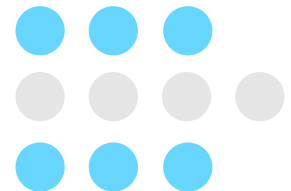


IP FOR SMEs CASE STUDY



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Sophisticated use of patents, designs and trade marks underpins worldwide success



One man's research and love for outdoor sports has helped drive Rheon Labs into an organisation now employing over 30 people and with investments of millions of pounds raised through their first Series A funding round in 2019.

Rheon Labs was founded by the Chief Technology Officer Dr Dan Plant, who is a mechanical engineer and materials scientist, as well as passionate about motocross and reducing injuries in this and other sports where there is a risk of injury from impact.

The idea started life with Dan's love of high-octane pursuits, grew during his studies at Imperial College, London and resulted in the creation of Rheon Labs a few years ago. Patenting and thoughtfully protecting its intellectual property is a core part of its business strategy.

Rheon Labs creates reactive body armour, initially soft like plasticine; when activated on impact it stiffens rapidly and helps save sports people from injuries in areas such as American football, motocross, cycling, ice hockey, snowboarding and skateboarding, as well as saving lives through its advanced technology for helmets and bullet proof clothing.

Rheon's technology is also used in medical applications for elders or people with difficulty walking, combined with proprietary electronics to predict when people are more likely to fall by monitoring their gait; should they do fall, the polymers stiffen up quickly to help protect them from serious injury.

Initially, Rheon's IP was kept tight through reliance on confidentiality and keeping its manufacturing secrets and know-how in house. However, as competitor products started to appear, the company moved more into patenting its technology, locking it up for 20 years, but preventing others from gaining exclusive rights by dint of publication of its patent applications.

When Rheon moved its IP work to Abel + Imray, one of the drivers was to underpin its strategy of collaborations and to ensure that water-tight NDAs were in place when discussing heads of terms with commercial partners.





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Rheon's latest collaborations involve the likes of Ruroc, who make motorcycle and snowsports helmets enhanced with Rheon technology, and Xenith helmets, a major NFL helmet manufacturer.

Over the last few years, Rheon has been increasingly using co-branding agreements with the likes of Fly Racing, a leading producer of helmets in the motocross sphere. As its brand becomes widely recognised and respected in the marketplace, the company has locked in that value by registering its key trade marks to keep them safe from competitors using them. It has also been developing a strategy for companion trade marks and sub-brands in ancillary areas such as computer aided design for athletes, designing and manufacturing protective bodywear to their exact shape and bone structure.

The lead partner at Abel + Imray for Rheon Labs is Neil Forsyth, an electronics specialist with a PhD in telecommunications and signal processing; whilst another partner, Matthew Fletcher, provides expertise on the chemical side; and partner Caroline Brooks provides trade mark advice.

Abel + Imray also registers Rheon's innovative product designs; energy controlling cells which crush on impact are designed to unique shapes for different companies and protected through registered design and design patent applications.

"We are currently in the 8th generation of patent filings," comments Neil Forsyth. "The first generation has now expired, the second one is 13 years in, the third one is 6 years in."

"I would describe Rheon as a strategic and sophisticated user of patents, trade marks and designs in the complex overlapping areas of material science, mechanical engineering, electronics and chemistry. I've known Dan personally since our time at University together and my own background in electronics and excitement for their products has also been a factor in our successful working relationship."

Rheon has benefited from expert IP advice on the patenting journey and without the right advisors in place the company may not be in today's enviable position. They now have over 80 patent filings, around 50 trade marks and 14 registered designs in place in different countries around the world.



<https://rheonlabs.com>
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