

The **i**NTERPATENT newsletter



JULY 2025

THE INTERPATENT TEAM IS GROWING AGAIN!

We are pleased to announce that our team is expanding further. Joining us are **Gian Antonio Pancot** and **Marilena Garis**.

Gian Antonio brings with him over forty years of solid experience in the field of Intellectual Property, where he began working in July 1978. From 1980 to 1993, he served as CEO of one of the leading Italian firms in the sector, of which he was also a partner. He was later called to join another top-tier consulting firm in Rome, where he remained until the end of 2006. At that point, he joined a world-leading group in the field of Research & Development (R&D) as CEO, focusing on Intellectual Property management and support, with a particular emphasis on the economic valorization of patent rights. From 2017 to 2020, he also held the roles of President and CEO of another Italian professional firm operating in the Intellectual Property sector. Since then, he has continued to work in the same field, collaborating with other professional firms.

Gian Antonio has recently joined the Interpatent team with the goal of contributing not only his specialized expertise in Intellectual Property, but also his extensive experience

gained through working closely with major international patent and trademark holders, thereby providing a significant contribution to the enhancement of their activities and services.

Registered with the Italian Industrial Property Consultants Institute (in both the Patents and Trademarks/Designs sections), he is also a qualified representative before the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). Since 2020, he has served as Vice President of LES Italy and is also a member of several other Intellectual Property associations, including AIPPI, FICPI, AICIPI, LIGUE, among others. He has contributed to publications, lectures and conferences on industrial and Intellectual Property matters.

Marilena will enhance our team with her extensive experience in Intellectual Property, a field she has been working in since 2001 within leading national firms.

Marilena holds a law degree with a specialization in transnational law from the University of Turin (2001) and obtained a Master's in Corporate Law (2018). She has

collaborated with the University of Turin as a subject expert, contributing to the courses in Industrial Law (Economics and Business degree program) and Intellectual Property Law (Communication Sciences degree program). She is registered with the Italian Industrial Property Consultants Institute (in the Trademarks/Designs section) and is also admitted to practice before the EUIPO.

Marilena represents both Italian and international clients, providing them with strategic advice on Intellectual Property matters, coordinating the protection of trademark portfolios worldwide, handling oppositions and cancellation actions and negotiating contracts. She has established strong professional relationships with legal and Intellectual Property experts on an international level. Since 2020, she has been a member of the Executive Committee and an International Delegate of LES Italy, as well as a member of AIPPI (Italian group). She has contributed to numerous publications, lectures and conferences on industrial and Intellectual Property matters, including for *Il Diritto Industriale*, *SPRINT*, *Italia Oggi*, *Managing Intellectual Property*, *World Trademark Review*, *LES International* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*."

To introduce them to you in the best possible way, we asked them a few questions.

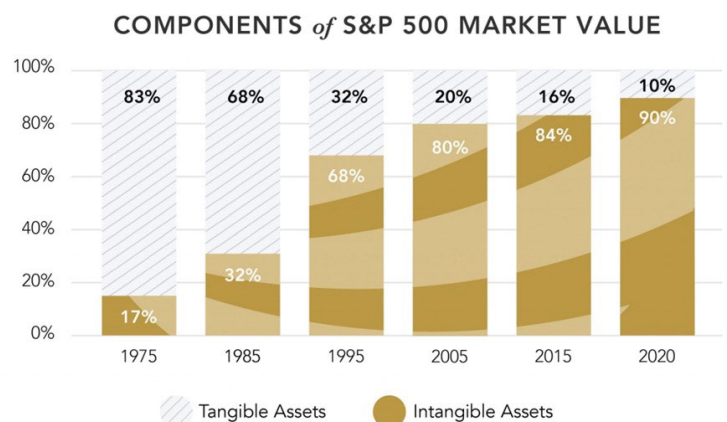
Gian Antonio Pancot



Q: What are the most common mistakes companies make in managing Intellectual Property?

A: I believe that, although considerable efforts have been made at all levels in recent years, only now are the most astute companies beginning to fully recognize the significance and importance of Intellectual Property (IP). I don't think the focus should be on mistakes (or alleged mistakes), but rather on the limited awareness of what patents, trademarks, designs, domain names, as well as trade secrets, copyright and other intangible assets (which fall under 'intellectual capital' and constitute a substantial part of so-called 'intangible assets') represent in terms of value for a company – whether large, medium-small, or artisanal – either manufacturing or service-based.

