

BOXED OUT: How IP Strategy of BHS Corrugated Locks Competitors Outside the Corrugator Game



Introduction

You may not know BHS Corrugated, but chances are every third box you touch rolled off its machines. BHS was founded in 1717 (yes, 1717, this is not a typo!) and is headquartered in Weiherhammer, Germany. Its end-to-end service model covers equipment, digital services and predictive maintenance for the corrugated-board industry. BHS operates in a far bigger, livelier niche than most people realise: corrugated packaging now sits at the centre of modern supply-chains.

This case study explores how this massive industrial manufacturer totally flipped their thinking on intellectual property (IP) and how they went from just protecting inventions to using IP as a serious strategic weapon.

Corrugated Boom: E-Commerce + Eco-Regulation

The corrugated-board market continues its steady expansion, growing roughly in line with global GDP while benefiting from two powerful structural forces reshaping the packaging landscape.

E-commerce logistics represents the first major driver of this growth. Online retail is projected to reach USD 8 trillion by 2026, creating unprecedented demand for packaging solutions. Consumer preferences are also shifting decisively toward sustainable options, with 77% of shoppers expressing a preference for corrugated packaging over plastic for deliveries, according to Pristine Market Insights.

Sustainability regulation provides the second crucial tailwind. The European Union's new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which entered into force in February 2025, mandates recyclability for all packaging sold after 2030. This regulatory framework is accelerating the transition away from less sustainable packaging materials.

These converging trends are driving robust demand for corrugated equipment. Industry analysts project demand will rise at a 3-4% compound annual growth rate throughout this decade. The machinery segment alone represents a substantial market opportunity, valued at USD 257 million in 2024 and expected to reach USD 339 million by 2034.

From Ironworks to Industry 4.0

BHS exemplifies how strategic pivoting can transform a company's trajectory. The firm's ability to reinvent itself has become its defining strength. Around 1960, when iron castings lost market relevance, BHS shifted to paper-handling equipment.

Later, as spare-parts margins faced pressure, the company bundled service contracts to create new revenue streams.

Today, BHS has evolved into a technology-driven operation, selling integrated "corrugators + data" solutions. The company's iCorr® digital platform represents this transformation, monitoring 400 sensor points per machine in real time. This shift from traditional manufacturing to data-enabled services positions BHS at the forefront of Industry 4.0 innovation in the packaging sector.

Redefining Value Creation: The "Lifecycle Partner" Business Model

BHS has fundamentally reimagined the traditional equipment manufacturer's approach to revenue generation. While conventional OEMs rely heavily on initial machine sales with modest aftermarket margins, BHS has inverted this model to create a more sustainable and profitable business structure.

The company's three-pillar strategy centers on (1) *corrugator lines* engineered for maximum Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE), delivering the high-speed performance that modern packaging demands. These machines serve as the foundation for BHS's true differentiator: (2) comprehensive *Lifecycle Agreements* that guarantee uptime and upgrades throughout the equipment's full 20-year operational lifespan. The third pillar, (3) *digital services* through the iCorr® platform, transforms traditional maintenance into predictive, data-driven subscriptions. This system enables remote support and automated spare-parts ordering, creating seamless operational continuity for customers while generating recurring revenue streams for BHS.

This model delivers compelling advantages: annuity-style revenue that provides financial predictability, deeper customer relationships built on operational partnership rather than transactional sales, and a proprietary data advantage that creates significant barriers for competitors attempting to replicate the approach.

Competitive Landscape and Strategic Positioning

The corrugated equipment industry exhibits high concentration, with three Tier-1 players controlling approximately 60% of global sales. BHS competes directly with established giants including Italy's Fosber Group, Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), and China's Dongfang Precision, each bringing distinct regional strengths and technological capabilities to the market.

Strategic Alliances: Building Scale Through Partnership

Recognizing the importance of complementary capabilities, BHS has forged strategic alliances in areas where internal development would be inefficient.

The joint venture with Screen GP and Inca Digital was an example of this approach, embedding 300-meter-per-minute inkjet print engines directly into production lines. The joint venture was specifically created to develop a high-speed, single-pass, aqueous inkjet print engine for integration into BHS Corrugated's inline manufacturing systems. This innovation enabled branded box production straight from the corrugator, eliminating additional processing steps and reducing time-to-market for customers.

