraction of that time. Facebook is currently 12 years old - the same age that McDonald’s was when it opened its first overseas fast food restaurant. Facebook operates in virtually every country, has almost two billion active users and a brand value of more than $50 billion, according to the Forbes World’s Most Valuable Brands report 2016.

Facebook is not alone. The top ten most valuable brands also include other technology giants including Apple, Google and Microsoft – all companies created in the digital age.

Other rising stars include WhatsApp (a company founded in 2009) that had just 55 employees but one billion users when it was acquired, aged five, for $19 billion. In April 2012, a 15-month-old company called Instagram with 13 employees was purchased by Facebook. The price? $1 billion. The digital age does not afford companies the time to establish themselves – they innovate or die.

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A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Historically innovation was the domain of large corporations. Decades ago, before digital disruption, people worked in silos. Ideas were created by engineers and products were sold by sales.

Today, anyone can create and execute ideas. Think about some of the fastest growing brands in the world: Uber, WhatsApp, Spotify – these started as ideas about how travel, communication and music could be delivered in a more effective way. Each has disrupted large industries. Today you do not need to be an engineer or software developer – all you need is an idea and the right people to help you execute it quickly and globally.

Twenty years ago, innovation needed large research and development departments or engineers. Ten years ago, it required coding expertise. Five years ago, it needed the capability to deploy website or e-commerce platforms. Today, all that is needed is access to and knowledge of a social media platform.

It is no coincidence that many of the winners of the digital age are based around technology platforms that facilitate a more frictionless experience: communication (Facebook and WhatsApp); sharing (Instagram); travel (Uber). These platforms are providing a valuable (and often free) service in exchange of critically valuable data and insight into people’s interests. These platforms are facilitating a new era of business communication that provides access to detailed, granular information. It is easier than ever to target exactly the right customers a company wishes to approach. With the mass adoption of smartphone technology, companies can gain insight into not only who customers and prospective customers are but where they are.

Consider a local, family owned restaurant that has historically been forced to compete with large franchised operations. The combination of hyper local marketing and low cost targeted advertising via social media enables the restaurant to compete for the first time, head to head, with larger chains. The restaurant can address its audience directly, deliver special offers and raise awareness with the right audience.

Millions of companies are already exploiting platforms to drive increased sales. The natural competitive advantage afforded by size is being replaced by a competitive advantage driven by innovation.
THE IMPACT FOR THE IP INDUSTRY

What does this mean for intellectual property? We are already seeing open innovation, crowd sourcing, collective funding for IP creation and other new methods of generating innovation outside of the traditional approaches.

Some industries are spurning IP protection because the time it takes to gain protection means products would be redundant before it is achieved. Others are forfeiting IP rights to facilitate new markets. The electric vehicle company Tesla has said it will not pursue patent lawsuits against anyone who, in good faith, wants to use its technology. Its aim is to grow a market for electric vehicles that previously did not exist and it recognises that competition can help mass adoption take place more quickly.

More effort is being made than ever before to capture innovation. According to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) statistics database, more than 2.9 million patents were filed globally across more than 160 patent offices in 2015. This number has increased every year since 2009 and is almost three times the level of filing in 1990. The sheer scale and volume of filing is an increasing headache for overstretched corporate IP departments.

The old world of IP protection is colliding with the new business practice of growing markets quickly. To be able to better serve the new innovation economy, IP practices need to change. A radical response to new ways of working is required; one that encompasses not just trademarks, patents and copyright but embraces other forms of innovation and enables businesses to react quicker and more flexibly to market disruption.
A NEW VIEW OF IP MANAGEMENT

In the same way that platform technologies have disrupted the way people communicate, share and even do business, the IP industry is ripe for a platform approach that helps to drive better decision making across the ideas lifecycle.

The ideas lifecycle remains fundamentally unchanged: research and development creates innovation which is then protected and monetised. But in a digital environment, with accessibility to big data, cloud storage and on demand processing, IP professionals will need to demand more insight from the IP data they have access to. A platform approach to solving this issue, deploying cloud technology and processing big data sets for improved decision making can help transform the innovation process and deliver a modern-day response, creating more meaningful insight and driving down cost.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

The most common issues faced by IP professionals are ensuring that amendments to data are universally applied; day-to-day management of complex workflows; a lack of insight from data and risk associated with disjointed processes.

