



Conversations on the *Cutting Edge*

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Thoughts from the INPEX Conference

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INPEX, America's largest Invention & New Product Exposition trade show, is a forum for inventors to exhibit their inventions and make contacts with companies interested in licensing, marketing or manufacturing new products. In conjunction with the trade show held in June of this year, INPEX hosted its inaugural Open Innovation conference. I found the conference to be quite refreshing ... in particular the degree of candor and specificity of speakers in answering attendee questions.

In my recent thought pieces I remarked on how open innovation is benefiting R&D productivity but is not yet benefiting growth. Also, the critical importance of the human system in making truly innovative concepts a commercial success. At INPEX I shifted my attention to the changing role of business intermediaries in the growth creation value chain.

Most of us are familiar with Innocentive, NineSigma, and Inno360 - intermediaries that source solutions and solution providers to specific technology challenges. Most of us already have an appreciation for the critical role venture capital plays in brokering relationships among start-ups and key players in their broader ecosystem. The following are some newer forms of intermediaries:

Highlights and Key Takeaways:

Clorox discussed their low friction path for inventors and start-ups. It has contracted with a 3rd party, Evergreen IP, to act as an intermediary. The Clorox brands brief the professionals at Evergreen on their strategies for stretching the brand. Evergreen owns the inventor relationship and acts as a gateway. With Clorox, it has established pre-agreed deal terms including timing, royalties and options. With start-ups it provides standard terms and conditions, patent landscape, and acts as the pitchman into Clorox. Evergreen's business model is based on a royalty structure on deals, and the ability to offer its portfolio to other companies if Clorox signals no interest.

InventHelp described ways it provides one-stop services for private inventors attempting to submit ideas to industry. It has a variety of channels for linking companies with inventions including INPEX, and a database registry. InventHelp, as an intermediary, provides a standard of IP protection to inventions. It also provides inventors with access to patent services, virtual prototyping, 3-D modeling, and an inventors' university.

P&G During a sidebar with Nick Nikolaidis, North American Innovation Ecosystems Manager, I learned more about P&G's collaboration with university systems in states such as Michigan and Ohio. P&G has evolved from contracting with researchers on a one-off basis to putting in place standard terms & conditions with an entire state-wide university system. Licensing specific research is then

significantly expedited with no need to re-visit understandings around IP protection. So the university system is now intermediating with its individual researchers.

If I were to boil it down to a key takeaway from INPEX, this would be it ... you can step-up your growth and innovation efforts through the thoughtful leverage of intermediaries. I expect this segment of the innovation eco-system to significantly evolve in the next 2-3 years.

For more insights into implementing Breakaway Growth & Business Innovation

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