Many considerations can be made on this subject, but briefly, it is enough to note that the American company Ocean Tomo (part of JS Held, providing expert opinions and consulting focused on Intellectual Property and other intangible assets) found that whereas in the 1970s intangible assets represented about 20% of a company's value, today this proportion is reversed: trademarks, patent portfolios, designs, as well as management reputation, employees' know-how and the customer base account on average for 80% of a company's market value, as illustrated in the chart below.



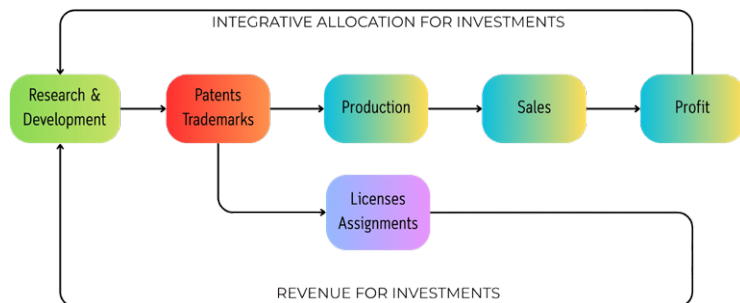
SOURCE: OCEAN TOMO, A PART OF J.S. HELD, INTANGIBLE ASSET MARKET VALUE STUDY, 2020

Furthermore, in some cases, especially during a period of significant transformation as experienced in recent years, the strategic lack of an adequate portfolio of patents and

trademarks has hindered the successful transfer of production and sales to outsourcing (i.e., to lower-cost areas) in order to prioritize internal creativity, research and development, as did instead those companies that have grown and developed by giving proper attention and substantial importance to Intellectual Property and licensing activities.

More generally, the opportunity to implement an 'integrative cycle' like the one illustrated below was missing:

Integrative Cycle Providing Additional Benefits



There are many other reflections that could be made on this topic, which are omitted here for brevity. However, a brief mention must be made of the mistaken belief that patents and trademarks represent a 'cost for the company' rather than an investment. This leads to a lack of awareness about the possible 'valorization' of these assets, which are fully part of a company's heritage. More generally, among a large number of stakeholders, there is still a lack of full understanding and culture regarding the potential and importance (broadly understood) of Intellectual Property.

Q: What advice would you give to a startup or an inventor approaching Intellectual Property protection for the first time?

A: The advice I usually give in such circumstances is based on the following twofold approach: on one hand, acquire a thorough understanding of the sector in which you intend to operate; on the other hand, abandon the 'do-it-yourself' mindset and rely on consultants with proven experience – whether accountants, marketing experts, or Intellectual Property consultants – with whom companies can engage to form a working team or partnership to review the business plan,

budgets (including those aimed at defining financial needs within implementation timelines), invention protection and so on.

The success of any initiative cannot disregard the analysis and the drafting – as clear and complete as possible – of all its components, along with the simultaneous definition of timelines, responsibilities and financial coverage necessary to ensure the market entry and distribution of the related products or services, where the commercial and marketing aspects will play a key role in supporting corporate success.

Q: Why is it essential to rely on an expert for the management and protection of IP rights?

A: The field has evolved and expanded so extensively over the years that specific, highly qualified professional figures have emerged in the consulting market. I emphasize that, in addition to the evolution of national legislation, supranational agreements, conventions, directives and regulations have been introduced, which cannot be overlooked. From this follows the inevitable conclusion that it is necessary to rely on experts – IP consultants – to obtain the best possible comprehensive assistance and protection, thereby reducing the risk of failure of any initiative involving the adoption of IP rights, safeguarding the efforts and sacrifices of inventors and investors.

Q: How does your experience allow you to offer personalized solutions to clients?

A: In the professional organization I decided to join, I was able to preliminarily verify the concrete existence of ongoing solid training, the availability and full openness to all accessible sources of information and updates on the subject, as well as a widespread network of reliable and continuously monitored foreign agents worldwide. These are all essential elements to seriously and diligently ensure the best and most qualified consultancy in the various areas related to IP. Added to this are the experiences that some professionals have developed within other settings, from which they have gained knowledge that allows for better interaction with clients. Finally, professional development is enhanced by active involvement in the subject matter, with almost all professionals serving as active

members of study committees at various levels, speakers at events and authors of articles published in industry journals. Sharing the vision that places full and qualified attention to client needs and satisfaction as a priority, I have aimed to contribute my own – partially diversified yet complementary – expertise developed over more than 40 years of proven experience and work.

Marilena Garis



Q: What have been the key moments in your educational and professional journey?

