The project brief

To run a series of seminars bringing in notable successes from the UoS spin out community, as well as founders of engineering start-ups. These seminars were to be of the individual experiences the companies witnessed in early stages. The intention was to show the wider engineering community how engineering ideas crystallize into a business. Although creating a business is only one element of enterprise, the series challenged the audience to think about engineering as an enterprise. The audience were undergraduates and researchers in Chemical & Biological Engineering.

Key impacts

Key impacts have been to raise the profile of entrepreneurship. The stories the guest speaking entrepreneurs shared helped to make the concepts of enterprise and entrepreneurship relevant to new potential entrepreneurs.

Outcomes observed

Informal feedback was taken from individual attendees. Each of the presentations was considered highly relevant and interesting. That all the presentations were directly related to the University of Sheffield made the content more pertinent. The attendees were better informed about the potential pitfalls of a new business, especially one closely aligned to the University.

These speakers were highly relevant to anyone thinking of starting a business out of the University. They all also gave a candid view on the UoS spin out process.

The legacy

The concept of enterprise thinking will remain but wider engineering participation will be required. The talks are better used as part of an overall programme such as an entrepreneur’s course. It was a mistake to run them in the Spring - they would be better placed in the Autumn. In future, they need to be linked to a faculty not a department as there was little or no uptake outside the department of CBE.

Enterprise

The enabling of six disparate businesses from an idea based within the University to actually generating revenue.

1st October 2013
Innovation

Each idea was considered new and therefore innovative and the founder recognised that there was a potential market for the idea.

Presenter Profiles

Mr Chris Kirby - Managing Director of Magnomatics, a spin out from the University of Sheffield Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Magnomatics has grown to £1.6m turnover developing significant opportunities in the aerospace, hybrid vehicles and marine propulsion sector using their patented magnetic transmission systems.

Phil Harper – CEO Tribonsonics Ltd who design, manufacture, supply and install high end ultrasonic platforms and low-cost monitoring systems across many industrial sectors in the area of tribology (friction and lubrication).

Sameer Kothari – Formerly CEO of Plasso and currently of Zilico. Plasso utilizes functional coating technology for applications in glycomics and cell culture and was sold to a US company in 2007. Zilico make and market testing equipment for diagnose of cervical cancer.

Nigel Allinson – Professor of Image Engineering at the University of Lincoln and formerly of the University of Sheffield has created several companies throughout his career at Sheffield and before his arrival, notably at York.

James Huntingdon – SEAMS Ltd develop and supply intelligent asset planning software so that infrastructure companies and infrastructure projects can make better life-cycle decisions on assets saving time and money to achieve strong and sustainable financial performance.

Paul Thomas – MD and owner of Mycorrhizal Systems, a company founded on significant technological advances in the cultivation of the black truffle.

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