Similarly, the collaboration with Tiger Coatings focused on developing water-based inks specifically optimized for high-speed corrugation processes, addressing both performance and sustainability requirements that increasingly define customer specifications.

Navigating a Complex Stakeholder Ecosystem

BHS operates within a complex network of stakeholders, each influencing the company's strategic direction and operational priorities. Box plant customers, often owned by packaging giants like Smurfit Kappa or Mondi, demand the speed, uptime, and data transparency that BHS's integrated approach delivers.

The company's multi-site supply chain encompasses paper mills, steel fabricators, electronics vendors, and software partners, requiring sophisticated coordination across diverse industries and geographies. Regulatory compliance adds another layer of complexity, with frameworks like the EU's PPWR, DIN 77006 quality management standards, and various safety regulations shaping product development and market access.

BHS's global workforce spans more than 20 countries, while the company's family ownership structure emphasizes long-term community relationships over short-term financial optimization. Perhaps most significantly, end-brand owners — the consumer goods companies whose products ultimately fill the corrugated boxes — increasingly drive investment decisions through their demands for traceable, low-carbon packaging solutions.

This stakeholder complexity requires BHS to balance competing priorities while maintaining its focus on innovation and customer value creation, positioning the company as a true lifecycle partner rather than merely an equipment supplier.

The Foundations of Endurance: How BHS Maintains Market Leadership

The following five pillars build on the transformation outlined earlier:

To begin with, the company's commitment to *constant reinvention* has carried it through multiple industrial transformations, evolving from traditional ironworks to advanced mechatronics and now to comprehensive data services.

Customer relationships form the second pillar through deep operational integration. BHS's Lifecycle Agreements don't merely sell equipment. Instead, they embed the company directly into clients' Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE) key performance indicators, creating mutual dependency that transcends typical vendor relationships.

Research and development discipline provides the third foundation, with BHS consistently allocating 5% of revenue to new technology development even during economic downturns. This unwavering investment ensures the company maintains its technological edge regardless of market conditions.

Geographic diversification through eight global factories offers the fourth pillar, providing natural hedges against geopolitical disruptions and currency fluctuations that might otherwise destabilize operations. This distributed manufacturing strategy has proven invaluable in an era of increasing trade tensions and supply chain volatility.

The fifth pillar — *strategic intellectual property* — represents BHS's most sophisticated competitive weapon. Rather than protecting individual components, the company's patent strategy blocks entire business models, creating insurmountable barriers for competitors attempting to replicate BHS's integrated approach.

This comprehensive positioning explains why BHS continues commanding half the global corrugator market three centuries after its founding. The company no longer merely sells machines; it delivers guaranteed uptime, actionable data insights, and regulatory compliance assurance. Competitors worldwide are scrambling to replicate this formula, validating BHS's strategic transformation from equipment manufacturer to lifecycle partner.

The Great IP Awakening: From Paper Shields to Strategic Weapons

Before 2021, BHS treated intellectual property much like protective packaging: useful, legally required, but largely an afterthought once the real engineering work was complete. This "good old" approach seemed sufficient when the company faced only established Western competitors and operated in relatively stable markets. The traditional IP playbook reflected this casual attitude. BHS maintained a purely defensive focus, conducting freedom-to-operate searches, filing one or few patents per new machine, and submitting applications only after R&D had frozen designs. Management viewed patents primarily as compliance costs and deterrents to blatant copying rather than strategic business tools. External counsel drove most IP activities, with no in-house patent attorney to provide strategic oversight. Internal business units approved budgets but rarely questioned scope or return on investment. Perhaps most tellingly, intellectual property remained conspicuously absent from BHS's eight-pillar company philosophy, with no dedicated KPIs or budget lines in profit-and-loss statements.

This approach treated patents as legal hygiene factors rather than levers for pricing power, market access, or licensing revenue generation, which worked adequately in a simpler competitive landscape but proved increasingly inadequate as market dynamics shifted.

The Cracks Begin to Show

The rise of capable imitators transformed the competitive landscape dramatically. Where BHS once competed primarily with two Western rivals, a dozen Chinese and Italian entrants began offering technically solid corrugators at significantly lower price points. Some competitors openly boasted about "slipping past" individual BHS patent claims, steadily eroding the company's 50% global market share.

