



Coaching of high-tech pre-starters: the SO Kwadraat experience.

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Objectives of SO Kwadraat

- ❖ Coaching of high-tech pre-starters.
- ❖ Valorisation of PhD research through Spin-Off creation.
- ❖ Stimulation of high-tech entrepreneurship.
- ❖ Stimulation of collaboration between high-tech starters.

Organisation

- ❖ 7 coaches.
- ❖ Kroonraad (Peter Heller, Piet Vandendriessche, Johan Vermeiren, Hendrik Van Maele,...).
- ❖ Board of directors with independant director.
- ❖ 7 industrial sponsors.
- ❖ Business Club.

How we work

- ❖ Intake: through spread of word, Innovationcenters and press.
- ❖ Selection criteria: motivated team.
- ❖ Start of the coaching process.
- ❖ End of the coaching process: visit to the Notary.
- ❖ Business Club.

Coaching process

- ❖ Study and analysis of the technology.
- ❖ Composition of a “dream team”.
- ❖ Define a business concept, using the technology.
- ❖ Gather market information (visits, presentation to CEO's).
- ❖ Iteration of the business concept.
- ❖ Writing of a business plan and attraction of capital.
- ❖ Business start-up.

Lessons learned (1)

- ❖ Build a company based on market feedback:
 - Make many visits to potential customers.
 - Go to the market in an early phase.
 - Build up market intelligence.
- ❖ Select your own team, based on people you trust.
 - A team of at least 2 people is advised.
 - Align your long term objectives.

Lessons learned (2)

❖ Team:

- Equal share distribution (e.g. 50/50).
- Equal salaries.

❖ Cash management is key.

❖ IP protection & ownership is key.

❖ Combine product development with services

- A product company has a high risk.
- Compensate this risk with consulting services.

Lessons learned (3)

❖ VC's:

- Try to attract smart money.
- VC's are not aligned with a start-up!
- Company survival rate goes down significantly.

❖ General:

- A researcher can become an entrepreneur in 3 to 6 months after intensive coaching.

Results

- ❖ 2005-2015: creation of 107 high-tech companies (100 are operational today).
- ❖ These companies employ 700 people directly (1400 indirectly).
- ❖ All companies are active on the european market, 50 are active on a world-wide market.
- ❖ 2015: currently 60 projects in coaching phase.

Examples (1)

- ❖ ICsense N.V. (Esat, KUL)
 - 4 dr.ir's, CEO Bram De Muer.
 - Analogue IC design.
 - Digital design.
 - 55 employees.
 - World-wide activities.



Examples (2)

❖ Mu-Technologies (U Antwerpen)

- Founder = dr. Wim D'Haes.
- Musique software for live performers
- 3 employees
- World-wide active through e-commerce and dealers



Examples (3)

❖ MagCam (Imec)

- Founder = dr. Koen Vervaeke (Ex-Imec)
- Camera for magnet field inspection
- Cryogenic hall sensors.
- 5 employees.
- World-wide active.





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