



Innovative Invention Company Or Giant Patent Troll?

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It might be the single company with the most patents that you've never heard of: [Intellectual Ventures](#). Well, you've heard of it if you read this [Law Blog post](#) from May 2006, in which we featured this [profile](#) on the firm from IP Law & Business. The company is the brainchild of [Nathan Myhrvold](#) (pictured), the former Microsoft big wig. Its goal: to amass dozens upon dozens of patents that it can license. The company has no desire to manufacture or commercialize any products.

How does the company get its patents? It buys a lot of them, and there's a [WSJ story](#) today indicating that the company wants to buy a lot more. It hopes to raise as much as \$1 billion to help develop and patent inventions abroad, many of them from Asian universities.

The news of the company's growth renews concerns that Intellectual Ventures is a litigation play, or, to use another popular pejorative phrase, that it's a giant "patent troll."

Some university officials — including those from Stanford and MIT — say they aren't working with the firm because they worry it could use its patents for litigation or other purposes that don't promote innovation. Myhrvold says their concern is overblown, as his company has numerous deals to buy or license patents with more than 80 universities. He says his firm simply wants to get "fair compensation" for new inventions, and help inventors do the same, and that its goal has always been to create a more liquid IP market. (In March 2006, Myhrvold authored this WSJ op-ed, "[Inventors Have Rights Too](#).")

Will the company begin launching patent-infringement lawsuits to pressure companies to pay for use of its IP? Myhrvold says that his firm hasn't sued anybody for patent infringement but that he can't rule it out in the future.

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