To date IP management systems have not been particularly effective at addressing these issues. They have tended to be large and inflexible software programmes that aim to replicate what has historically been paper-based systems via technology.

At CPA Global our aim is to deploy a series of cloud-based applications within a software platform that directly addresses these issues, providing IP professionals with access to accurate information, simple to use and unified workflows, improved insight from IP data and a faster and more intuitive environment in which to manage common IP practices.

The IP Platform fundamentally changes how IP professionals do their job by not simply digitising paper processes but by creating an environment where information drives better decision making.
KEY FEATURES INCLUDE:

- A single identity for every IP right across the globe, eliminating errors and mis-filings. IP amendments are reflected across the entire lifecycle.
- Cloud-based applications that provide instant access to common IP-related tasks, delivering a modern and more efficient way to work.
- Insight into a company’s own IP portfolio and competitor portfolio analysis.
- An intuitive interface that enables IP professionals to carry out IP tasks effectively.

THESE FEATURES DELIVER A NUMBER OF BENEFITS:

- Reduced risk of misinformation or incorrect filings.
- Insight collated from accurate data that drives improved decision making.
- A reduction in the time that IP professionals need to allocate to common tasks.
- Cost savings driven by more accurate information and efficient working practices.

CONCLUSION

Intellectual Property accounts for more than 70% of the global corporate balance sheet: it is literally the most important asset that many companies own. Yet for many this asset has been the subject of more questions than answers: what is my IP portfolio worth? How do I compare with my competitors in terms of my IP assets in key markets? Where should I be investing my research budget? How can I be sure I am protecting my most valuable ideas? To date these questions have often been unanswerable for IP professionals. The IP Platform from CPA Global will transform IP professionals, arming them with the tools to answer complex IP-related issues quickly and effectively, as well as enabling them to focus on strategic business decisions rather than mundane daily tasks. Innovation is more critical to business than ever. With The IP Platform CPA Global is providing corporations with the tools to make fast, flexible and accurate business decisions for the digital age. We know practices, large and small, are under increasing pressure to deliver more for clients. At CPA Global, we will free you from your administrative burden and liberate your experts to deliver differentiating services.

If you would like to know more about taking a better approach to the IP renewals and patent annuity process, please get in touch with us. In the past decade, we have helped more than one hundred law firms achieve IP success.
ABOUT SIMON WEBSTER

Simon Webster is CEO of CPA Global, the world leading IP technology company. He joined CPA Global in March 2000, and was appointed to the Executive Board in 2003. Over the last 17 years, he has developed a deep knowledge of the business, its customers and markets and the Intellectual Property industry as a whole. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer in October 2015 having previously served as Chief Business Development Officer with responsibility for worldwide sales and, prior to that, as Chief Operations Officer responsible for business operations globally.

As CEO, Simon has set CPA Global on a mission to transform the IP industry with the launch of The IP Platform - an integrated suite of technology solutions that serve customers right across the idea-to-IP lifecycle. Simon has spoken regularly about how new technology will bring about rapid and significant improvement for IP professionals and law firms as they seek to increase the return on innovation investment. Before joining CPA Global, Simon worked in the UK financial services sector for 12 years, successfully leading business change programmes, delivering technology transformations and supporting merger and acquisitions transactions. Simon qualified as a Chartered Management Accountant in 1998 and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

ABOUT CPA GLOBAL

CPA Global is the world’s leading IP management and technology company, trusted by many of the world’s respected corporations and law firms. Our integrated offering is underpinned by an outstanding global team of 2000 people.

Now we offer customers The IP Platform: delivering integrated Innovation and IP Portfolio software, services and insights across the entire Idea Lifecycle, supporting customers every step of the way to realise the value of their ideas.

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY

To discover how CPA Global can help you adapt and thrive in today’s environment, visit us online at cpaglobal.com/the-ip-platform

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