The strategic shift from hardware sales to service-based business models amplified these vulnerabilities. BHS's new Lifecycle Partner approach depends on uptime guarantees and data analytics rather than equipment sales alone. When competitors copy key sensor layouts or predictive algorithms, they can undercut entire service contracts rather than just individual spare parts, threatening the foundation of BHS's differentiated business model.

Regulatory and customer scrutiny added another layer of pressure. Long-term service agreements expose BHS to significant penalty clauses if competitor work-

around cause system downtime. Institutional investors also began questioning how the company protected its intangible assets, recognizing their growing importance to overall valuation.

The Engel family ownership team observed successful industry peers monetizing their intellectual property portfolios and questioned why BHS's patents generated no revenue beyond basic exclusivity rights. Maintaining the traditional light-touch IP regime would mean ceding pricing power, losing competitive differentiation, and missing substantial new income opportunities.

The Drivers of Change

There were some specific catalysts that transformed BHS's approach to intellectual property, converting it from a defensive afterthought into a strategic growth engine.

In October 2024, the board formally inserted "Managed Intellectual Property" as the ninth pillar in BHS's corporate philosophy, signalling to every business unit that IP would henceforth receive the same strategic attention as safety and quality metrics — non-negotiable priorities with measurable outcomes.

Leadership transformation proved equally crucial. Hiring of Dr.-Ing Martin Bookjans brought rare dual expertise combining a mechatronics PhD with patent attorney credentials. His operational mantra, "Patents are not only a shield, they are a sword," fundamentally reframed internal conversations from compliance focus to competitive blocking strategy.

These converging elements transformed intellectual property from a simple cost center into a board-level growth lever. The strategic shift represents more than procedural change. Above all, it reflects BHS's evolution from traditional manufacturer to comprehensive lifecycle partner, where competitive advantage depends as much on protecting intangible assets as on engineering excellence.

Engineering Strategic IP Governance: IP the BHS Way

BHS Corrugated's intellectual property governance appears deceptively straightforward: a single-sentence vision statement, two slides outlining company-wide principles, and individualized strategy booklets for each business unit. This apparent simplicity, however, conceals a sophisticated management system engineered for DIN 77006 certification, annual strategic reviews, and enforcement through both hierarchical authority and economic accountability.

The result is a powerful IP engine capable of transforming a corrugator concept into a comprehensive global blocking position while continuously measuring the effectiveness of that competitive barrier. This systematic approach represents a fundamental shift from reactive patent filing to proactive intellectual property strategy.

From Philosophical Foundation to Operational Reality

As mentioned already, the transformation began with addition of IP into the company's philosophy, elevating it to the same strategic level as safety, quality, and customer service. The accompanying IP Vision distills the company's ambition into a single guiding principle: "IP as strategic asset safeguarding customer value." This concise formulation provides every future decision with clear directional guidance, from high-level portfolio strategy to individual patent prosecution choices.

The DIN 77006 framework underpins BHS's governance spine. Internal change champions appreciated that the standard "makes the change stick when memories fade," providing institutional continuity beyond individual enthusiasm or executive attention. The standard's structured approach helps organizations avoid the common pitfall of initial IP governance energy dissipating once novelty wears off. Implementation followed the methodical approach of DIN: comprehensive gap analysis, pilot process development, systematic documentation, internal auditing, with external certification to follow soon (planned by the end of 2025).

The documentation challenge, which is typically a significant burden for fast-moving engineering organizations, was addressed by integrating DIN templates directly into BHS's existing workflow systems. This integration reduced administrative friction while ensuring compliance with standard requirements.

Power Dynamics and Financial Accountability

Effective governance extends beyond documentation to encompass decision-making authority and budget responsibility. Dr. Bookjans deliberately structured the patent department as an internal consulting firm that drafts applications, provides strategic advice, and flags potential risks while avoiding direct financial authority. Final go/no-go decisions remain with business unit heads who fund patent activities from their own profit-and-loss statements.

This design forces rigorous return-on-investment discussions at the operational level, reflecting governance research demonstrating that strong IP performance correlates with clear accountability at profit-center levels. When business unit leaders control both strategy and budget, they naturally balance patent costs against expected competitive benefits.

