

# STRENGTHENING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY TO PROPEL ENTERPRISES FORWARD

*SPRINGnews* spoke to Dr Sze Tiam Lin, Senior Director of Intellectual Property Intermediary (IPI) Singapore, on intellectual property strategies for businesses



## Why is the protection of intellectual property (IP) important?

**TL:** IP protects an enterprise's investment in research and development (R&D). This protection could translate to having a differentiated product in the market and commanding a premium for it. For enterprises venturing into high-value products and services, it is important to invest in technology. This makes filing protection – whether as a patent (which prevents others from making, using and selling it), copyright (which protects the expression of ideas), trademark (a sign to distinguish the product) or trade secret (information important to the business) – important as it creates and sustains the enterprise's competitive advantage.

## How can IP play a role in innovation and product development?

**TL:** Having an IP spurs one to innovate further. Take Wangi Industrial, a local precision glass machining business that produces glass coating for electronic devices, as an example. Through a technology partnership introduced by IPI, Wangi was able to develop its own IP in protective nanotechnology-based diamond-like-carbon (DLC) coating for glass. This background IP became a basis for further research projects on the glass coating system and that motivated the company to continue to improve and differentiate its product.

It went on to work with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research's Institute of Materials Research and En-

gineering to develop new IPs from the glass coating system. This means the product now has a combination of various IPs protecting it, making it much more defensible, compared to just having that one IP.

Also, having your own IP facilitates the collaboration and development of new IPs, because companies are usually more willing to work with parties that have an IP on their product. It protects everyone's interests – everyone respects each other's IP and is clear how each party contributes to the new product. If you don't have IPs, roles get muddled up and it's hard to ascertain who owns an IP in a project collaboration. Besides, potential partners tend to be cautious of collaborating with one another because of the possible risks of infringement and IP disputes.