HTG:M ALUMNI • INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FOR GROWING BUSINESSES • 5 NOVEMBER 2026

Someone could have copied us in a weekend.

Why a small Stockport studio filed a patent before it had a product and what that decision has bought us since.

Bassel Ounah • Founder & CEO, Neptune's Submerge Ltd

UK Patent GB2640439 • PCT international filing

THE STORY

The idea was the whole company.

Neptune’s Submerge builds immersive VR for education. **Ocean Quest VR** takes primary pupils on an underwater clean-up mission. Our **life-skills platform** lets SEND learners rehearse the bus, the supermarket, the appointment safely and repeatedly before they face it for real.

In immersive tech the pattern is familiar: a small studio shows a big partner something clever, and six months later the partner has built it in-house.

So we filed before the first pitch and before the first line of production code.

STEP 1	Idea, no product One founder. A method worth protecting.
STEP 2	UK filing • April 2024 £2,878 all-in, before any demo left the building.
STEP 3	Granted • September 2026 GB2640439, 29 months on. The method, not just the brand.
STEP 4	PCT international Options open in 150+ countries.

WHAT WE PROTECTED

Three layers, one moat.

01 • PATENT

The method

UK patent GB2640439, granted. PCT filing holds the international option open. Protects how the experience works the part that is hard to design around.

02 • CONTRACTS

The paperwork

One-way NDA before any brief leaves the building. IP assigned to NSUB on payment with every developer. Heads of Terms with non-circumvention for collaborators.

03 • KNOW-HOW

The evidence

Outcomes framework, pilot data, teacher workflows. Nobody can file for it and it is what turns a protected method into a product that works in a classroom.

Take one layer away and the other two are weaker.

THE IMPACT

It changed the conversation.

150+

countries covered by the PCT option, from one granted UK patent

4

university partners engaging with a company that owns its IP

3

export markets in licensing talks and every one opened with “who owns this?”

30×

three-year pipeline under discussion, against the £2,878 it cost to protect the method

£85k three-year pipeline under discussion across four markets, on three-year school terms licensing deals instead of contractor jobs, and “patented” on page one of every proposal.

Partners: MMU • University of Manchester • University of Salford • The Manchester College • GM Business Growth Hub

THREE LESSONS

What I would tell a growing business.

1

File before you pitch.

Once it is public, it is gone. The order matters more than the budget.

2

Treat IP as a sales asset, not a legal cost.

It is shorthand for credibility with partners, universities, funders and schools.

3

Layer it.

Patent, contracts, know-how. A patent on its own is not a business — the pilot still has to prove it.

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Questions welcome — including the awkward ones about cost