

Summary of Q and A Panels

Market and Idea validation Panel Q&A:

- ❖ **What if you're "ahead of the market"? Is this a problem?**
 - NO, make it a benefit! *Show* the long term benefit. But remember that no one will pay more for a new idea. Show your cost is better than what exists today and so is your performances – based on what the market needs – even if you are in a “green” space, no one wants to pay more.
- ❖ **How do you respond to “if it’s such a great idea why hasn’t it been done”?**
 - Focus on explaining how you would position this idea for a given market and why it IS a good idea.
 - Try not to get combative or augmentative; just reiterate your point in new words. Stay on YOUR message.
 - Focus on demonstrating market demand – NOW.
- ❖ **When do you create a “business” incorporate or LLC and when do you start funding it? How do I get this all done?**
 - As soon as you have an idea and believe you’re a business – act like one and create one!
 - It’s important to have a business and not “hobby” mindset, so starting the business makes sense.
 - You don’t have to do everything alone – in fact, you can’t! So find help and those who have a passion about it as you do and see how they can help and what it will cost. \$, equity, what?
- ❖ **How do I know if I really have something and it’s “worth” pursuing?**
 - Develop a market construct and idea and go and test it. If people (potential customers) say “no interest” find out why so you can refine your offering, your pitch or both.
 - Have a very positive attitude about your product – not arrogant, but confident and positive.
- ❖ **How do I ask for \$\$\$?**
 - Be sure you are coming from a place of integrity with yourself and your offering
 - Believe in the value of BOTH yourself and your offering.
 - Be sure you can explain the value both your offering and you bring to your customers and your investors.
 - REMEMBER – you are always able to create new wealth – you are *not* limited.
- ❖ **What if you don’t have \$\$\$ to hire a team?**
 - Find others with your passion about the idea with different skills and “share the wealth”.
 - Remember that VC’s want to know that you are the leader – or if you’ve put someone else in charge what your role actually is.
 - Find others who can help with alternate roles through your Tech Transfer Office, if you are government or academe.

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Finance panel:

- ❖ **Is it valid to pursue multiple funding sources at the same time?**
 - ABSOLUTELY YES!
 - Get advice as to what is best for your situation: VC, angel, SBIR, etc. and prioritize
 - Aim for non-dilutive government funding if you can and if you fit
 - No strings attached
 - SBIR/STTR can add credibility to your venture and work
- ❖ **Are all SBIR's "equal"?**
 - NO! Each Agency has its own flavor with different goals, timing, \$ amounts.
 - For example, NSF is general seed funding overall while NIH has more health related requirements
- ❖ **Is all \$ equal? Is there such a thing as good or bad \$?**
 - NO, all \$ is not equal and there is good and bad \$.
 - If you get a sense that the terms or situation is not "right" for you, then it isn't and back away...graciously.
 - Be sure the investors understand YOU and YOUR vision and you know HOW they can help you attain it.
- ❖ **What is expected from SBIR funding?**
 - That you do what you said you would in the proposal.
 - Stay within the funding restrictions for the award
 - Remember there are two phases and each has different requirements
- ❖ **What is the role of the Founder when you get funding and can it change?**
 - The role of the founder can always change.
 - Be "flexible" with respect to your role and business plan or this can be a red flag for investors
 - You may *not* be the CEO going forward, and that is okay.

IP and Negotiation Panel:

- ❖ **How can a grad student learn more about the IP process and their role and rights?**
 - Talk with your advisor and Tech Transfer Office
 - Speak with a patent attorney but remember – all rights are spelled out in the agreements between the university and the inventors. The University owns the rights to the patent under Bayh-Dole.
- ❖ **How can anyone learn more about IP and their rights in an organizational setting?**
 - If in academe or government, speak with your tech transfer office
 - If in industry, this is usually in your work agreement, but check and ask
 - There are many online general resources
 - Organizations such as AUTM and LES as well as local law firms
- ❖ **What is the timing for patents and having a product come on the market?**
 - Remember – faster to market and revenue is better!
 - There is no real value in getting to market before or after an issuance BUT BE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING COVERED THROUGH the PATENTING PROCESS.
 - If you commercialize before the patent issues, you may require a renegotiation after wards *if* the patent fails to issue or important claims are altered or not allowed.

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- ❖ **Is there a preferred timing for negotiating my role and rights with the University?**
 - Negotiate up front and know from the onset what you do and do not own and the rights and role you have. If not, it may get “messy” later on.
 - Check laws in your state and rules at your University. Not all states and universities are the same.
 - Be sure you know how your role in the start-up – if any – will impact your academic position and be comfortable with it.

- ❖ **Is there a preferred or more “successful” tone when negotiating?**
 - Find a way that for you in a balance between aggressive and non-engaged and cool.
 - Figure out who is opposite you in the negotiation and “match” their style and determine what they want.
 - Stick with the facts – terms, roles, etc. Don’t get emotional.
 - If you feel someone is being unreasonable, try to figure out why they are taking this position so you can get around it.
 - Take time to determine what each side “must have” for success, their style and develop a position and style that complements. Stay flexible and listen.
 - Determine how to value technology in your area so you have a *realistic* sense of what it is worth.
- ❖ **If your business is not research based, there is no IP and you are in a University can you simply do what you want?**
 - Check your conflict of interest clauses in your employment agreement and be sure what the requirements are around timing, disclosure, etc.
- ❖ **What are some overall “words of wisdom” on IP?**
 - Have your IP ducks lined up before seeking funding. Be sure you know your rights and role before you do anything.
 - Don’t feel you personally need to have all the answers. Seek advice.
 - Do your homework. Know the industry your work fits into, what the market says it needs and what your solution is worth, build a network and visibility. Understand your objectives in the negotiation and for the business – short and long term.

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