

IDEAS MAN

Lu Papi's company is revolutionising the development and subsequent IP protection of both local and international products.

Leaving Rome in the late '70s, Papi took up residency in Australia. These days, his fertile mind is given full scope on an expansive acreage in Cobbity, New South Wales, where he tends to his cattle and operates his business, Lu Papi & Associates.

Papi, a mechanical engineer who studied in Italy to enhance the knowledge gained on the shop floor of his grandfather's factory, heads up an innovation research and development company that assists inventors and corporations who want to breathe commercial life into their ideas.

"We fulfil an idea from the concept stage to the manufacturing stage for a variety of clients," Papi explains. "We work closely with Griffith Hack to ensure that we do the required checks and obtain the necessary IP protection for our clients."

UNIQUE VISION

Papi's business has won numerous awards, including the Most Outstanding Innovator in the Innovation Category of the Western Sydney Industry Awards in 2002, and the Macquarie Graduate School of Management's award for the 2002 Alumnus of the Year for Outstanding Professional Achievement.

The range of products that Papi has worked with is diverse: from chairs in Sydney's Olympic Stadium and urine sample jars for women with a collapsible funnel, to batteries for electric cars and bathroom accessories.

Papi's brain has also conjured up valuable innovations for himself, with the two most notable being the provisional patents he

has secured over a new type of syringe and a wheelchair.

"It's funny where ideas start," he says. "I was watching the vet use a syringe on one of our cattle and saw him working awkwardly with a typical syringe while he was up to his knees in cow dung. So after some thought and sketches, I devised my syringe."

FILLING THE GAP

To secure his idea, he described the process to Griffith Hack in order to gain an understanding of the needs of the patent, then prepared sequential computer schedules to explain how the product would work - Papi undertook post graduate studies at Macquarie University in technical management - as well as a verbal description of the process to be patented.

"We also use other people's IP - not to copy it, but to find the gaps we can fill. People often don't realise that to ensure their IP is strong, they should see what's already out there."

In order to capitalise on a dream 25 years in the making, Papi was able to secure a government grant to develop innovations on a wheelchair.

"I always believed wheelchairs don't meet the user's need," Papi explains. "We brought a wheelchair into the office here and could see, for example, how difficult it was to manoeuvre."

"At the moment we have provisional patents on both our products. We'll probably not take worldwide protection, as it is too expensive, but will protect ourselves in the US, Europe and Japan via a Patent Cooperation Treaty application."

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