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Technology transfer

## How TLB halved patent search time and strengthened its advisory role with IPRally



Dr. Frank Schlotter  
Authorized Officer  
TLB GmbH

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#### Key highlights

- + Approximately 50% reduction in time spent on patent searches
- + Higher relevance and less noise in search results
- + Increased confidence that critical prior art has not been overlooked
- + Improved strategic advisory work and commercialization efforts

#### Faster searches across complex technical fields

TLB GmbH serves as the central tech transfer office for universities and higher education institutions in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Acting as a service provider between academia and industry, TLB evaluates invention disclosures, manages patent filings, and supports commercialization across a wide range of technical fields. “Doing patent searches is one of our main focuses in our work,” says Dr. Frank Schlotter, Authorized Officer at TLB GmbH. “When we recommend filing a patent, we must be confident in our assessment.”

Inventions from the University are typically given to TLB at a very early stage. Disclosures are often based on preliminary research, written under publication pressure, and span fields from biotechnology to engineering and electronics. That breadth makes prior art searches complex and time-consuming.

Before IPRally, TLB relied on extensive keyword planning and manual Boolean queries across large databases. They had also used another AI tool for patent searches, but were not satisfied with the quality of the search results. After testing IPRally, it was adopted as their main tool for novelty and state-of-the-art searches.

“With IPRally, we spend about half as much time on patent searches as we did before,” says Frank Schlotter. “Preparing the search is much easier. With Smart search, we can describe the invention in a short, structured way, upload any images or documents, and get an optimized search query in a matter of seconds. If you want to emphasize something or tweak the focus of the search, you just type a quick instruction”, he says and continues:

“In the review process, it really helps to have the Ask AI feature because then you can actually have a discussion with the tool and find out if the key features of the invention are present or not. That is really a game-changer.”

#### Greater confidence in critical patent decisions

For TLB, the search output is closely tied to its strategic recommendations to the university. But prior art searching carries inherent uncertainty: you are looking for a potential roadblock without knowing exactly what it looks like, and without ever being completely certain the search is finished.

“Now our gut feeling is much better. We are more confident that the search is complete and that we have identified what is really out there,” says Schlotter.

IPRally’s AI-driven search reduces noise and surfaces more relevant documents earlier in the process. That improvement not only saves time but also strengthens the basis for recommendations to university administrations.

“When we recommend filing a patent, we need to be sure,” Schlotter says. “Today, we feel much more certain that we have a solid overview of the landscape.”

#### More focus on strategy and commercialization

By accelerating prior art searches and improving result quality, TLB can dedicate more time to its broader mission: guiding researchers and supporting the path from invention to commercialization

With IPRally, searches often reveal gaps in the prior art that help researchers refine their focus. Instead of inadvertently duplicating existing developments, inventors can redirect their work toward areas with stronger commercial potential.

“We are a tech transfer office, we work on behalf of the universities, not on our own patents,” says Schlotter. “Our goal is not just to file patents, but to bring innovations to life in the market. IPRally gives us more time to focus on that core task.”

The ability to generate clear, shareable reports also improves communication with inventors and university administrators. By transparently presenting search results, TLB can align stakeholders more quickly and move promising technologies forward with greater clarity.

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TLB GmbH is a leading tech transfer office supporting universities and research institutions in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. TLB specializes in patentability assessment, IP strategy, and technology transfer, helping researchers protect and commercialize their innovations. TLB supports the entire process from invention disclosure and patent management to licensing and collaboration with industry, strengthening the impact of publicly funded research.