A: After earning my law degree with a transnational focus, I began practicing law.

Given my inclination toward international fields and my language skills (English, French, German), I joined a leading Intellectual Property firm, where I quickly progressed through the initial stages and was soon integrated as an associate.

At the same time, I cultivated an academic commitment by collaborating with some prestigious legal journals in the field, particularly on trademark matters.

More recently, my active participation in a prestigious international industry association (where I served as a member of the Executive Committee and as an International Delegate) has allowed me to gain significant experience and contribute importantly through publishing texts on trademarks and participating in events as a speaker and/or moderator of roundtables.

Q: Was there an event or a person who particularly influenced your career?

A: There have been numerous occasions where I was an integral part of professional work teams that allowed me to expand my experience abroad (in Europe, the United States, Russia and China) by handling important cases for major clients.

I am grateful to many senior professionals for their contributions to my training: among my various experiences, I personally hold unforgettable memories of those who trusted me and, at the same time, helped pass on the knowledge from their authoritative expertise.

Q: What strategies do you recommend for the protection and enhancement of your clients' Intellectual Property rights at the national and international levels, and why is it important to leverage your IP assets?

A: The message I aim to convey to clients is based on a relationship of trust built through the professional services I provide in response to their needs. I have always tried, with complete transparency, to emphasize the importance of IP as an investment, working with clients to implement protection plans spread over time, based on precise programs that consider the benefits and protective aspects of their trademarks. In this regard, I have also been involved in developing anti-counterfeiting projects in the geographic areas of greatest economic interest to clients.

Q: How is the Intellectual Property sector changing with the advent of new technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, blockchain, etc.)?

A: On a purely practical level, new technologies have not yet significantly affected our professional work itself, but they have had a considerable effect on the procedural and strategic aspects, which now demand increasing levels of up-to-date knowledge and flexibility in the execution of IP tasks.

We believe that the addition of Gian Antonio and Marilena to the Interpatent team will be key to successfully tackling upcoming challenges in IP and that their support will help us reach new goals.

A warm welcome to them both!

DEFENDING AUTHENTICITY: NEW FRONTIERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ITALIAN SOUNDING



According to data compiled by The European House – Ambrosetti – one of the leading think tanks in Italy assisting companies in establishing reports and setting up projects and events in several economic fields – **the agri-food supply chain**, comprising the agricultural sector, the food and beverage industry and the intermediary, distribution and restaurant sectors, **has grown by 34% compared to 2015**.

In 2023, the sector generated €74 billion in direct added value, a result worth 2.5 times more than the "Made in Italy" fashion and over 5 times that of the chemical industry. Italy is also the third-largest EU country in terms of agri-food added value, accounting for 3.9% of its gross domestic product (source: <https://www.ambrosetti.eu/en/search/?search=italian+sounding>).

The top four Italian regions for agri-food exports account for 62.1% of the national total, with Lombardy leading (€10.4 billion in 2023), followed by Emilia-Romagna (€9.8 billion), Veneto (€9.6 billion) and Piedmont (€8.9 billion).

Interestingly, though perhaps unsurprisingly,

the Italian regions most skilled at exporting high-quality products abroad are also the ones most affected by the phenomenon of "Italian Sounding". In fact, Lombardy is the most affected region, with estimated losses of €10.2 billion per year, followed by Veneto (€10 billion) and Emilia-Romagna (€9.9 billion).

Italy's ability to export excellence, as well as the presence of certified products (with 891 PDO and PGI products, Italy leads Europe in the number of certifications), makes our country particularly vulnerable to Italian Sounding, i.e. the practice of imitating Italian food, but also non-food, products for misleading commercial gain, through the use of names, images and color schemes that unmistakably evoke Italy.

According to the most recent projections, **the value of Italian food & beverage exports would more than double if the impact of Italian Sounding on Italian companies' flagship products could be eliminated**.

Unfortunately, the new **U.S. tariff policies** are not helping. Italian Sounding products remain highly competitive because their average prices are lower than those of authentic Italian goods. In this context, the potential imposition of tariffs on Made in Italy products would likely lead to even higher prices for the originals, making the already cheaper "fake" products even more attractive. With €7.8 billion in exports, the United States is Italy's second-largest market for agri-food products and these tariffs risk boosting the sales of non-authentic goods on the North American market.

So, what can be done to counter Italian Sounding? How can Italian companies recover, at least in part, the revenue lost over the years to products that clearly evoke our country but have nothing to do with Italy?

