

▶ Taking Innovation to a New Level

ULRICH BETZ, Ph.D., Director at Merck Serono Portfolio Development and Head of the Department Center of Innovation, talks about fostering innovation and entrepreneurial thinking within the company.

➔ **PV: What is the Merck Serono internal Innospire innovation program?**

BETZ: Innospire is an internal initiative that allows people across all divisions of Merck Serono and across the world to submit ideas for new projects generating new business. Through a multistage process, these ideas are further optimized into business plans. We are conducting innovation marketplaces and innovation boot camps to make these ideas public within the company, to optimize them further in multiple coaching and discussion rounds, and to give the idea champions a chance to recruit highly motivated team members who are interested in joining the innovation project team. This internal program is in its third year.

Very often the innovation ideas fall between different divisions and require expertise from many areas. It's exciting to bring all of these areas together through the Innospire innovation incubator. The project teams are supported and receive funding to follow through with the idea.

One project is a new tool that will help accelerate drug discovery. Another project is looking at using technology synergies between the chemicals and pharmaceuticals business units. Other projects are investigating new formulation technologies for poorly soluble compounds.

➔ **PV: How is the Innospire initiative different from "idea" competitions?**

BETZ: The Innospire program was inspired by what we saw in other industries. It is different from idea competitions in three ways. First, the idea doesn't stay at one level. Once the idea is submitted it is continually optimized in multiple evolutions and improvement cycles. The idea submitters also get training and support. The second difference is that not only is the idea dynamic, but the team is dynamic. Very often the project needs people with different skill sets to take it forward at different project stages. The process allows teams to be built on complementary skill sets, and the people needed for the various phases of the project are always there.

The third and maybe most important differ-

ence is that with Innospire, everything is based on voluntary contributions. A manager doesn't delegate a department member to serve on the project; rather, the project leads recruit and find the people needed and only those ideas survive that manage to enthruse people to work on them.

We also support the project teams with open innovation, technology forecasts, game changer workshops, and in-house innovation lunches.

➔ **PV: What is the Innovation Cup?**

BETZ: The Innospire project was so successful, we wanted to open it up outside the company and allow external know-how to flow into the company and capitalize on a better exchange of brain power that is available in the world.

The Innovation Cup is a one-week event in the summer that takes place near Frankfurt, Germany. The program allows students working on their Ph.D.s, master's diplomas, and MBAs a chance to get to know Merck Serono, to understand how R&D is conducted in the pharma industry, and to work on their ideas and develop those into a business plan.

We offer a 10,000 euro prize for the winning team presenting the most innovative and convincing business plan. We are always looking for good talent. If a project is interesting to the company, then there is an option that the team members will be offered a position to implement their idea with us.

We recently completed a pilot program of the Innovation Cup, and it was very successful. We've gotten excellent feedback from the participants. We have formed a LinkedIn alumni group where all of the participants can stay in contact with us and with each other. We also have scheduled telephone conferences with some of the participants to follow up on their projects.

At the moment we haven't officially announced that we will repeat it in 2012, but it is very likely that we will.

➔ **PV: Why did Merck Serono offer this program?**

BETZ: The topic of innovation is very important to



Dr. Ulrich Betz

us. We would like to bring forth to the market highly innovative new medicines benefiting patients in areas of unmet medical need.

We thought about what we could do that would be special and that hadn't been done somewhere else. The idea to combine different generations at the boot camp was inspired by the Merck group's slogan 'we think in generations,' which translates to thinking on a long-term basis. In this program, we brought the generations together to brainstorm, to share expertise and knowledge, and to come up with new ideas in diverse teams. We had three generations: we had top students from all over the world, we had active colleagues who work for Merck Serono, and we had retirees as coaches.

We want to position ourselves as top employers in the industry. The industry can only survive and produce innovation if it can attract the brightest people. The industry offers a chance for the brightest scientists to not just work on a research paper, which then disappears in the library, but on a project that could potentially change people's lives. **PV**



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UNITED STATES PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE

Grants TrialCard® Patent for Technology
that Optimizes Prescription Co-pay Cards



TrialCard announces the issuance of **U.S. Patent No. 7,925,531**

for technology that enables prescription Co-pay cards and coupons to adjust value based on a patient's insurance coverage.

TrialCard's **Adjusting Value™ co-pay card*** technology optimizes promotional programs that offer savings of "Pay No More Than..." or "Save Up To..." with a prescription Co-pay card.

Dave Cunningham, CEO and founder of TrialCard, says, "We are proud of our innovative technologies and look forward to continuing to provide solutions that meet the needs of our customers."

TrialCard has received a variety of patents for its solutions that improve patient access to medicines and facilitate patient reimbursement. The issuance of **U.S. Patent No. 7,925,531** is another example of TrialCard's recognized ability to provide ground-breaking solutions that meet the needs of patients and pharmaceutical marketers.

*U.S. Patent No. 7,925,531 awarded April 12, 2011

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