

Case Study 11.1. Business Developers and Matchmaking Events at Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA)

CRITICAL AREA OF FOCUS 1: “Scouting ideas/technologies from the PRO and incentivizing researchers to disclose IP”

BEST PRACTICE FOR: “Collaboration among TTOs”

AIMED AT: TTO/Researcher/Industry

UNIVERSITY: VU University Amsterdam (Netherlands)

TTO: Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA)



The context:

The **Innovation Exchange Amsterdam** is a collaborative technology transfer office formed in 2014 with around 40 employees for the Academic Medical Centre (AMC), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam (HvA), the Vrije University (VU) Amsterdam and the VU Medical Center (VUmc) Amsterdam. Those five research institutions cover the whole spectrum of academic research in the Amsterdam area.

Researchers with a new idea, invention or innovation raising up are encouraged to talk to the **Business Developers of IXA**, specialized in assisting the further development of the ideas. With expertise in business and market application, legal protection of knowledge and potential partners, they accompany researchers in generating new opportunities for invention disclosures and IP protection and help them finding the best commercialization route. Business Developers are specialized in different technological and expertise areas.

The problem:

For research to create a societal and economic impact, it is important to facilitate and **stimulate interaction between academic researchers and the industry**. Furthermore, researchers must be enabled to drive the transition from scientific discoveries to innovation on the market. Since research institutions work on many different fields and often not close to the market, combining the efforts among several research institutions might help to get a new view on research and its applications.

Another important opportunity to engage researchers in technology transfer is represented by the matchmaking events organized by IXA, VU University Amsterdam and Amsterdam Economic Board. They invited researchers and people from business for a **matchmaking event** with the aim to scout ideas and explore opportunities for research collaborations for new technologies. Several researchers from the VU Network Institute presented possible ideas of collaboration to the attendants. The VU Network Institute works on the combination of social sciences and humanities with computer sciences. These academic fields grow together, since both gain from using the others specific knowledge and tools.

The solution:

The **Innovation Exchange Amsterdam** is the combined technology transfer office for five universities and research institutes from Amsterdam which aims to bring together academic institutions with parties interested in their research findings and knowledge. For that purpose, it assists researchers in generating societal and economic impact from their work and help external parties to find relevant research.

After the event, eleven research-business collaboration proposals were sent in, with five of those awarded vouchers with 5.000€ each. These vouchers should be used substantiating a project, product or service based on the proposals made by teams of researchers and business people.

Finally, in terms of incentives for researchers engaging in collaboration, the Innovation Exchange Amsterdam organizes the Amsterdam Science and Innovation Award. The Award is an annual competition for the most innovative idea resulting from scientific research which has a social and/or commercial application. In 2015 (its 10th edition) over 70 researchers and students from Amsterdam's different universities and research institutes competed with innovation ideas. The projects were assessed in areas like innovativeness, societal/commercial/academic benefit, application and planned commercialization route. The winner, selected from 10 finalists, received 10000 euro as a prize.

70 researcher and students from several universities and research institutes participated at the **Amsterdam Science and Innovation Award 2015** with the winner being a collaboration of researchers from VU Amsterdam and Otoconsult N.V. and winning 10.000 Euros, another 1.000 Euros where for each the runner-up and a audience award winner.

Since the IXA is a newly founded TTO and the event took place recently, success rate of such events cannot be entirely determined yet. The vouchers went to projects that combined social and computer sciences and external entrepreneurs and researchers from VU University Amsterdam and therefore it appears to be rather successful.

Alignment to PROGRESS-TT:

This case is a good illustration of the "Collaboration among TTOs" Best Practice in PROGRESS-TT Critical Area of Focus 1 "Scouting ideas/technologies from the PRO and incentivising researchers to disclose IP".

While the vouchers are rather small, the matchmaking event brings together researcher and entrepreneurs to talk about possible collaborations, using technologies of the researchers and business skills of entrepreneurs. These **collaborations** are targeted on creating products out of technologies of the researchers.

This certain kind of event seems to benefit from the VU Network Institute of the VU University Amsterdam, which fosters research collaboration between researchers and might have an accelerator effect for business-research work.

Original from [VU University Amsterdam] Original release of [03 18 2016]. Last revised, [03 18 2016].

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