



OI INSPIRATIONAL CASES



CO-DEVELOPING NEW PRODUCTS WITH UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM OPEN INNOVATION PARTNERS

AlphaBio Control's strategy is to drive its projects from ideation to commercialization thanks to various upstream and downstream partnerships. Their experience shows how open innovation has to be considered as a dynamic process which is aligned to the needs of a project at specific points in time. This means that new product lines need to be developed in different stages under a different focus until they are ready to go to market. By extension this implies that partnerships often change as the project matures.

- AlphaBio Control was founded in 2011 to commercialize the agri-tech ideas of Italian agricultural scientist, Alfeo Vecchi.
- It is a British/Italian company registered in the UK with its headquarters in Cambridge and its principal commercial office in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia.
- The company operates at the forefront of agricultural science in developing and commercializing effective, sustainable crop protection solutions which comply with today's stricter environmental norms.
- AlphaBio has a full portfolio of products originating from discoveries made at the convergence of natural chemistry and microbiology.

The Origin of the Open Innovation Collaboration

The company was financed at the start entirely by its four founding partners and focused on the development work already undertaken but not completed by their research director, Alfeo Vecchi. The first stage was to look at how to generate income from his ideas and fund their activities. Technology development took place around 3 pillars: natural chemistry, hybrid technologies and microbiology.

The SME established teams of people to work on the three pillars from universities and companies in Italy and the UK. Their work was funded either by the company's own resources or through UK government R&D grants. Despite the commercial risks involved, the founders were convinced that their company's USP had a promising future as today's agri-food industry is confronted with the need to become environmentally sustainable. This is because AlphaBio's know-how and IP in natural chemistry and hybrid technology enables it to develop crop protection solutions derived from natural sources which offer comparable resistance to disease and pests as that provided by synthetic chemical products.



are negotiating what each can contribute to the collaboration: as AlphaBio Control has the basic data on the natural chemistry, their contribution will be to develop the regulatory application. The partner company, on the other hand, holds data on the synthetic chemistry and access to it in regulatory terms. The latter will also contribute a major part of the financial backing for the commercialization phase, while AlphaBio Control will receive an upfront fee calculated on the value of the regulatory work. In parallel, the SME is negotiating royalty fees based on revenue streams.

Impact of the OI Collaboration

Its experience of open innovation projects has helped the company develop skills in managing collaborative dynamics. Starting from the initial idea, it has learned to progress steadily through the different stages of a radical innovation process in which open innovation targets and partners can change over time. Thanks to the honed interpersonal skills of Alfeo Vecchi, the company has been able to build a network of relationships and impose its work ethics. These put an important focus on trust and integrity, making sure that they look after the people they work with. In the case of building new alliances, the SME highlights its ability to listen to researchers and understand their unique offering. AlphaBio Control's task is to use their technical understanding and combine it with their own commercial know-how and direct it towards a market opportunity.

Since it was established, AlphaBio Control has filed several patents. The company is still relatively early-stage and the revenues they are generating, although limited, are beginning to accelerate. Its priority is to continue to work towards securing a large, strategic industrial partner to help take forward their technologies to the commercialization stage and thereby achieve a major impact on the company's bottom-line.

IAIN FLEMING
CO-FOUNDER & CEO

OI IS UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM

This SME started its business by piggybacking on its founder's established contacts and research work. By necessity, the company has become involved in managing a range of different OI relationships both upstream and downstream.

BUILDING OI RELATIONSHIPS IS AN ART

Skills in maintaining complex relationships upstream with other scientists/technology partners and downstream with market partners are often linked to the abilities and dynamic personality of a key member of the company.

GROWING THE BUSINESS THROUGH OI PARTNERSHIPS

The resources of small companies are often too limited to do everything on their own – both in terms of staff and funding – so they must therefore manage their network successfully in order to build their business.



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