

## **DOST, IPO push for intellectual property protection**

Written by Luisa S. Lumioan, S&T Media Service, DOST-STII  
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“Protect your intellectual property right from the start,” advised Carmen Peralta, director of Intellectual Property Office Philippines (IPO-Phil), to a group of young technopreneurs during the Investors and Start-ups Forum held at the UP-Ayala Technohub in Quezon City last January 11.

Organized by the Department of Science and Technology-Technology Resource Center (DOST-TRC), the forum was part of DOST’s bid to promote IP awareness to strengthen its technology business incubation program. Under this initiative, private or public entities called business incubators or accelerators provide assistance to start-up companies via affordable services and facilities, administrative and technical support, mentorship, and linkages to clients and investors.

According to Dir. Peralta, a strong intellectual property (IP) portfolio could boost the value of a start-up company. She cited The Economist claims in 2005 that 75 percent of the value of publicly-traded companies in the US was based on IP.

IP refers to any creation or product of the human mind including inventions, original designs, practical applications of a good idea, mark of ownership, literary and artistic works. Protecting IP rights through patents, utility models, industrial design, and copyrights will ensure that that any commercial gain from the use, production and sale of a product or creation will go to the inventor or creator, and not someone else.

Further, the IPO-Phil director emphasized that the “first to file” rule applies in the country, so it is important for start-up companies, especially when technology is at the core of their business, to study their IP protection strategy as early as possible and get advice from professionals.

A person of a company with a novel, inventive and useful product, process or improvement of a product is advised to file a patent to obtain a 20-year exclusive right over the product. This means that no one else is authorized to develop and sell his or her product other than those formally authorized. The person or company that owns the patent receives royalty whenever other people or entities use the product for commercial purpose.

IPO Phil has waived its fees for the first 1,000 patent applications under the Patent Protection Incentive Package. However, Peralta clarified that this applies only to those inventors and

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researchers who are collaborating with institutions which are Innovation and Technology Support Office (ITSO) franchisees.

A utility model, or an innovation that is not sufficiently inventive, is given seven years patent protection.

Meanwhile, an industrial design, referring to the aesthetic aspect of a product, can have a five-year patent protection that can be renewed twice.

While patents, utility models, and industrial designs require registration, a copyright does not as it can be filed immediately from the time of publication or recording and other such moments of expression. Copyrights last 50 years after the death of the owner.

The forum also featured a panel discussion on start-up founders under the DOST-TRC Open Technology Business Incubator (Open TBI) and UP Enterprise, two of several incubators set up in the country via DOST's business incubation program. The start-up founders pitched their companies and products as well as shared the challenges and demands of starting up a business.

Moreover, the speakers also revealed that there are financing companies that can help private incubators, accelerators and angel investors beef up their businesses.