IBM Shatters U.S. Patent Record; Tops Patent List for 18th Consecutive Year

IBM today announced that its inventors received a record 5,896 U.S. patents in 2010, marking the 18th consecutive year it has topped the list of the world's most inventive companies. IBM became the first company to be granted as many as 5,000 U.S. patents in a single year. It took IBM's inventors more than 50 years to receive their first 5,000 patents after the company was established in 1911.

IBM received patents for a range of inventions in 2010, such as a method for gathering, analyzing, and processing patient information from multiple data sources to provide more effective diagnoses of medical conditions; a system for predicting traffic conditions based on information exchanged over short-range wireless communications; a technique that analyzes data from sensors in computer hard drives to enable faster emergency response in the event of earthquakes and other disasters; and a technology advancement for enabling computer chips to communicate using pulses of light instead of electrical signals, which can deliver increased performance of computing systems.

More than 7,000 IBM inventors residing in 46 different U.S. states and 29 countries generated the company's record-breaking 2010 patent tally. Inventors residing outside the U.S. contributed to more than 22% of the company's patents in 2010, representing a 27% increase over international inventor contributions during the last three years.

IBM's 2010 patent total nearly quadrupled Hewlett-Packard's and exceeded the combined issuances of Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, EMC, and Google.

"Patents, and the inventions they represent, reflect the commitment to innovation that has differentiated IBM and IBMers for a century," said Kevin Reardon, general manager of Intellectual Property and vice president of Research Business Development for IBM. "Patent leadership is an important element of our high-value business strategy, which is focused on enabling instrumented, interconnected, intelligent infrastructures that can change how systems of all kinds work to support a smarter planet."

IBM's inventiveness stems from the company's long-term commitment to development and bold, exploratory research. IBM spends approximately $6 billion in R&D annually. This year marks IBM's Centennial, and from the first patent IBM received in 1911 for an invention related to punched card tabulation – to patents its inventors received in 2010 for analytics, core computing and software technologies, and smart utilities, traffic systems, and healthcare systems -- the company consistently has pursued a balanced and versatile intellectual property strategy that can translate into real-world solutions, and make systems, processes and infrastructures more efficient, more productive and more responsive.

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