The three-tier hierarchy — *“vision guiding politics guiding strategy”* — wrapped in recognized international standards and sustained by budget accountability and real-time analytics, demonstrates how thoughtful governance channels rather than constrains innovation energy. For executives examining this framework, the fundamental lesson emerges clearly: sophisticated governance systems amplify rather than diminish innovative capacity when properly designed and implemented.

Redefining Patent Value: From Feature Protection to Business Model Defense

BHS Corrugated's revolutionary IP strategy centers on a fundamental principle: patents derive value not from preventing component copying, but from blocking competitors' ability to generate revenue. This seemingly simple insight required completely reimagining how the company conceives, drafts, and manages its intellectual property portfolio.

The transformation from "good" to "best" practice reflects a strategic evolution from defensive filing to offensive market control, where patents function as business weapons rather than legal formalities.

Traditional patent methodology, which is filing single applications per clever feature after machine completion, appeared professionally sound but proved strategically porous. Competitors discovered they could modify individual dimensions while

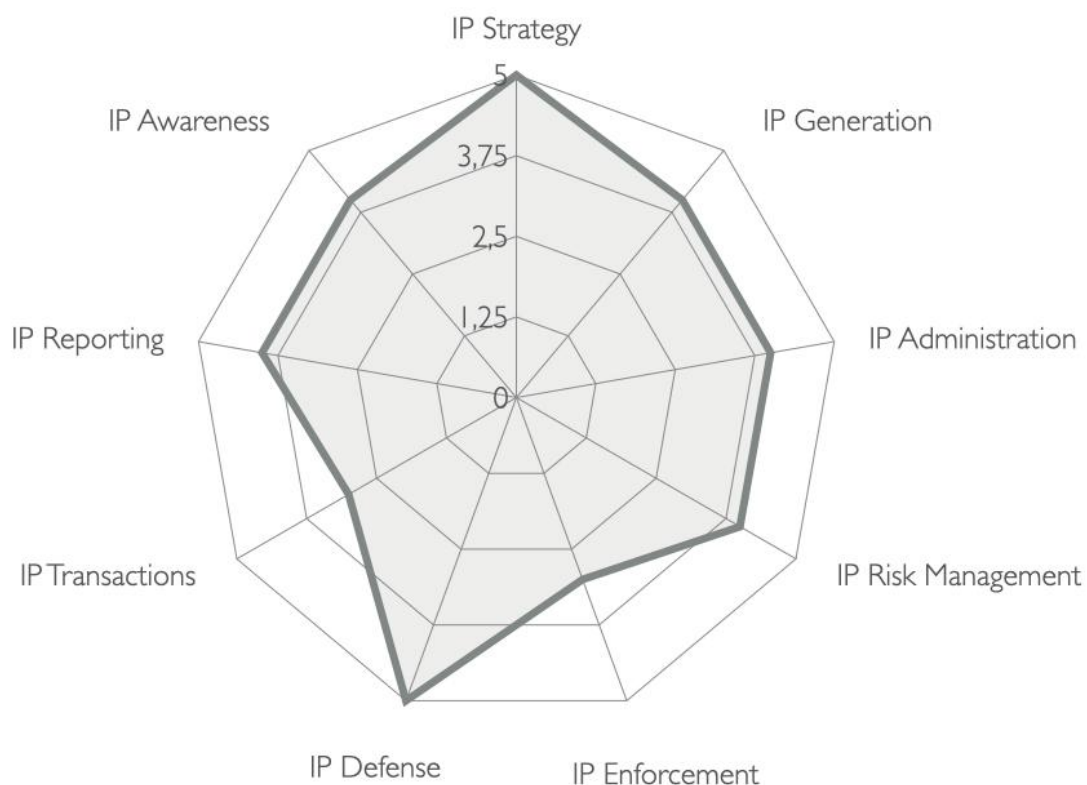


Fig. 1: Schematic evaluation of IP Management dimensions within BHS Corrugated on the scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being "outstanding")

maintaining functional equivalence, effectively circumventing patent protection through minor design variations.

