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Summary

“ Transition of the Intellectual Property Strategy in Firms ”

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In this study, we analyzed a functional transition of “ Intellectual Property Division(IPD) ” and “ Intellectual property Strategy ” by using the case studies and questionnaire survey of firms.

During the latter half of the 1980s and 1990s, many Japanese companies changed the name of their patent division (or section) to "IPD". It was not just a change of name, but also a reorganization to review the function of their patent division. These firms knew that an intellectual property had a powerful source to take advantage in competition.

Through the case studies, we found that the following changes at firms. First, the function of the IPD was gradually reinforced to manage patents or to deal with legal disputes. Through such disputes, executives of firms came to recognize the importance of intellectual property rights as strategic resources. Second, the IPD has changed from a part of the R&D division to a strategic division that belongs the head quarters in the firms. An organizational trend is showing development from the decentralized patent part and separate functions to the centralized IPD. Third, as the role of IPD has changed, the staff members are now required to have total management capability. In addition to technological knowledge, they are required to have a kind of strategic sense in finding patentable technology, evaluating patents, or applying patents effectively based on competitor's activities. We supported the results by the questionnaire survey of firms.

Firms are reinforcing their IPD to connect their R&D activities and the changing market effectively, and to raise their competitiveness. Today, the IPD grew into a strategic division to conduct total management of intellectual properties.