



SupBioEnt

Supporting biotechnology students oriented
towards an entrepreneurial path

O1 Success stories in European Biotech Entrepreneurship

Project n. 2017-1-RO01-KA203-037304

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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Introduction

The SupBioEnt - Supporting biotechnology students oriented towards an entrepreneurial path project is aimed at **decreasing the unemployment of European higher education graduates by increasing the level of successful Biotechnology graduates following an entrepreneurial pathway.**

The main SupBioEnt purposes are:

- developing innovation in Biotech higher education towards entrepreneurship by delivering five innovative intellectual outputs to be used by Biotech and Economics HE teachers and students in the educational process;
- developing entrepreneurial culture and skills of at least 220 Biotech and Economics students involved directly in the project activities by delivering two educational materials and one training programme;
- widening the inter-academic and academia-business cooperation in the field of Biotechnology by the involvement of at least four academic Biotech providers, one Economic university and at least 12 Biotech stakeholders.

This first project output, the **Success stories in European Biotech Entrepreneurship**, would like to be a collection of data and motivational information both for knowing the general existent situation in the Biotech fields and for sending a short and strong motivational message to the students and people with Biotech background or entrepreneurial affinities.



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Project partners

Faculty of Biotechnology/ University of
Agronomical Science and Veterinary Medicine of
Bucharest, Romania



University of Perugia, Italy



Romanian-American University, Bucharest,
Romania



Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain



UNIVERSITAT
POLITÈCNICA
DE VALÈNCIA

University of Leuven, Belgium



Tiber Umbria Comett Education Programme,
Perugia, Italy





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Alina Nanu - Evic Product Testing Romania

First and last name: Alina Nanu
Enterprise: Evic Product Testing Romania
Country: Romania



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

By no means of wanting to become an entrepreneur, I built my career based on the principles that rule my life: no compromise, fair play and the confidence that any limit can be overcome. Of very big importance for me are continuous education, experience and personal example, moreover, the belief that you can never know everything and that every person is valuable and can prove this in the right place. I trust in respecting everybody's needs. My entrepreneurial model are Bill Gates and Marie Curie.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

Biotechnology research began within a pharmaceutical company where my two passions - chemistry and computers - were harmoniously blended; this was the moment when I discovered a niche on the market and the chance to become a pathfinder in terms of clinical research of cosmetics performed at the highest level within the frame of existing international regulations



The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

Lack of legislation in the field, cumbersome collaboration with the authorities, lack of entrepreneurial training and the inherent difficulty of the pathfinder.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

Encourage biotechnology research through support measures at national level, better collaboration between private and academic environments, encouraging student participation in internship training.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The entrepreneur in biotechnology should be a scientific researcher with leadership skills, disciplined, very well informed and having the ability to create connections, networking.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Insist, never give up your ideas. Follow your dream.

The biotechnology entrepreneur should respect life in whatever form and should not forget that there must always be a balance between risk and benefit.



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Ionuț Moraru - ProNatura

First and last name: Ionuț Moraru

Enterprise: ProNatura

Country: Romania



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

My name is Ionuț Moraru and I am a doctor in medicine with competence in acupuncture and apiphytotherapy. I graduated the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" from Bucharest in 1982. At that time the dream of any medical graduate was to do surgery but also I was fascinated by Traditional Chinese Medicine (acupuncture, apiphytotherapy) and the other branches of medicine like geriatrics and gerontology. The principle that guided me in life as a doctor was: to alleviate the sufferings of others by any means.

The basic principle that guided me in business was fairness and the "pleasure" of doing new practical and innovative products, meeting new special people, new valuable ideas.

I did not have a successful entrepreneur model, but I was fortunate enough to have special lifestyle models: Anatomy professor Cezar Niculescu and Mr. Nicolae Iliesu, the inventor of Apilarnil (drone bee larvar triturate) who saw in me a passionate life scientist; chinese Master Wang in 1994 has influenced both the way I perceive energy-informational medicine and the importance of spirituality.