The design process now begins with a workshop question posed to product and service managers: "***What do we never want to see on the market?***" This business-centric approach requires participants to map the revenue logic underlying target offerings, such as pay-per-roll uptime guarantees, and enumerate every technical pathway competitors might exploit to capture similar cash flows.

Only after completing this revenue analysis does the patent team engage in claim drafting. This sequence ensures intellectual property protection aligns with business strategy rather than merely following engineering completion.

Dr.-Ing Martin Bookjans employs his "Front-End/Back-End" analytical framework to maintain strategic focus throughout the development process. Front-end considerations examine what gets sold, how, to whom, and why customers must purchase from BHS rather than competitors. Patent claims in this category protect unique user benefits, distinctive visual design elements, and data-enabled service capabilities that differentiate BHS offerings.

Back-end analysis focuses on how BHS delivers those benefits at cost or quality levels competitors cannot match. Claims here create barriers around critical process parameters, sensor architectures, and AI algorithms that underpin service contract execution and profitability.

This dual perspective ensures patent protection covers both premium pricing maintenance and competitive cost execution, creating comprehensive barriers to market entry.

Synthetic Invention and Comprehensive Coverage

Once revenue mapping is complete, engineers and patent counsel engage in what Bookjans terms "synthetisches Erfinden" — developing multiple, overlapping applications around foreseeable variants without requiring finished prototypes. This 'shot-gun' approach files multiple overlapping patents around every revenue-critical concept.

The monthly Decision Board, comprising business unit heads who balance costs against expected blocking effectiveness, determines appropriate protection categories for each innovation. This structure ensures patent strategy remains grounded in business reality rather than purely technical considerations.

From Cost Center to Strategic Weapon

BHS effectively transformed its patent department from a legal cost center into what Bookjans characterizes as a "forward artillery unit", designed to clear competitive territory well before engineering teams advance into new markets. This transformation represents more than procedural change; it reflects fundamental strategic evolution from reactive protection to proactive market control.

The comprehensive approach: business-centric development, synthetic invention, data-driven targeting, and performance-based optimization, creates patent portfolios that function as genuine competitive weapons rather than mere legal documents. For organizations seeking to maximize intellectual property value, BHS's journey demonstrates how strategic thinking can transform patents from defensive necessities into offensive advantages.

The Strategic IP Toolbox: Beyond Patents to Comprehensive Protection

BHS's board frequently observes that "no single tool wins a fencing match". Rather than relying solely on traditional patents, the company employs a carefully orchestrated portfolio mix that addresses three fundamental questions for every innovation:

Can we reliably detect infringement when it occurs? Will the asset help us block a rival's revenue stream, not merely a single feature? Does the ongoing cost of maintaining protection match the expected business benefits?

The answers to these questions determine whether each concept becomes a patent, trade secret, defensive publication, or trademark and design registration. This multi-dimensional approach creates comprehensive competitive barriers that address different vulnerability points and business scenarios.

Patents continue serving as the structural backbone of BHS's blocking strategy because they alone can halt competitors at customs checkpoints and create future licensing revenue opportunities. However, as it has been shown above, the company has fundamentally reimagined how it develops and deploys patent protection.

Defensive Publications: Strategic Territory Denial

Some innovations show technical promise but carry uncertain commercial potential. Rather than investing in expensive global patent prosecution, BHS creates prior art, depositing anonymous technical papers in state libraries. These publications receive official timestamps and remain searchable enough to invalidate competitors' later patent applications while remaining sufficiently obscure to avoid broadly telegraphing BHS's strategic intentions. This approach functions as

affordable "barbed wire" that denies competitors the ability to patent promising technical approaches without significant BHS investment. This flexibility appeals to decision-makers who appreciate maintaining strategic options while minimizing upfront costs, typically hundreds of euros versus tens of thousands for full patent prosecution.

Trademarks and Designs: Protecting Brand Identity and User Experience

While patents and trade secrets protect functional advantages, trademarks and registered designs safeguard market perception and customer experience. The distinctive blue-and-white BHS logotype signals reliability to conservative box-plant owners who value operational predictability above technical innovation.

Registered graphical user interface layouts on control panels will further help preserve the distinctive "BHS look-and-feel" that customers psychologically associate with uptime guarantees and operational reliability. These elements create emotional barriers to competitor substitution that complement technical protection strategies.

