

Transferring University Technology into Commercial Practice

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Abstract

University research serves many purposes: to advance our knowledge of fundamental and applied science; to educate students for valuable careers in society; and to create new technologies that can be the “engines of our economy.” Over the past 10 years, Universities have put a lot of energy into encouraging the latter role of transferring technology into commercial practice. Surfx Technologies is one example of a University spin off. The company licensed from UCLA the invention of a low-temperature, atmospheric plasma source, and is developing several applications in advanced materials. We have found that there are several keys to successfully growing a small business: (1) be market, not technology, focused; (2) customers are your future, listen to them; (3) let cash flow dictate your growth; and (4) build a strong team. We have also found that University inventions require a tremendous amount of development before they can be introduced to the marketplace. For Surfx, the Small Business Innovative Research program (SBIR) has been invaluable in helping us commercialize new products. At the meeting, I will discuss our experience with SBIR grants, as well as the challenges of running a small business.