



Michael Auer

Transfer Entrepreneurship

**Brief summary based on a detailed study –
citing the example of the Steinbeis Transfer Centres**



Steinbeis-Edition

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Foreword

Technology transfer is not exactly new: its significance goes back a long way. From the very first time human beings started sharing knowledge, experiences and products, they have had to transfer know-how and technologies. Unknowingly, in fact almost by chance, this has actually been the driving force behind economic development. Since time immemorial, it has also been a catalyst for social change. Today as in the past, technology transfer is pertinent to everything we do. Without question the economic process of technology transfer – whereby research bodies and business schools make the findings of research and development work available for use in new processes, products and services – is central to fostering competitiveness and industrial growth. This is reflected in the number of academic studies in recent years turning the spotlight on technology transfer, as well as a rise in the intellectual status of the transfer philosophy. Institutionalised by new transfer networks throughout the field of research, and highly targeted in nature, technology transfer is being heralded as a key state instrument in fostering the development of research.

However, as in the past, one issue has yet to be adequately resolved: how best to apply the significant levels of technological know-how at our disposal efficiently and effectively to everyday industrial practice. In future therefore we must benchmark the degree to which transfer successfully promotes business by using the following criteria: efficiency and effectiveness in actual business practice.

Taking as a starting point the expectations placed on technology transfer, the study this synopsis is based on identifies the ideal approach to organising the transfer of know-how and technology into actual industrial practice – taking into account the interplay between entrepreneurial issues and human aspects of the transfer process. Using empirical analyses, its theoretical approach examines and evaluates entrepreneurial behaviour during the transfer process, looking at the quality of the corresponding transfer organisation.

By considering issues such as the underlying motives for transfer, skills, the personal market environment or the role of networks, corporate culture and incentive systems, the overall result of this study is a model of transfer entrepreneurship. The fact that this model has already been put into successful practice, in the form of the long-standing Steinbeis Foundation Transfer Network, serves as confirmation of its validity. Even though the study's results have already been published for the first time in 2000, they have not lost their significance until today.

Stuttgart, November 2010

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult. Johann Löhn
President Steinbeis University Berlin

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Summary

Appropriate organisational structures and forms (systems) of transfer are required for the effective and efficient implementation of knowledge-based technologies. The results gained from the assessment of current technology transfer systems vary greatly: however the findings again and again show that it is an exception rather than a rule for this transfer to function correctly. What is commonly referred to as a "Transfer Center" ("Transfer Enterprise") can form an appropriate and fully functioning form of organisation in which entrepreneurial activities form a focal point of the so called "transfer entrepreneurship". A successful transfer entrepreneur is better in using his personal parameters, is more active on the business side and creates his own appropriate organisation. He also achieves a higher degree of economically recognised success in the transfer of technology.

1 Initial comment

If technologies based on knowledge are to be effectively and efficiently implemented in industrial applications, suitable organisations and forms of transfer will be required.

The transfer system of the Steinbeis Foundation has once and again been described as a “suitable” organisation of technology transfer¹. Such descriptions are usually limited to the objectives and structure as well as to the factors assumed to be responsible for the success of the system.

However there have not been to date been any concrete results from empirical investigations into the factors responsible for the success of the Steinbeis transfer system, or at least results capable of providing a scientifically proven explanation for its suitability.

One of the factors for its success is the Steinbeis Transfer Centre (STZ) used as a mean of transfer for technologies in value-oriented, regulated customer-supplier relationships (procedural). This success factor has been investigated within this study.

The model commonly referred to as the TUNtum (from the German TransferUN-ternehmertum meaning “transfer entrepreneurship”) model has been developed on the basis of selected theories in technology transfer and entrepreneurship.² This model has been empirically tested using the example of the STZ. The acronym Tun (which is also the German verb for “to do”, “to make” or “to act”) plays a central role here since it characterises both the creation and procurement as well as the implementation of the technologies and/or knowledge.

1 Refer e.g. to Stamm, A. [1999]; KPMG/Taratec [1996]; Cluster Competitivitat [1996]; Reinhard, M./Schmalholz, H. [1996], p. 152 ff.; Universal Link Europe [1995]; Beise, M./Licht, G./Spielkamp, A. [1995], p. 112 ff.; Betz, A. [1997]: p. 269-277.

2 Refer to Auer, M. [2007].