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## COVER STORY

# Sprint/T-Mobile merger in KC: What will it mean for innovation?



[Bobby Burch](#)

Reporter- Kansas City Business Journal

[Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Google+](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

## 6. What does it mean for Kansas City innovation?

If **Sprint** Corp./T-Mobile US Inc.'s West Coast presence grows as expected, it would have a mixed effect on Kansas City's innovation.

Sprint has been a local giant in the realm of innovation, as patent filings indicate. The company and then-subsiidiary Embarq accounted for a whopping 46 percent of local patents in 2011.

Sprint/T-Mobile and Sprint parent **SoftBank Corp.** may try to take advantage of the draw of the Seattle and Silicon Valley areas to pull in tech talent. But even if more early innovation is done on the coast, Kansas City still could thrive as an implementation hotbed.

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- [Sprint/T-Mobile merger in KC: 7 answers to one big question](#)

[Doug Ciocca](#), CEO of Kavar Capital Partners LLC, said the combo of Midwest opportunity and West Coast intellectual capital offers attractive prospects.

"When you think about the incubation that takes place in (Silicon Valley) and kind of the opportunity for implementation in our part of the world, it can be a pretty cool coexistence," he said. "Opportunities might really exist from the standpoint of exploitation of opportunity because it's not so deeply penetrated."

Sprint also helped publicize the advantage of lower Midwestern costs to tech entrepreneurs through its Sprint Mobile Health Accelerator. The program, led by accelerator guru Techstars, brought 10 startups to Kansas City to hone their business plans and build relationships. Two have relocated to Kansas City, and others have discussed retaining a presence in the area.

Even better for Kansas City, the program's first year was so successful, Sprint plans another class in 2015.

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## Patents

Share of patents granted in 2011 to Greater Kansas City-area assignees:

**49 percent:** Other

**41 percent:** Sprint

**5 percent:** Embarq

**3 percent:** Cerner

**2 percent:** Garmin

**Source:** "Patenting Prosperity" **Brookings Institution** 2013

Bobby reports about technology/telecommunications, entrepreneurship and sustainability.