What I consider to be the most important in life, as heritage, for the two children (Rares and Radu) is education, the motivation to succeed in life through their own powers.



The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

Traditional Chinese medicine includes both acupuncture and medicinal herbs and bee products used for both preventive and curative purposes; from here was only one step of 30 years of work at the company "Medica Laboratories", which includes as a field of activity research and production of nutritional supplements, medical devices and dermaceuticals; we currently have two factories 3800 sqm at European standards (the third factory for probiotics being under construction); we have physico-chemical, microbiological and dermatological laboratories.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

The first obstacle was the lack of legislation in this field encountered at the beginning of the production, as well as the lack of adequate information for doctors and pharmacists; moreover, the reluctance of those to the acquisition of other types of products rather than medication.

Another obstacle was the lack of money to finance the development of production facilities, new products or new equipment and technologies.

Until 2008, the research was carried out in collaboration with various research institutes (ICA, ICCF, Marine Research Institute, etc ...). In 2008, we received European funding for the research infrastructure, which has changed the way we are working now, having the opportunity to co-opt biologists and biotechnology engineers into the research team.

In 2008 I received "Romanian Star", as a knight for scientific research work.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

The first change, which I consider inevitable for the future of these children, is the a mandatory period for at least two months per year to work effectively in profile companies, to be financially motivated during these periods and at the end of the practice to get qualifications; introducing management courses (ISO, HACCP ...), marketing, sales to broaden the practical knowledge horizon.

The second change I would consider simplification of the university curriculum, but including practical activities, simulations of entrepreneurial activities (creation of new products in response to market needs, production, distribution, promotion and sales, post-sales tracking).



The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The most important criteria in the life of an entrepreneur is the absolute belief in what he wants to do, accompanied by good professional training and sustained work. Neurosurgeon DeePak Chopra said that absolute desire can turn into success, so you can turn into reality what you want. Moreover, nowadays, when the effects of pollution and the abnormal contaminations with chemicals (food, cosmetics, drugs, polluted air, etc) are becoming more and more harmful, man needs to reinvent himself. Here comes the biotechnology which I personally consider is the science of the future.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

You have a beautiful and useful job for the humankind; Take advantage of the fact that you are currently on the "wave".

Start from the aspiration to achieve new, beautiful and practical things, even if, at first, you have the feeling that they are extremely difficult to achieve; with patience, you will receive both material and moral rewards, as a result of the accomplishment of your dreams. Good luck!



Raoul Mureşan - Transylvanian Institute of Neuroscience

First and last name: Raoul Mureşan
Enterprise: Transylvanian Institute of Neuroscience
Country: Romania



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I was passionate about building and repairing stuff ever since I was a kid. I used to build toy rockets and planes and then moved to the more serious business of repairing cars. My grandfather has been a model for me as he was also passionate about mechanics and technological design. Having a loving and caring family is in my opinion part of the success of an entrepreneur because it enables her/him to engage in the business just the right amount of emotion. Education is of course critical and one important part in my career has been played by my parents, who have inspired respect and curiosity for scientific research and for the wonders of biology/medicine. I initially trained as a computer scientist, at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, but was also drawn to biology. Understanding biological mechanisms was something very fascinating to me, so in the fourth year in college I started modeling neural systems by taking inspiration from my parents' neurophysiology book. Afterwards, I went on to do research at a private company and subsequently left for a PhD and postdoc to the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research and Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies in Germany. There, I trained as a scientist but also learned that beliefs and values are paramount to anyone's success. In my opinion they determine to a large degree one's ability to work in a team. The ability to assemble and inspire a team is critical to any development in the field of biotech. Having a strong and enthusiastic team was extremely important when I returned to Romania, ten years ago, and decided to work in a private research center that needed to be built from the very bottom up. With the experience we have gained, both in terms of administration and science, we finally



managed to set up the current research institute that is focused and dedicated to doing experimental neurosciences. Again, having a team of bright people and who shared the same passion for research was crucial in this endeavor.

