

THE WESSEX PHENOMENON

A Case for Replication
University of Lodz – October 2003

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Executive Summary

The Wessex Phenomenon centrally involves Business Link Wessex (BLX) and includes:-

- Wessex Innovation Service that assesses 200+ inventions per annum
- Three inventors clubs that provide prototyping facilities
- The Virtual Company (TVC) concept to support high growth technology businesses. 40 new businesses created through TVC
- Government grants – 130 projects supported - £6.3 million grants
- Links with investors – private and institutional

It works because it is all joined up



Wessex Innovation Service

Wessex Innovation Service

- Primary responsibilities – to identify, nurture and support invention and innovation
- One to one business counselling
- Promotion through intermediaries – accountants, bank manager, lawyers
- Introductions to advice agencies re funding etc
- Organises regional innovation competition
(2003 – 55 exhibitors - £35,000 in prize money)
- Team manager plus two part-time assistants plus secretarial support



Inventors Clubs

- Three in Wessex area – Isle of Wight, Southampton and Bournemouth
- Talk shops versus workshops!
- The links with Southampton Institute

Wessex Round Table of Inventors Club – Southampton Institute

- £50 per annum
- Access to workshops and staff
- Dedicated room to assemble prototypes
- Monthly meetings on specialist subjects – e.g. intellectual property protection, grants and awards, visits to R&D establishments etc
- Small active committee
- Business Link provided support including creation of constitution, confidentiality agreements etc.



Business Link Wessex

One of 45 business advisory centres funded by the Department of Trade and Industry Small Business Service

- BLW – 140 employees providing expert advice in all major business sectors including export, finance, innovation and technology, network broking etc
- Service Wessex area – Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Dorset with 67,000 VAT registered companies
- Effective links with regional Government (SEEDA) plus grant providing groups (Small Business Services, NESTA, EC etc)
- Regular involvement with HEI's – Bournemouth/Southampton/Portsmouth universities
- In contact with leading research groups in area (IBM, Roke Manor, QinetiQ)
- Active collaboration with business federations including Farnborough Aerospace, British Maritime Federation, Chamber of Commerce and Engineering Employers Federation, etc



The Virtual Company



Executive Summary

- The Virtual Company (TVC) is a collaboration agreement between a lone inventor and a team of experts. The experts work at no cost but in exchange for virtual shares. When funds are secured the virtual shares become real shares. Business Link Wessex (BLW) has set up 40 micro-businesses through TVC, the majority of these have gained Smart awards.

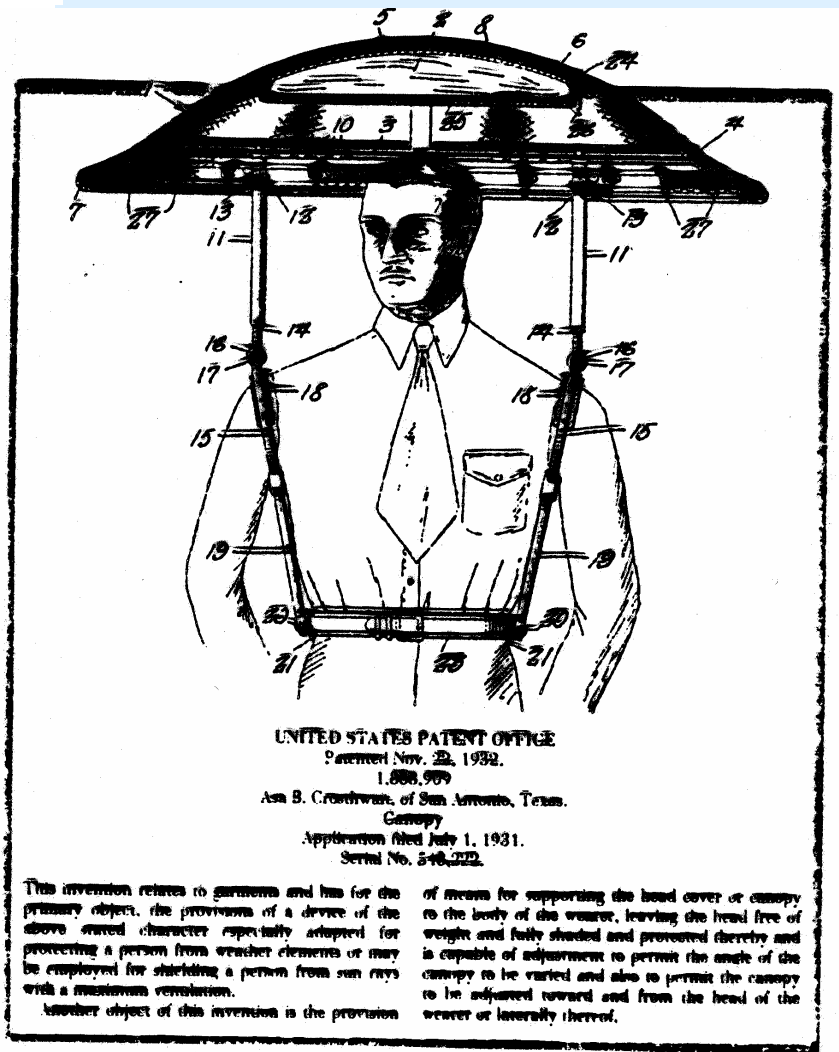
Inventors Profile

- Inventors are inventors..... but not necessarily designers, scientists, manufacturers or marketing people. In order to secure funds they need to build credibility through the formation of a team. This is the key feature in TVC

