

# Bolstering the Intellectual Property Power of NTT DOCOMO

How well known is the intellectual property power of NTT DOCOMO? The company has been deeply committed to Research and Development (R&D) over many years, and one result of this work has been the steady acquisition of patents. NTT DOCOMO currently holds about 14,000 patents worldwide. However, if we were to ask if these assets were being sufficiently used for the benefit of business, we would unfortunately have to say that more effort is needed.

Mobile communications technology represents a major strength of R&D at NTT DOCOMO—it is the company's main field that accounts for more than 40% of its patents. As you know, international standards such as W-CDMA and LTE have been established in mobile communications, and such patents that are deemed necessary to manufacture products complying with these standards are called "standard essential patents." Patents, in general, are frequently locked within a company's proprietary technology and used as such, but a company is obligated to license any standard essential patents it might hold to anyone under fair and reasonable terms to promulgate the use of standards. This mechanism, which has been in place since 1994, has enabled a variety of firms to manufacture telecommunications equipment leading to overall market expansion. Since 2009, however, lawsuits related to standard essential patents as in the case of "Apple versus Samsung" have surged, and the need for measures that can achieve some sort of balance here has been felt to enable further expansion of the telecommunications market.

Against this background, NTT DOCOMO has been making major contributions to the development and standardization of new telecommunications technologies, and it has come to hold many standard essential patents for 3G, 4G, and other standards as a result. In a field dominated by global telecommunications manufacturers, NTT DOCOMO has consistently held a top share in such patents [1], which is quite unique as an operator and a Japanese firm. Our Intellectual Property Department aims to license and monetize NTT DOCOMO's standard essential patents throughout the world, and to this end, it has been participating in patent pools and negotiating licensing terms with individual firms. Moreover, in recent years, it has been putting a great deal of effort into negotiations with global handset manufacturers, which has begun to show results, if only a few so far [2]. At present, the submission of 5G-related patent applications is well underway, and to increase NTT DOCOMO's share of standard essential patents for 5G and expand licensing activities, we are ramping up our support for inventors.

At the same time, service-related technologies as in NTT DOCOMO's Smart Life initiative are becoming increasingly important. In contrast to standard essential patents, the company is using these technologies as a weapon for achieving business flexibility by preventing imitation by other companies and using them as a basis for alliance forming. For this reason, an effective approach is to establish rights to strong points of NTT DOCOMO services as strategic patent clusters, even if they are not necessarily innovative ideas that could lead to the creation of new business areas. In "mobile spatial statistics," for example, the Intellectual Property Department has teamed up with departments of concern in the initial stages of service planning so that strategic patenting can be promoted in fields heavily affected by imitation by other firms in various types of applications. From here on, there will be increasing collaboration with



*Takashi Komoro*<sup>†</sup>

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## General Manager of Intellectual Property Department

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diverse partners as part of NTT DOCOMO's "+d" initiative, but to make good use of ideas and technologies unique to NTT DOCOMO while fully protecting them, I would like to see the Intellectual Property Department form even closer ties to concerned departments at early stages of service planning and to work together as one from the creation of intellectual property to its use.

Returning to intellectual property power, NTT DOCOMO is creating an extensive amount of intellectual property with great potential in the above ways. However, the possession of intellectual property by itself cannot contribute to business since they incur maintenance costs such as patent annuities. In the Intellectual Property Department, we are taking up a variety of challenges to intensify the use of patents to enhance NTT DOCOMO's intellectual property power in a true sense. Nevertheless, whatever actions we take will not function well if we do not have a close relationship with the inventors and departments of concern. We will therefore make every effort to use intellectual property in a way that contributes to business while working with all concerned in a positive and supportive manner.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Cyber Creative Institute: "Evaluation of patents declared to ETSI as essential to LTE related standards."  
<http://www.cybersoken.com/en/research/lte/>
- [2] NTT DOCOMO Press Release: "DOCOMO Grants Patent License to HUAWEI," Jun. 2016.  
[https://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/info/media\\_center/pr/2016/0610\\_00.html](https://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/info/media_center/pr/2016/0610_00.html)

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<sup>†</sup> Currently NTT Software Corporation, Senior Vice President, General Manager, Strategic Business Integration Division