The most important principle I value a lot in my personal life is to be honest to the others and sensitive to their needs. Realizing that our actions can have a dramatic impact on someone else's life and career should determine us to be careful and caring to each other and to try to understand each other's needs. As simple as this may sound, this principle is, at times, not an easy or comfortable one – but it can have dramatic consequences in daily life.

The most important principle which guide myself in business is Do NOT fail fast! As a scientist, my main driving force for what I do is curiosity and the thrill I find when we make a discovery. The main rule that guides me in science is in a way opposite to what people tend to teach you in entrepreneurship. They say that if you fail, you should fail fast! On the contrary, I consider that failure is not an option and that one should not fail fast. The biggest discoveries in science came because some passionate people were stubborn enough not to give up!

A model which inspires me is one of the most successful scientists in the field of Neurobiology, Stephen William Kuffler, who is considered the father or modern Neuroscience. In terms of mentorship and role modeling, I have a high respect for Wolf Singer and Danko Nikolić, who have both shaped my career to a large extent. All these scientists have in common a true and honest passion for the discovery of the mechanisms of the brain.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

When I returned in Romania, I have done it on the condition that I'd able to do research in similar conditions like abroad. I had a positive experience at the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies, a private institute in Germany founded by Wolf Singer, and I hoped that this could be replicated in our country. While experimenting with some private institutes whose mission was not very clearly defined in terms of scientific target, we realized that an institute targeted specifically on neuroscience research is badly needed. That was the reason to establish the Transylvanian Institute of Neuroscience (TINS) together with friends that shared this common interest.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

The largest initial obstacle was to leverage enough funding in order to establish a proper cash flow for the institute in the first months of its existence. Another difficulty



was to set in place all the administrative mechanisms to enable a research institute to function and to overcome all the bureaucratic procedures that are required in order to render the institute eligible for research funding. Today, the challenges also pertain to funding. In the absence of a large endowment, that is almost impossible to secure in Romania, a private research institute can only be funded via research grants. Research funding in Romania is scarce and unpredictable and therefore the only reasonable solution is to access European funding – but this is, unfortunately, also very hard to secure.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

I would change the awareness of the central authorities on the importance of science. Equally, I would change the perception of the private sector to understand that investment in fundamental and applied biotech research can lead to very profitable business on a medium and long term.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The foremost principle that, in my opinion, is the key to success is team work. One should also be humble and realize that intelligence and competence is not something owned exclusively by someone but widely spread in society. To be successful, one needs to involve and motivate people to build a company/institute as a team. This means that people will share both advantages and responsibilities. The worst strategy is to found a company seeking profit in the first place and keeping benefits for yourself. This is, most likely, not going to work, because a biotech company needs not only workforce but expertise and knowledge, which can only come from a well-prepared team that is motivated and involved. Finally, a critical aspect to success is that this team should be composed of curious and passionate people that can drive innovation. On the present markets, innovation is the driving force for any company's success.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Play a team game if you want to succeed!

