

Remarks by Cheryl Cejka, Director, Technology Commercialization, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
ACS/ WCC Women and Entrepreneurship
Innovation and IP Panel
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Question 1: Fortunately, creativity and innovation are not limited by gender. However, each step in taking an innovation from idea to patent to license can be fraught with decisions impacted by gender bias. How does a female entrepreneur navigate this path efficiently and effectively and how might her strategy and tactics differ from those of a male entrepreneur/would-be entrepreneur? Please consider issues such as determining the lead inventor on a patent, working with your research institution's tech transfer office and/or that of a corporate licensee, managing the negotiation process as licensor or licensee, etc.

1. First off, an inventor or innovator is not necessarily well suited to be an entrepreneur and vice versa. Often I find that the skills needed to be successful at one vs. the other are quite different, although there are some skills common to both.
2. I'll focus on the successful inventor. And, by the way, in answering this question, I asked for input from other women, successful inventors/investors, and entrepreneurs alike.
Some suggestions:

- Keep excellent notes from early on in the R&D project/invention process, including your specific role in the invention(s).
- If you are the lead inventor, don't be afraid to take the lead – and initiate the discussions with your institution's technology transfer or licensing office.
- Keep co-inventors informed and involved in the process of commercialization and patenting. Acknowledge all contributions; strong team communications are key to innovation!
- Don't give up on a great idea that you believe is technically achievable and that can have great impact. This includes a great deal of time, getting and keeping others enthused! Advocate/champion/persuasion are key.

I think the above can apply equally to men and women, though I see far fewer women than men as inventors.

Question 2: Negotiation is the linchpin of commercializing IP, regardless of whether you are the licensor or licensee, and yet there is little formal training available to most technical women. How did you develop this skill as a woman and what would you recommend to our I2V participants do to develop this critical skill?

1. In terms of negotiation, this is a critical skill in many career fields. At DOE National Labs, our scientists and engineers are not responsible for leading licensing negotiations, but do participate on the negotiation team.
2. Negotiation skills can be learned, and there are many excellent training courses for this purpose. Among others AMA, LES, AUTM all offer courses.
3. In addition, an excellent venue for learning about negotiation is doing public speaking, or by getting practice in pitching or selling something.
4. Be clear! Let people know what you want. Sometimes, women have trouble specifically asking for what they want, and in particular asking for money. Important to be willing to be specific about what you want and why.

5. In terms of gender bias, several women I spoke with (and I have seen this at times myself) talked about having to earn their credibility with a new group, walking into a room of strangers, etc., versus a crowd conferring instant credibility on a man in a similar circumstance until he says or does something to make them think otherwise. I think this has generally become less prevalent, as more and more women assume leadership roles.

Other suggestions:

1. Talk about bias issues. Confront an inequitable situation immediately and address assumptions about women to create awareness.
2. Be visible – show your competence, seek high level assignments, speak up at meetings, and find a mentor who can help make you more visible.

Key Message Summary: Please provide the audience with the one single Main or Key Message you believe is most important for a woman to be successful in developing, protecting and negotiating IP. Then please explain why this is so important and provide some insights into your selection.

1. Do your homework! Most important! You need to understand competing technologies, state of the art, industry you work with or are targeting for your inventions. Doing your homework also means aggressively building your network and your visibility in your field.
2. Understand your objectives, your role and resources potentially available. You are your own Business! Understand your audience(s)!
3. Plot a course drawing in other team members who are good at skills that you may not be and relentlessly persevere