



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



IGNITING NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT INTERNATIONAL PAPER

The synergies were unmistakable. At the Industrial Liaison Program's 1998 Research Directors' Conference, International Paper research and development director Bruce Lyne recognized several links between MIT research activities and potential products and business opportunities for his company. Soon after, International Paper joined the ILP and began to capitalize on those opportunities. ILP-arranged meetings with MIT researchers sparked several joint research projects, new product developments, and consulting relationships with MIT faculty. "Since we joined, the ILP has alerted us to new enabling technologies and introduced us to business concept innovations," says Lyne.

One such enabling technology is the passive radio frequency (RF) tag, an electronic label used for product tracking. During an ILP-initiated meeting at the Media Laboratory, Lyne encountered a student who had set up wire baskets with RF tags. The tags, which cost about a dollar apiece, reported to an inventory database whenever an item was pulled out of a basket. Picturing their use in packaging, Lyne asked if a technology existed that could substantially reduce the cost of each tag. The student then referred him to a contact at Motorola, and eventually the two companies formed a partnership to place inexpensive chips on packages. The resulting "intelligent packages" will initially target applications such as inventory control, authentication and security.

As RF identification (RFID) technology spreads, industry analysts expect it to displace the UPC barcode that is now reaching its limit in terms of information carrying capacity. Like the ubiquitous barcode, the RFID tags must be widely accessible. That's why – thanks to an ILP introduction – International Paper joined MIT's Auto-ID Center, where the company participates in regular discussions with major manufacturers of household products and retailers to develop universal standards for reading and writing to RFID packages.

Since joining ILP, International Paper has also tapped into a wide range of MIT research on new business models. In 1999, the ILP made it possible for the company

to hold its semi-annual Innovation Council Meeting at MIT. For two days, Sloan School faculty shared their expertise with 120 managers, exploring supply chain management, e-commerce, process control, and several other topics. "We gained exposure to a lot of new business concepts," Lyne recalls, "In particular those aimed at speeding commerce and facilitating more rapid adoption of new technologies in our products." IP subsequently enlisted several of the speakers as consultants in different areas of its businesses.

Overall, Lyne has found MIT and the ILP to be a winning combination, one that has helped International Paper advance both technology and business goals. "MIT is out front in knowing how to speak to industry," he says. "With much of its research funding coming from private sources, MIT has a built-in orientation towards industrial concerns. For example, the ILP anticipates that industry will want to draw proprietary benefits, and MIT's Technology Licensing Office seems attuned to this objective."

What Lyne appreciates most about the ILP is that it provides a resource contact person to facilitate interactions with MIT faculty. "You just don't see that anywhere else," he maintains. "At other universities you have to seek out people independently."

For more information about how we can put the resources of MIT to work for you, call the Industrial Liaison Program at 1-617-253-2691, e-mail us at liaison@ilp.mit.edu, or visit <http://ilp-www.mit.edu/>

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