

Chapter 3

Introducing a Science-to-Business Marketing Unit to University Knowledge and Technology Transfer Structures: Activities, Benefits, Success Factors

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses two major challenges in academic entrepreneurship. First, rather than continuously questioning and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their knowledge and technology transfer (KTT) program, universities often get stuck in their day-to-day business. Second, unlike businesses, most research organisations do not base their strategy and operational activities on their research customers' demands, namely companies, and thus often miss to meet the needs of their market. Starting with a theoretical discussion on university structures and market orientation in KTT, this chapter presents the successful case of Münster University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) in Germany. Separating strategic, operational, and analytical-scientific activities, MUAS established a Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre (S2BMRC) which conducts various activities to optimise relationships between academia and business based marketing principles. The chapter details the centre's field of duties, benefits of having such a centre, and success factors in the formation and operation stage, thus giving insight for all those lacking a market-oriented KTT structure.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge economy, expectations on universities are no longer limited to research and teaching, but also include knowledge and technology transfer (KTT). While transfer activities, also known as the "third mission" of a university (e.g. Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), can be traced back a long time, policy changes in the 1980s and 1990s all over the world have significantly contributed to its development and importance today. One of the most known enablers of this movement is seen in the Bayh-Dole Act established in the United States in 1980 (e.g. Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Roper & Hirth, 2005). For several years, there has been a growing view that universities should be(come) a main source of knowledge and technology creation thus contributing to businesses and society in a meaning way (e.g. Goldstein & Luger, 1997; Marcure, 2004). This view nowadays becomes more and more predominant, particularly with regard to increasing global competition in many sectors. The view of a knowledge economy convinces policymakers of the necessity of university research and innovation activities for economic development and industrialization (Reddy, 2011).

While this development took a long time, terms such as "knowledge and technology transfer" and "(research) commercialisation" are gradually becoming more common in a university's day-to-day business (e.g. Bok, 2003), though a certain scepticism towards these tendencies admittedly still remains – particularly from the point of view of representatives from disciplines with less practical applicability of research (results). However, regarding businesses as one of the most important university stakeholder groups (particularly as source for financing research activities and equipment), in line with the change of university missions, a need to successfully manage relationships with businesses has been established.

With the emergence of universities' "third mission", we can continuously observe parallels

between traditional business and universities (e.g. Goldstein & Luger, 1997). Several authors regard universities directly or indirectly as companies or at least company-like organisations (e.g. Goldstein & Luger, 1997; Zinkl & Binet, 1997; Müller-Böling, 2007). While the necessity of student marketing has already been established in some institutions, increased economic and market-oriented thinking and acting can be observed in the context of universities as well. Therefore, to foster and promote university-business relations, many university managers, policy makers and researchers have developed a large variety of recommendations, policies, tools and best practices. Though, most universities still lack a well-structured and market-oriented KTT program though. Hereby, two main problems can be identified: First, rather than continuously questioning and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of third mission activities, universities often focus only on their day-to-day operations. While the *business of today* is crucial for short term success, strategically planning the future is important to participate in the *business of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow*. Second, unlike most business organisations, hardly any university bases its transfer strategies and operational activities on their research customers' demands, but rather on theoretical concepts, own opinions and/or experiences of others organisations. As a result, these universities often fail to fulfil the needs of their target market.

In line with the above problems in KTT, this chapter aims to provide insights into a specific way of dealing with a lack of market-orientation in academic entrepreneurship. To do so, the chapter presents the case of Münster University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) in Germany which successfully established a centre, namely the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre (S2BMRC), conducting market research in KTT and developing tools based on the data gathered. The main objective of the chapter is to make the reader familiar with the activities, benefits and

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