Marketing departments maintain primary ownership of these brand-related rights, but they operate under the same DIN 77006 governance framework that covers other IP assets. This integration ensures renewal deadlines and enforcement actions remain visible to the central IP team, preventing valuable rights from lapsing due to organizational disconnection.

A Lean IP Department Operating as an Internal Law Firm

For a company with 3,500 employees, BHS keeps its IP team intentionally small: just three full-time equivalents consisting of Dr. Bookjans, an experienced paralegal, and a patent attorney trainee. Their focus is firmly on providing advice and executing strategy, not building bureaucratic empires.

When speed is essential, patent drafting happens in-house. When specialized claim language requires niche expertise, the work is outsourced. However, prosecution strategy always remains under internal control. This lean structure keeps hierarchy minimal and prevents teams from hiding behind excessive process complexity.

Digital Evolution: From Spreadsheets to AI Heat Maps

The system's foundation remains a traditional IP management platform for cost tracking and deadline management. However, the standout innovation is a pilot AI landscape tool that creates color-coded visualizations comparing BHS claims against competitor portfolios. Bookjans anticipates this technology will shift conversations from asking "how many patents do we have?" to "which missing claim could cost us €10 million in margin?"

Building an IP-Aware Culture

When Dr.-Ing Martin Bookjans joined BHS in 2021, he discovered "world-class machines, three centuries of pride, and almost no IP conversation beyond the legal department." His first priority wasn't generating more patents. Instead, he focused on developing more *people who think in patents*.

The transformation began with employee trainings for all RDE engineers and other groups of people, the introduction of PatOrg and the setup of a legally compliant third party right observation. The adaption of core philosophy of BHS was the company's latest and biggest milestone.

Recognizing that even the best processes and tools fail without proper human implementation, a comprehensive two-and-a-half-hour training module for R&D staff has been created and already reached approximately 90% of engineers. Starting in 2026, this same content will be delivered bi-monthly through an internal portal accessible to engineers and product managers worldwide.

Aligning Rewards with Business Outcomes

Building on Germany's statutory inventor bonus system, BHS has created a more comprehensive incentive structure. Inventors receive identical rewards regardless of whether their ideas become patents or trade secrets, reinforcing the principle that business impact, not legal classification, determines value.

The company is developing KPI dashboards that will show each business unit head exactly how many white-spot opportunities their teams identify and pursue. This direct connection between innovation contribution and career advancement helps embed IP thinking into daily work routines and performance evaluations.

Sustaining Cultural Momentum

Cultural change requires continuous attention rather than one-time initiatives. The intended annual DIN 77006 audit here will serve as a systematic pulse check, evaluating whether disclosures happen promptly, trade secrets remain properly secured, and litigation lessons get incorporated into ongoing training programs.

Also, to especially highlight "Incentive system" and "Mitarbeiterschulung" (employee training) as permanent organizational processes within the company. This recognition acknowledges that building an IP-aware culture isn't achieved through isolated workshops but requires sustained, cyclical reinforcement that becomes part of the company's operational rhythm.

The result is a cultural transformation where IP consideration becomes as natural and automatic as quality checks or safety protocols, woven into daily decision-making rather than treated as an afterthought.

Monetization Outlook — Turning Rights into Revenue

After three years of building a portfolio designed to constrain competitors, BHS is preparing for the next critical phase: converting that strategic advantage into tangible financial returns.

The timing challenge is straightforward. Since most high-value patent families were filed only after 2021, the portfolio remains "too young to license for serious money," as Bookjans candidly acknowledges. When market timing outweighs the satisfaction of internal development, BHS has shown willingness to acquire existing patent families. The company has already completed several targeted acquisitions, focusing exclusively on technology clusters that strengthen blocking positions rather than pursuing trophy patents that look impressive in marketing presentations but lack strategic substance.

This pragmatic approach reflects a mature understanding that portfolio building requires both patience for organic development and opportunistic acceleration through external acquisition when the right opportunities arise.

Challenges, Next Steps and Lessons for Practitioners

Despite BHS's remarkable progress, several challenges continue to demand attention and keep the IP team focused on the road ahead.