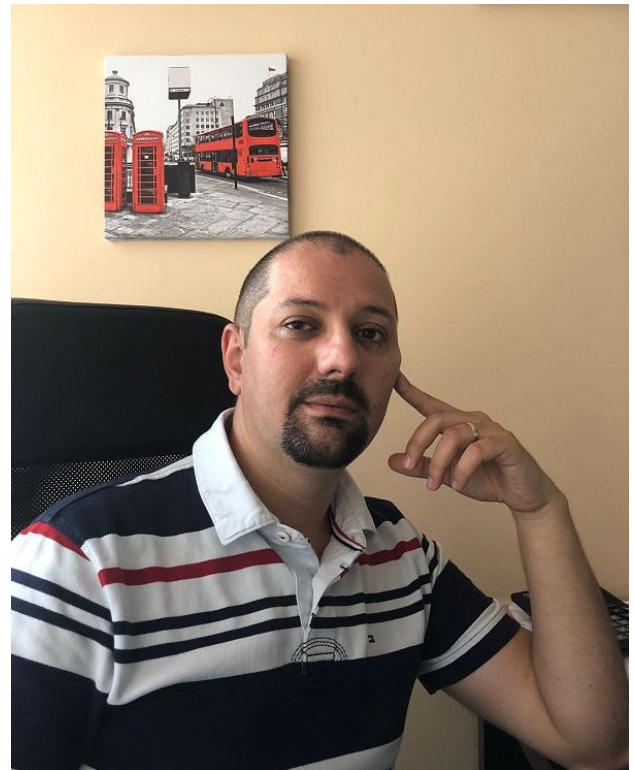


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Proca Irinel - Laboratorium Life Science

First and last name: Proca Irinel
Enterprise: Laboratorium Life Science
Country: Romania



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I'm married and I have one children, my studies allowed me to attain a Diploma in Ecology, a Master in Ecology, and a Third year PhD in Biotechnology. I believe in the work well done and my most important values are respect and trust.

The most important principle guiding me in my personal life is to trust my partner/family and accept it as it is.

The most important principle guiding me in business is to respect my business partners and be transparent to them if you want them to respect you so you can build a long term relation.

I don't have an entrepreneurial model which inspire me, I try to learn as much as possible from any of the people that I meet and use the values that I consider to be applicable for the specificity of my business.



The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

I can say that the business chose me in the first place and in the beginning it happened mainly by chance. After some time I start realizing the potential and by learning more of this activity I started to like it more and be more comfortable with it.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

In the beginning you have to learn some legal aspects, you have to understand how to act as an entrepreneur and what risks you have to take. Now the question that we have to answer is related to the size of the business because a bigger company generates more responsibilities.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

I would try to find a solution to encourage the academic community to start small clusters where they can relate with the industry or even became small pilot production sites. In this way the research will be combined with the result. We have to encourage any research group to start making a product that can be produced on large scale.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

Any entrepreneur should be dedicated, they should have a business plan so they can realize if the business is going to be profitable, they should be prepared to accept failure and continue.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

The work that you have to do for any business is hard but when you see the results and the end the satisfaction will be proportional to it.



Antonio Graziano - Human Brain Wave

First and last name: Antonio Graziano

Enterprise: Human Brain Wave

Country: Italy



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

The professional and life trip that push me to become a biotech entrepreneur begin first of all from the PhD in biotechnology on the study of isolation of stem cells by dental pulp. Through these studies I understood that cell isolation could be made easier by a mechanical action respect to the more long and complex enzymatic digestion. I think that the most important principle guide me in business are the creativity and the desire to always face new challenges. On the other side it was crucial to the winning of Urban Prize in 2006 for new enterprise because the award gave me not only a small amount of money to start but also a 6-months MBA-like academic Program to practically learn how to manage a company.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

The Human Brain Wave (HBW) is a biotechnology company focused on the development of medical devices and products for all fields of regenerative medicine from dentistry to aesthetic medicine. The company is to date the only owner of Rigenera technology, an innovative and promising protocol for the human tissue regeneration. This protocol is based on the use of a CE and FDA certified medical disposable Rigeneracons and the Rigenera machine and allows to obtain autologous micrografts ready to use. The HBW is always looking to build high-value strategic collaborations to create the next generation of regenerative products and has several research collaborations on some of its key projects with industrial and academic



partners, such as the University of Pavia and Turin. Furthermore, is equipped with an own research laboratory.

The first step to start this business was to look for partners who could make their contribution in terms of know-how for the development of the Rigenera technology.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

The main obstacles at the beginning of the business were above all of an economic nature. You need to have capital partners to start the business. Then the bureaucracy that is never simple when you want start a new activity. Today the main obstacle are the competitors already present in the market and for a young company like this, keeping up is essential to keep going.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

Italy is a country where the scientific research it is not much appreciated and then investments for this sector have been poor for years . If I could, I would change this trend by increasing the resources for research allowing to many people to develop an idea of business. which very often derives from the studies that researchers perform during their professional path.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

At first the creativity and the desire to go on despite the difficulties. Problem solving skills are essential to develop a successful business. Another key competence is to have a team that shares your ideas and helps you deal with difficulties.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Believe in your ideas and try everything possible to make them come true. Einstein said “the imagination is more important than knowledge”.