We attempted to provide some answers on June 17, when **Alberto Furno from our firm** (a.furno@interpatent.com) participated as speaker in an insightful event organized by the

Chamber of Commerce of Turin: *The Impact of Italian Sounding on the agri-food sector.*

From a national legislative standpoint, it is worth highlighting, on one hand, the amendment to Article 144 of the Italian Industrial Property Code, which now includes Italian Sounding practices among **acts of piracy**. On the other hand, the establishment of the **National Council for the Fight Against Counterfeiting and Italian Sounding** – already discussed in an [article in our November 2024 issue](#) – an inter-ministerial body aimed at guiding, promoting and coordinating actions to enhance Intellectual Property and protect it from unfair economic competition.

At the European Union level, it is also important to mention the implementation of **Regulation (EU) 2024/1143**, concerning geographical indications for wines, spirits, agricultural products, traditional specialties and optional quality terms for agricultural goods.

As of 2024, this regulation represents a significant step toward greater protection for Made in Italy. For example, it strengthens the powers of consortia for defending GIs, increases consumer transparency through

mandatory labeling of the producer's name, enhances protection for Geographical Indications (GIs) even when used as ingredients and expands international GI protection.

From a socio-cultural point of view, Italian Sounding can be battled by effectively communicating the value of Made in Italy through targeted consumer education initiatives and, where possible, the involvement of brand ambassadors promoting Italian excellence worldwide.

In conclusion, the damage caused by the false evocation of Italian identity in the agri-food sector is immense. In a period of general economic crisis, protecting one of the few sectors in Italy still capable of generating added value must become a national priority. Some progress has been made on the legal front, but only through greater awareness among all industry stakeholders – and a stronger focus on protecting Italian Intellectual Property assets, from trademarks to PDOs and PGIs – can Italian food manufacturers/ distributors and institutions hope to reverse the trend and eventually transform what is currently revenue for unfair competitors into revenue for Italian companies.

EUROPEAN INVENTOR AWARD: CELEBRATING INNOVATION, INSPIRING THE FUTURE

The **European Inventor Award** is a prize awarded by the EPO (European Patent Office) every two years, to honor inventors who turn their ideas into concrete solutions capable of addressing major challenges of our time.

The European Inventor Award was created to give proper recognition to talented inventors, celebrating their inventive spirit and successful innovations.

Applications for the next edition, which will take place in Berlin in 2026, are currently open and will be accepted until **30 September 2025**. Nominations can be submitted by the public, EPO staff, patent offices from around the world, or by the inventors themselves.

Winners will receive striking sail-shaped trophies, designed by **Miriam Irle**, symbolizing exploration and ingenuity and representing how inventive ideas can push humanity toward uncharted horizons.

The award is divided into several categories, designed to provide recognition to a wide range of innovators:

- **Industry** (for inventors working in large European companies)
- **Research** (for inventors working at universities, research institutes, or their spin-offs)

- **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** (for inventors working in SMEs)
- **Non-EPO Countries** (for inventors from non-EPO member states, provided the inventions or related products are available in Europe)
- **Lifetime Achievement Award** (for inventors who have made long-standing contributions in their technical field)
- **Popular Prize** (awarded through public voting, which starts with the announcement of the finalists and closes during the award ceremony)

For all categories, the prerequisites for nomination are a granted European patent and commercialization in Europe. Additionally, to be eligible, an invention must demonstrate a high degree of inventiveness, a clear benefit to society or the environment and proven or potential economic success in Europe.

Being selected for the European Inventor Award means receiving prestigious recognition for excellence in innovation, while also gaining significant international visibility. This represents a strategic opportunity to enhance the value of the Intellectual Property assets of companies and strengthen their presence in the global market, paving the way for new opportunities in growth, collaboration and worldwide networking.

That could be a further good reason for companies and individuals from EPO and non-EPO countries to aim at **obtaining a European patent with the help of trusted European patent attorneys.**

The INTERPATENT team includes experienced patent attorneys whose knowledge covers a wide variety of technological fields admitted to practice not only before the Italian Patent and Trademark Office (UIBM) but also before the European Patent Office (EPO), who would be delighted to assist the future EUROPEAN INVENTOR AWARD winners from all over the world.



The aim of this newsletter is to keep our Clients and Associates updated about developments in the sector of Intellectual Property in general and our firm in particular. In this way, we wish to provide a broader view of the tools that the field of trade marks, domain names, patents, designs and related rights offers to entrepreneurs to enhance and protect their efforts in researching and developing new solutions and ideas.



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