

Contacts:  
Mary Leigh Wallace  
(336) 812-2020  
[mwallace@rlfcommunications.com](mailto:mwallace@rlfcommunications.com)



A.K. Wilkinson  
(336) 812-2028  
[awilkinson@rlfcommunications.com](mailto:awilkinson@rlfcommunications.com)

## THE ROAD TO EUREKA

*Fueling global moments of discovery*

**CARTHAGE, Mo.**, (July 24, 2007) – It is no secret that in the information age, ideas are the lifeblood that keeps companies alive. They generate innovative products (Apple), produce stellar profits (Kohl's) and open up new markets (Facebook, YouTube).

It's an area where Leggett & Platt has invested significant resources. The concept isn't to hire a wunderkind that churns out infinite product designs. Leggett's strategy is in connections; linking its disparate divisions around the globe in search of new ideas. The company's development teams are creating original thought through the application of existing knowledge.

It's not that Leggett doesn't have a history of great ideas. The 124-year-old company holds more than 1,500 patents for everything ranging from automotive seating to innerspring technology.

"In today's competitive marketplace, maintaining that reputation means we have to consider our development teams as networks, not independent domains," says Vincent Lyons, vice president of product development and president of Leggett's machinery and technology group. "Using these networks to attain knowledge from other Leggett divisions bolsters our ingenuity."

At the heart of Leggett's new strategy to capitalize on existing ideas is a database called Goldfire. It sounds like James Bond, but it's actually more like (Yahoo! co-founder) Jerry Yang. Goldfire is the search-engine-like software that houses Leggett and Platt's online library of research and gives the company access to external databases like "deep Web" and the global patent offices. Want to know what the German automotive division has been up to lately? Need to search the billion-plus pages of Web content not available through traditional search engines? Just ask Goldfire.

Goldfire resides on the company intranet and gives engineers instant access to each division's research in real time, which is interesting enough if the company was working in only one industry. But consider that Leggett and Platt has 33,000 employees in more than 20 countries covering five very different product segments – and the picture begins to look very different:

--more--

- Residential furnishings  
(The world's leading supplier of mattress innersprings)
- Commercial fixturing and components  
(You can find the company's display stands in Barnes and Noble and Victoria's Secret)
- Aluminum products  
(Their small engine parts make them one of Harley Davidson Motorcycles' top 10 suppliers)
- Industrial materials  
(Leggett & Platt is North America's leading producer of drawn steel wire.)
- Specialized products  
(Including an automotive up fit division that supplies the ballistic panels for Ford police sedans).

According to Lyons, the diversity of the company's product portfolio is the fuel that drives true innovation.

"Leggett has an unusual advantage in their ability to be successful in so many differing industries," says Lyons. "In an age where companies are scaling down their focus to ensure success in one category, Leggett is thriving on the energy and collective wisdom it gains by mixing apples and oranges."

Lyons, a veteran of Maytag and GM, gathers those apples and oranges together in one room every month, as part of the company's new Engineering Council. Every division within the company is represented, whether in the U.S. or abroad. Each meeting offers an opportunity for the divisions to share current research, developments underway and future product prospects.

So far, the networking of minds has resulted in the investigation of potential new technology areas such as:

- Intelligent wireless power
- Highly efficient, low-polluting alternative energy system
- Rare-earth DC motors

### **Beyond Borders**

But it's Lyons' firm belief that the company must stretch beyond its boundaries to truly compete and succeed. To that end, he has spearheaded the Worldwide Innovation Network (WIN), Leggett's strategy that recognizes the critical role that external sources play in product development.

"It's 70 percent us, and 30 percent them," says Lyons, referring to their strategy on idea generation. "Often, the best ideas come from outside the company. Remember, Apple didn't invent the iPod."

To capitalize on this, Leggett has created a space on their Web site, LeggettInnovation.com, where it encourages everyone from company employees to suppliers to everyday citizens to submit ideas for new or improved products.

"We've received many entries," states Lyons, "and several of them are in the development process."