



We turn good ideas into *great* products.

## Q4, 2006 - Continuing a year of growth and development

2006 has been a year of growth and diversification at Porticos. Our staff continues to grow in both size and breadth of expertise, while our client base grows in number and industry diversity. We currently serve many major markets, including consumer products, industrial, medical, and military. In addition, we continue to work on our own products and intellectual property. One example, our Porticool™ cooling garment for emergency first responders, is being refined and readied for its first field trials. At the same time, work is underway to secure funding for the industrialization of the first product to use this patented technology. The first applications for this patented technology will be in military and civilian emergency response teams.

## NEW FACES

We are pleased to introduce 3 new 2006 additions to the Porticos team...

**Mike King** -- Mike joined Porticos full time in January 2006. He is a senior level mechanical



engineer, experienced in product development. Mike possesses expertise in the design and development of medical devices and electronics packaging.

**Tom Jazwa** – Tom joined Porticos in December 2005 as a member of the management team.



Tom brings broad experience in project management, holding a PMP certification, and is an experienced electrical engineer.

**Chris Laidlaw** – Chris joined Porticos in April 2006 as an engineering technician. Chris is



currently pursuing his BS in mechanical engineering at NC State University. Go Pack!

## RECENT HEADLINES & UPDATES

**Porticos supports INI Power Systems-** Porticos helps INI design a portable fuel cell power unit prototype to be shown at Fuel Cell 2006 Showcase.

Press Release:

[Porticos supports INI in fuel cell development](#)

**Porticos completes new RFID reader design for Sirit Inc (formerly SAMSys Technologies)** Porticos has completed the mechanical design for Sirit's industry leading INfinity 510 High-Performance Reader.

**Porticos completes mobile phone project for the hearing impaired -** This specialized mobile phone has an external retractable antenna and is designed specifically for use by users with hearing aids.

## THE BUSINESS OF IDEAS

Greg Patterson, CTO

Part 5 in this 12-part series focusing on the development of ideas into viable products...

## “Look Again”.

So you have a great idea. Now you are ready to patent your idea to protect your future fortune, or maybe just start making the product. Man has been wandering around the face of the earth for a long time now, improving his world all the way. So the chances of you truly being the first and only one to come up with a completely unique idea are pretty slim. If you want to avoid future heartache or worse yet, investing money into something only to discover the idea already exists, then you need to search exhaustively, and then look again.

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## *THE BUSINESS OF* **IDEAS**

Greg Patterson, CTO

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Before I decide to spend money on a patent attorney, I first go to the United States Patent and Trademark Organization ([www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov)) to make sure there is nothing obvious out there that looks like my idea. This is a free link where you can search from nearly the entire list of patents that have been granted. Just click on the search button under the Patent heading in the left column. The site has online help to answer most of your search questions, but it's pretty simple once you get used to it. However, you must have patience. Like any search there are numbers of keywords and search methods that you can and should utilize. Take your time and try them all. Look at the patents that come up as hits and print off or note the ones that seem closest to your idea. Also, look at the patents that were cited as prior art in these disclosures and look in detail at those. Basically what you will end up with is a long thread of patents that cited earlier patents, etc. I'll say it again; the chance of typing in a key word and not getting any hits is very low. If it does happen, then you probably didn't do a good job of picking a relevant keyword. This process can take many hours, even days, but the information will be invaluable as you determine the breadth of claims your idea has. Plus it is good data to take to your patent attorney when the time comes to get them involved.

The next thing you should do is an internet search, using a free search engine, like Google or Yahoo, to look for "prior art." Without getting into the full legal meaning of the term "prior art," we can sum it up by saying that if you find a public record of some idea close to your next great invention, this previous public disclosure of the idea can prevent you from making patent claims, or severely narrow the claims you can make on your idea. The advent of the internet age has definitely made this a much simpler task but it's still one of those tasks that folks just don't seem to want to do. It's a lot more fun to work through the details of your invention than to spend time in front of the tube searching what will seem like an endless number of Google hits. In this broader prior art search, you will be looking for written documentation or for products that are already on the market. Once the idea becomes public knowledge, either by publishing a description of the idea or by selling a product embodying the idea, all others are prevented from patenting that idea as their own, regardless of whether or not the idea was previously patented.

Another good source is to go to company (or university) sites that are focused in the area you are inventing in. This is especially true if your idea isn't really a product as much as it is a component in a product or software, etc. Searching these sites will give you a good understanding on what's out there and where to look next.

Finally, search some of the design company sites (like [www.porticos.net](http://www.porticos.net)) and look at their portfolio sections. These companies often develop products for a wide range of customers, some big clients that you would have heard of and some small clients that you might not have heard of. Since their portfolio sections are often a key source of marketing, they are typically eager to show their list of accomplishments so you can see what they've done before. Again, consider the threads that these may lead to. For example you might see a product that isn't exactly like what you were thinking, but it might give you another company name to search by to see if they have other products that more closely apply to your idea.

All of this work you have put into a "preliminary" prior art search, does not negate the need for a true prior art search made by a reputable patent attorney. I'm not talking about one of the infomercial ads that says for \$59.99 you will get a packet that has all you need to know to get rich off your idea. I mean a real patent attorney who is familiar with the specific area of expertise that your idea is in. While you can easily and inexpensively file your own patent claim, keep in mind that the patent process can be a long and complicated one. The quality with which it is done goes to a long way in determining the application's success and the eventual patent value. There are only so many hours in a day, so focus on your strengths and let others do the same. If you truly believe you have a novel and valuable idea, you will be doing yourself a huge favor by paying someone with the right experience to help you protect it properly.

These two simple steps "Look" (searching the USPTO site), and "Look Again" (doing internet searches) can save you much heartache down the road. I think you will be amazed at the "near misses" that you will encounter during your searches. Look at them objectively (or have a colleague look them over) then proceed accordingly.

So, until next time, have fun searching the internet highway, and when you think you've searched under every stone ..... look again.