Building a Global Human Firewall:

Training 3,500 employees across 20 countries presents complexities that dwarf the technical challenges of filing patents. While classroom sessions have successfully reached most product development staff, creating consistent global understanding requires the comprehensive e-learning platform planned for 2026. The challenge isn't just delivering content — it's ensuring that an engineer in Malaysia interprets IP opportunities with the same strategic mindset as a colleague in Germany.

Quantifying Blocking Power:

Advanced AI analytics show tremendous promise for visualizing competitive landscapes, but transforming colorful heat maps into concrete business value remains partially art, partially science. Proving that a specific patent claim actually prevented €10 million in competitor revenue requires sophisticated market analysis that goes well beyond traditional patent metrics. The IP team continues refining methodologies that can definitively link patent positions to competitive outcomes.

Systematic HR Integration:

While most IP processes now operate within automated DIN frameworks, formal onboarding and exit procedures for trade-secret holders still rely on manual interventions. This gap represents potential vulnerabilities in knowledge protection that could undermine years of careful IP development. Comprehensive HR integration remains a priority that demands systematic attention rather than ad-hoc solutions.

Sustainable Global Enforcement:

As competitors in China and India continue advancing their technical capabilities, BHS faces the prospect of defending patent rights in jurisdictions where litigation costs can quickly exceed the margins at stake. The company must develop sustainable enforcement strategies, whether through strategic partnerships,

litigation insurance mechanisms, or selective enforcement approaches that maximize deterrent effect while controlling costs.

Transferable Lessons for Any Organization

BHS's journey offers practical insights that extend far beyond the corrugated machinery industry. These lessons reflect fundamental principles that any organization can adapt to their specific circumstances.

Leverage Standards as Cultural Framework

DIN 77006 standard provides more than process documentation. It creates regular audit rhythms that prevent IP enthusiasm from gradually fading into background noise. Standards frameworks offer objective evaluation criteria and ensure consistent approaches across different business units and geographic locations. They transform cultural change from sporadic initiatives into systematic organizational development.

Pursue Strategic Depth Over Individual Brilliance

Single patents, however broad their claims, invite creative work-arounds from determined competitors. Well-coordinated patent families that systematically cover alternative approaches create much more formidable barriers. This cluster strategy requires more sophisticated planning and higher initial investment, but it fundamentally changes competitive dynamics by making entire technology areas prohibitively expensive for competitors to enter.

Transform IP into Financial Reality

Making business units directly responsible for patent renewal fees converts theoretical IP discussions into concrete financial decisions. When renewals impact profit and loss statements, managers quickly develop sophisticated understanding of which patents deliver genuine value versus those that merely occupy filing cabinets. This approach forces regular portfolio evaluation and ensures IP investments receive the same scrutiny as other business expenditures.

Ground Training in Real Consequences

Abstract legal concepts rarely motivate busy engineers, but concrete examples of competitive failure create lasting impact. Using actual business consequences, whether successes or failures, transforms IP education from compliance training into strategic skill development.

Align Incentives with Business Outcomes

Providing identical rewards for patents and trade secrets reinforces the fundamental principle that protecting competitive advantage matters more than specific legal mechanisms. This approach encourages employees to focus on business value rather than getting distracted by the perceived prestige of patent ownership. It also ensures that the most appropriate protection method gets chosen based on strategic considerations rather than personal preferences.

Maintain Strategic Flexibility

Defensive publications offer remarkable strategic value for minimal cost, allowing companies to establish technology positions while market opportunities mature. This approach provides options rather than commitments; companies can observe market development and choose appropriate protection levels based on actual rather than anticipated value. It represents sophisticated IP portfolio management that balances immediate costs against future opportunities.

The Transformation Continues

BHS Corrugated journey from treating patents as legal curiosities to deploying them as strategic weapons requires sustained commitment, systematic process development, and cultural change that touches every aspect of innovation management. BHS's experience shows that even organizations with centuries of traditional engineering excellence can successfully navigate this transformation, but only through deliberate, comprehensive approaches that address technical, financial, and human dimensions simultaneously.

For practitioners in any industry, the fundamental lesson remains clear:

Intellectual property becomes strategically valuable only when organizations treat it with the same systematic rigor they apply to other critical business functions. The tools and processes may vary, but the underlying principle, namely that competitive advantage requires both creating value and preventing others from copying it, applies universally.

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