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Gianluca Cavalaglio – BioViridis Srl

First and last name: Gianluca Cavalaglio

Enterprise: BioViridis Srl

Country: Italy



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I'm an environmental engineer, then I attended a PhD in Energy Engineering and I had the opportunity to study more in depth biotechnology issues. I'm a researcher since more than 10 years in the Centro di ricerca sulle biomasse (Research Centre on biomasses) where we study bionergy and biofuels. Our enterprise was created one year ago and it's characterized by a strong synergy with University. This allowed us to overcome several obstacles as initial investments that have been amortize thanks to the facilitated rates with whom University rents us research and analysis laboratories, and other spaces.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

Our enterprise was created one year ago and it's characterized by a strong synergy with University. This allowed us to overcome several obstacles as initial investments that have been amortize thanks to the facilitated rates with whom University rents us research and analysis laboratories, and other spaces.

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The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship can be supported from changes in law with reference to biofuels, which are clearly more sustainable than the products obtained by fossil resources. However biofuels are also more expensive and so it's really difficult to promote them in the market, so a useful change in law could be the tax exemption.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

A key factor is the creation of transversal competences, which can be reached by outing together complementary competences able to face all the challenges linked to biotechnology sector. For example, an added value of our company is that of having not only engineers as key staff, but also biotechnologist and agronomists who work in synergy with them.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Try to widen international study or working experiences in other European countries, so to strengthen competences linked to teamwork and foreign languages, and to become open minded and aware of the different working methodologies in EU countries by cooperating with other researchers.



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Alessia Pellegrino - BeFood

First and last name: Alessia Pellegrino

Enterprise: BeFood

Country: Italy



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I work in the field of Animal Nutrition, I'm graduated in Sciences of Animal Production at University of Pisa. I worked for many years with big animals, now I'm in the sector of dog and cat nutrition as Factory Manager, where biotechnologies are really relevant.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

I'm not the owner of the enterprise but I followed its creation because of my role of technical responsible. I've been engaged in managing issues related to sanitary authorizations.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

Main obstacles, at the beginning and today, are linked to innovation. The economic sector we're working in is extremely fast in growing so it's really important to keep up with the customers' needs. We are producers, so we only create products and then



they are sold with other brands; anyway, there is the request for healthier products, similar to those used for human nutrition due to the strong humanization process of pets.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

To promote entrepreneurship in biotechnology sector in our country, it's necessary to facilitate companies' access to research resources and activities. This is fundamental for a company like the one I work with because there is a urgent need for innovation and growth.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

To develop a business in this sector the professional competence is fundamental. Technology and science have to growth together and this could happen only through permanent learning.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Do your best to discover and learn. These are the two verbs which can give us the idea of what is necessary for growing . Without the attitude to discover and learn, it's impossible to develop your competences not only at personal but also at professional level. And this don't allow us to create new job opportunities and to deal with a market characterized by strong competitors. You can always make the difference by looking for innovation and improvement.



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Francesco Valigi – Genelab

First and last name:

Francesco Valigi

Enterprise: Genelab

Country: Italy



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

The identikit of the perfect entrepreneur does not exist, just as there is no univocal way of doing business. Spontaneously, a path of innovation, analysis and critical thinking has begun, we have studied and interpreted technical knowledge initiatives; we carried out intensive weekly courses about biotechnology sector through innovative and multi-disciplinary teaching and learning approaches. We acquired also a set of relational skills essential for the companies, linked to critical and lateral thinking.

