

Transition of an academic start-up: From public to private – Expert interview from a start-up from the Czech Republic

Marcel Rolf Pfeifer^{a,*}

^a *Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Business and Management, Department of Management, Kolejní 2906/4, 612 00 Brno, Czech Republic*

Abstract

Purpose of the article In order to bring new ideas and technologies from an academic background to a private sphere, universities try to promote academic start-ups. These start-ups might have its basis in an academic research group that develops towards a private profit-driven company. With rising size, start-ups may have to transfer from an academic research background towards a private-company management approach. For this, start-ups have to overcome several internal and external obstacles, also with respect to the current transition towards industry 4.0.

Methodology/methods The research is based on a single company qualitative approach. This study is conducted in an academic start-up that is a registered private company since seven years. With the help of expert interviews with all employees in the company that have been employed for longer than two years, the research wants to find patterns on issues and obstacles for this category of objects.

Scientific aim Academic start-ups have been researched from various areas, comparing them with non-academic start-ups and with established SMEs. There seems to be a research gap in the managerial implications during the transition phase from academic to private sphere. Thus, this paper wants to have a look on how a Czech academic start-up targeted its way towards being an established SME.

Findings The results showed different obstacles based on the area of working in the company. While the company management focused on establishing a reporting structure, non-academic sales and marketing staff fully revised all propagation materials. The academic technical staff felt an increased pressure on time and results.

Conclusions The ambivalent outcomes of this one case analysed show that the transition task for an academic start-up requires a thorough management. As transition is supposed to take time, and all interviewed agreed on that, it shall be handled as a project, by substituting academic elements by private-business habits. However, an obstacle for this remains the close relation of the academic start-up to research and development and the possibility to gather research grants for financing the transition and the further working.

Keywords: Start-up, Academic, Transition, Private Company, Management, Transition Management, SME

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: pfeifer@vutbr.cz.