

PraxisUnico 2017 Conference Session Notes

B2 - Driving growth and innovation beyond the university context

The UK Research and innovation system comprises a range of research intensive organisations that work alongside universities to drive innovation, productivity and growth. Many people working in research intensive organisations have experience of working within a university KE and technology transfer setting. Is it really a different world?

This session, chaired by Karen Lewis, BBSRC highlighted the personal experiences of professionals from a range of different environments, providing insight into the differences, similarities and how the working practices are complimentary.

Peter Oakley provided an overview of the landscape around innovation within the UK and how AIRTO members typically sat in the TRL 3-7 bridging between University and Industry. Peter highlighted some of the key players, current priorities, opportunities and challenges.

Martino Picardo talked about his background, working in both universities and Research & Innovation Organisations (RIOs). Martino talked about his journey at the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, its growth over last 5 years, the future and the impact of proximity and density of world leading companies both international and start-up has led to a world-leading innovation hub.

Adrian Davis-Johnston provided an overview about innovation at a National Lab and how the innovation culture in the Nuclear Industry is challenging but slowly changing. Adrian provided examples of this culture change through two innovation initiatives, namely Innovus a technology commercialisation programme responsible for engagement with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises SMEs, in Cumbria and a Sellafield Ltd Game Changers programme which looks for impactful technologies for nuclear decommissioning.

The conference session identified a number of differences, similarities and complimentary practices irrespective of the delegate affiliation (University or Industry). The audience were broadly split between University TTO's and industry commercialisation business units. The main messages to come out of the conference were focused around:

- Engaging with industry early to align any research / technology offering with industry need
- The drivers and timelines of industry were likely to be different to that of the university sector and that the role of the commercialisation person was challenging
- There was a strong willingness for industry and academia to work together which was driven by the desire to take new products to market to give a company a market lead to create impact as well as financial benefit. Universities were driven to create impact as well as the financial returns.
- It was important that early on in an industry /academic collaboration there was clarity on the motivations, drivers and internal processes as this was perceived as a cause for unnecessary frustrations / delays.
- TTO's in both industry and academia face similar challenges within their organisations to drive new technologies through current internal processes.