We often hear people say that anyone can become an entrepreneur. While it is true that the human being is naturally endowed with an extraordinary potential, it is also correct to be aware of the skills and personal traits necessary to tackle an entrepreneurial path and make a difference, for ourselves and our community.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

My business starts from a personal life experience. I was born in Perugia, then I started to contact companies located in Milan. I've had the opportunity to know several companies in the Biotechnology sector and I understood the great commitment they put in doing things and the obstacles they face day by day. So, I had the idea of doing business in the Biotechnology sector.



I participated in a call for grant even if I was very skeptic at the beginning because of the competition. Then I've been informed that I was eligible for funding and so I bought equipment and means to start selling biotech products.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

At the beginning it's really difficult to find money for the initial investment. Today the difficulty is looking always for new customers and keeping the old ones.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

In Italy, the challenges to promote the reforms aimed at supporting innovation and productivity are stronger because of a particularly difficult macroeconomic context, of a relevant competitive pressure from emerging countries and of rapidly evolving technologies and production processes. Over the last decade, Italy has accumulated a significant gap in terms of innovation and growth compared to most of its partners. Even before the global economic crisis of 2008-2009, Italy lamented a significant gap in terms of GDP. Research and development (R & D) activities are an important element of general investments in intangible capital.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The question that must be asked is why the Italian system has not invested enough in intangible capital, a factor that in other countries is driving of growth. Public policies play a key role in promoting and supporting the innovative efforts of companies. In particular, tax incentives to R&D have been an important mechanism for innovation and have been used extensively in several OECD countries; in Italy, on the other hand, public support for private investment in R&D focuses on direct investments without providing tax relief for R&D activities.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Graduate in time and find a small sector to develop with University's contacts and support.



Victoria Moreno - FactorStem S.L.

First and last name: Victoria Moreno

Enterprise: FactorStem S.L.

Country: Spain



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I do not think that you need to grow up in a “business” family, but it is true, that you need some personal skills, which I guess would be genetically acquired..., like initiative, not easily afraid to face challenges and extensive capability for personal communication.

If I have to choose one principle that guide myself in my personal life I will select satisfaction, its agglutinates happiness, honestly, enjoyable life and family and good performance on my professional life. However, if I have to choose a principle that defines myself on business I will select ambitious, for success you need to go always beyond the current state. It makes it easier if you have a reference that at least in part mimic or follow what you want to do, but it is not absolutely essential, you can have your own model.

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

To start up is the best moment, with a lot of enthusiasms, own confident and strong convincement of what you want and think is the best. All of these feeling moves up the start of the business.



The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

The beginning and later challenges are based in how much investments do you need versus the resources that you have. To have a realistic business plan helps on the beginning, and later, the association with expert partners.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

I will offer more training, make accessible good programs for business development to professionally instruct people with no experience and not background on it, but with a lot potential for exploitation from their corresponding specialties, like for instance, offering master programs or even do.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The more important and difficult step to start to develop or progress on the business is to get "clients" and for this purpose it is needed to market your idea as much as possible and in the best way. It is for me the most important and more difficult part to the way of success. The business idea is important, but how to developed it is more relevant to reach your goals.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

If you have an idea and if you have a plan for its development, do it!! If you are at this stage it is because you already thought about all pros and cons, so, you are the "expert" on it, with you enthusiasm you will have energy enough to complement your skills and move forward on the real market. Look for a good partnership, ask for technical advice and study the competence, and you will be part of it!



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Carles Cortes – CactusLoft

First and last name: Carles Cortes

Enterprise: CactusLoft

Country: Spain



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

CactusLoft was created only in 2010, but the idea of having a company to obtain and disseminate new varieties of cacti for collectors was the dream of my life. By time I was 13, I was already a collector of cacti and started to experiment mixing species and planting cacti to develop my own selection of cacti. My motto is “work on what you like and you will never have to ‘go to work’”

Little by little, my collection and production started growing such that my parents, who were always supportive, suggested me make a living out of my hobby. And that's how CactusLoft was born!