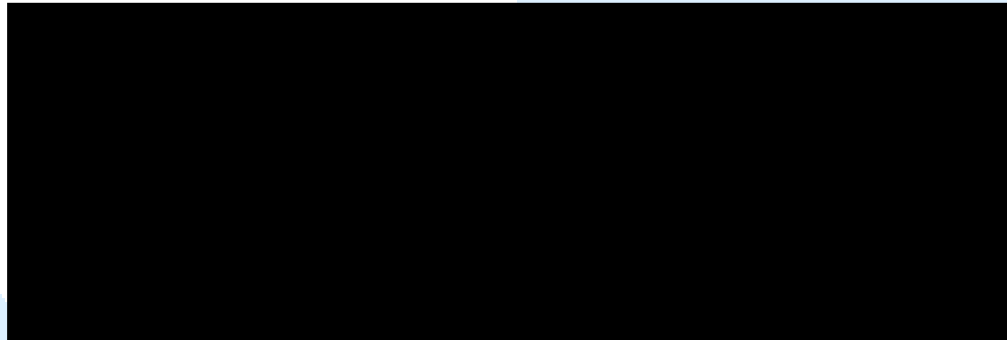
Prologue

- The exploitation of inventors
- Britain recognised and most inventive country in the world
- Many inventions not supported by UK investors - resulting in commercialisation overseas
- Where does the problem lie - is it in the perception of the two key personnel - the inventor and the investor?

The Investor's Perception of the Inventor



The Inventor's Perception of the Investor



The Virtual Company

- The virtual company seeks to build a link between the inventor and the investor
- It recognises that without funds the invention will not be developed. It appreciates that investors find it hard to relate to individuals and will only work with teams, ie companies

BLW Wessex - Pioneer Phase

Over the past three years BLW has:-

- Assessed 189 projects
- Recommended 56 of them as TVC's
- 40 have been set up as micro-businesses
- Total companies formed 83
- Has attracted c. £1,500,000 in funding
- Secured 49 Smart awards

Case Histories - TVC Gets Smart!

Company Name

Keenan Associates

John Christian

David Potter

UK Working Boats

Metcomp Tooling

Plasti Limited

Sycamore Limited

Orthosense Limited

Prof John Kemp

Microsport Limited

Interferomet Limited

RIB Limited

Matrix NDA

Prof John Morley

Gravity Pumps

LSC

Activity

Fire retardant materials

Stereo imaging

Thermal comparator

Kit boats

Rapid tooling

Recycled mooring piles

Marine sludge

Posture monitor

Wave energy system

Balance trainer

Measuring systems

Racing car components

Composites testing

Catamaran kite sail

Water pump

Life saving capsule

Status

Negotiating licenses*

Secured 2nd phase funding*

Field trials *

First demo boat sold

2nd phase funding secured*

Negotiating manufacturing *

Trials with P & O *

Production units in hand *

DERA testing models *

Hospital evaluation *

Joint venture agreed *

Completing feasibility *

Under review

Feasibility study *

Factory testing *

Trials in hand *

* *Gained Smart award*

TVC Toolkit

- SBS has supported the development of a toolkit for TVC. This comprises a Business Counsellors Guide and an Inventors Guide. It will be made available through a free license to other Business Links.

National Extension

- TVC Innovations Limited has been set up to extend the scheme throughout the UK. Discussions are underway with the National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Enterprise and a number of English Business Links

Conclusions

- TVC is a selective process intended to support inventors with outstanding ideas through the creation of expert teams

Inventors Don't Just Invent Better Mousetraps!

- Inventors that we are currently involved with are working on projects which offer significant job and wealth creation including a number of 'disruptive' technologies e.g.
 - Fire retardant materials
 - Wave energy systems
 - Novel aircraft, FanWing
 - Architectural products e.g. Serraglaze
 - Medical devices e.g. Caretek
 - Self powered water pumps etc
- The Virtual balance sheet
 - Can it be replicated?

It's a Relay Race?!

- The baton is the intellectual property owned by the inventor.
 - This is picked up by BLW (WIZ / or ITC) handed to second runner – the assessors. If they approve the project the baton passes to the project champion who will run with the team until the fourth and final handover – to the private sector.

Public Sector Responsibilities and Private Sector Opportunities.

- **Public Sector.** Responsibilities to identify, protect and preserve valuable IP. To sustain the feasibility and development of the project through grant funding (Smart/NESTA).
- Potential. £625 K comprising £375K through grants and bank through SFLG. Balance from inward investment / industrial partnership.
- Funding – Regional Development funds, business angels – others?
- **Private Sector.** Responsibilities to include tracking new opportunities and taking forward the project through conventional commercialisation stages at completion of development phase.

Funding – Corporate Venturing versus Venture Capital.

- The emergence of TVC clusters e.g. medical devices, telecoms.
- The identification of a business champion respected by the industry.
- Funding the cluster – spreading risk – the actuarial approach!

TVC – 2010 – Dream or SWAG

- Number of delivery points 20
- Number of inventions assessed p.a. 4,000
- Number supported by TVC 1,000
- Business value per annum £1 billion
- Personnel in Employment 3,000/5,000

Conclusions.

- Sir Arthur C Clarke said :-

Every new and revolutionary idea goes through four stages, which may be summed up by the following reactions:

- 1. What a stupid idea! Don't waste my time.*
- 2. Well, there may be something in it - but it's not important*
- 3. I said it was a good idea all along*
- 4. I thought of it first.*

- TVC is a risk - but a risk worth taking.