I ended up learning sales negotiation, management skills, and digital marketing to be able to manage my business on my own. But I had the best teacher I could have ever asked for: my father, who has a lot of experience in the complex world of business.

Currently, I define myself as a multitasker in my own business and my main rule is “to work”. The only place where success is ahead of work is the dictionary. I believe success is not possible without work. That is probably the reason why I have not been inspired by a successful business man. I rather go on step by step and enjoy the evolution of my business.



The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

As a cactus grower, I have constantly tried to look for new varieties, cultivars or particular forms to offer to my customers. These new plants usually generate a big interest among cactus collectors, and its prices reach high values in the market. Thus, I have always established as a challenge to obtain plants with differential and striking characteristics, but this is not easy to perform by crossing and/or traditional selection methods.

Taking advantage of my knowledge as a Doctor in Biotechnology, I began to apply in vitro culture techniques on materials that I had been selecting for years and the results have been very promising. In this way, CactusLoft has gone from being a common cactus nursery to a biotech company allocated to obtain new varieties of cactus.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

As usual, the main obstacle that I found at the beginning was to find financing to set up my project. I needed an instrumented laboratory and people that believed in my idea and in me.

Fortunately, Dr. Jaume Prohens and Dr. Adrián Rodríguez both researchers from the COMAV (Instituto de Conservación y Mejora de la Agrodiversidad Valenciana), UPV (Polytechnic University of Valencia) gave me the opportunity to set up this new line of work. And nowadays we keep on working together, not only trying to obtain new cactus varieties, but also with the aim to develop in vitro methodologies that allow to grow and propagate cactus species in danger of extinction, contributing to their ex situ conservation and/or facilitate the repopulation of threatened areas.

On the other hand, I would say that we are still facing today against a lack of financing. The biotech projects usually require an important initial investment and profit is not obtained in a short term. Investigation needs time and money, but it is not easy to enjoy both together.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

Probably, I would bring more facilities for the entrepreneurs, like training courses. Usually, the biotech students don't know how to manage a company, how to invest the money or how to make business properly. So it could be really useful to form and train them in these areas.



But above all, ease to obtain financing. There is a multitude of amazing projects that cannot be developed due to lack of initial capital. And this is a shame.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

The most important thing is believe in yourself. It is necessary to be aware that it will be hard, but if you have a defined goal and keep on working, all your efforts will be rewarded.

Furthermore, as I mentioned above most of students of biotechnology have a lack of knowledge in marketing, administration and management of a company. They are really good inside the laboratory, researching and writing scientific papers; but they are completely lost in the business world. And how to manage your company is the key to develop a successful business.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

"Tell me and I forget it, show me and I remember it, involve me and I learn it". (B-Franklin). So involve yourself in your own ideas, and finally you will learn a lot and get more than you expected!

Maybe it would be interesting to ask about how many times we have invested to get a profitable biotech company.

Obviously, the beginnings are really complicated and without external investments, research progresses slowly. We are in these hard first stages of development so that's the reason why our main source of income is still the cactus nursery. However, obtained results are very encouraging and we expect to take a qualitative leap in a short future.



Anda Burcea - Alchimie

First and last name: Anda Burcea

Enterprise: Alchimie

Country: Belgium



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

My mother's professional career, in the field of wine microbiology and genetics, have always fascinated me. When I was a child, I was macerating flower petals and plant roots: my grandmother's bathroom was like a lab with my "experiments". Following a high school of foreign languages I was first drawn to the faculty of political science, but found that I did not have a politician's temperament. So I decided to reorient myself to environmental policies, and pursued a Master in Environmental Biotechnology at USAMV Bucharest and one in environmental Management at ULB Brussels. Having some skills in informatics and also a predilection for video games, my first job was with the famous UBISOFT where I quickly became an area team leader. Later, an MBA in Paris in Internet and Multimedia helped me to become a production assistant on a television show at the Belgian national RTBF station: I was not able to continue in the video game industry because the field was not as developed in Belgium, where I had settled in the meantime. Remembering my childhood passion for experimenting and creating with Nature, I was inspired by the idea of developing my own spa business with my own brand of cosmetic products. I trained in the field of apiculture skin-cosmetic products under the guidance of specialists from Romania and Germany and then started an urban spa called "Alchimie"



Today I have a loyal clientèle that appreciates natural treatments based on bee products, herbal extracts, fruit acids, etc. Over the past 3 years, we have worked intensively to create a range of natural creams with detoxifying properties. and soon we will launch the Alchemie products. Our brand has already been registered in the Benelux.

I come from a family of university professors, with two generations dedicated to agricultural research from pasture to wine . Our family environment has always been a studious one and I view my efforts as a continuation of this tradition.

The most important principle which guides me in my personal life is "If you want to change something , don't be passive - work!" To do that, you have to look for answers, to question yourself and to constantly learn new things and to keep up with everything new.

In business, my guiding principal is "When you want to do something, learn from mistakes and do not give up. In business there are no failures, only experiences that show you the way. If you abandon hope you will not find the solution".

The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

There were several elements that gave me ideas. The quality of services provided in the field of body aesthetics in Brussels has been a great disappointment for me. The idea that the world wants a personalized approach to care, like "clean" cosmetics to better respond to new lifestyles, urban pollution, encouraging small scale production for cosmetics in the spirit of respect for the environment, the elimination of petrochemicals, etc. are just a few ideas that have inspired me to create a business around this area.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

The biggest difficulty is finding trained collaborators who are eager to progress. The vast majority of young people consider their job simply source of income for tomorrow and they do not want to get involved in business development.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

I do not think that changes to national politics are decisive, but the desire of everyone to put into practice personal ideals is not always obvious. In Belgium, there are



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"cooperatives" that help young people start a business, but the interest rates are quite high.

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Undoubtedly technical knowledge is decisive.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Return to nature.



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Nele Kindt - CoBioRes

First and last name: Nele Kindt

Enterprise: CoBioRes

Country: Belgium



My personal and professional path to become a successful biotech entrepreneur

I've been engaged in Scientific education and PhD, however always very clear that I wanted to go to industry. Also clear from the beginning to start industrial career in smaller companies, in order to learn as much as possible on all different aspects of decision making in a company.

The most important principle which guide me in my personal life is to keep a good balance between work and family and don't let them intermingle.

The most important principle which guide me in business is to stay focused and keep the bigger picture in mind, to stick to your strategy and milestones. This will also help to keep your team focused and motivated.

I don't have a specific entrepreneur model that inspired me, but learned a lot from interactions with former supervisors and bosses, where distance between management and employees was not big. Also learned a lot out of failures (both personal and previous company failures).



The reasons and the inspiration for starting my business

I did not start up the business myself, but stepped in at the time the company needed some reorganization and rethinking: put new strategy in place in order to assure the further existence.

The obstacles I faced at the beginning and the challenges I'm facing today

To implement a company mindset in a team that had no industrial experience, because performing research in a company needs a different approach as compared to university. It is also difficult to put together a good team, combining different expertise and allowing constructive discussions.

The changes I would like to do in my Country to encourage the biotechnology entrepreneurship

To emphasize this option more during university training. Everything is too much or mainly focusing on science, while a bit more stimulation of economical thinking could prove to be very useful.

The attitudes and the key competences an entrepreneur has to have to develop a successful business in biotechnology

A sound background in science and development, in order to understand the drawbacks and potential issues that pop up during the course of a project.

Be realistic in setting timelines and milestones.

Being eager to learn more about entrepreneurship: actively looking for trainings/events that broaden your horizon and expertise.

Having a broad network, which helps you to identify or approach potential KOL, investors, etc.

My recommendations for biotechnology specialists

Don't be afraid to start and face a challenge: with the right people and mindset you will succeed, even though it will not be a walk in the park.



Co-funded by the
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Project n. 2017-1-RO01-KA203-037304

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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