



Photo: Steinbeis Transfer Center TIB

“For SMEs, collaboration with Steinbeis Enterprises can be extremely fruitful”

An interview with Prof. Dr. rer. pol. Udo Wupperfeld

Professor Wupperfeld, your Steinbeis Transfer Center for Technology Evaluation and Innovation Consultancy is based in the metropolitan region of Rhine-Neckar. How does the mixed nature of industry in your region shape the services you offer and the requirements of your customers?

The mixture of industry in the region is also reflected in the field we've worked in until now. Over the past 15 years, we've written over 900 expert reports for a variety of industries, so-called market and technology network reports. Our services are also a reflection of our level of expertise and our flexible approach, which to a certain degree are shaped by our employees.

Our projects were strongly influenced during this time by the technological trends, economic developments and changes in the political environment. These have changed customer expectations, which we've had to react quickly to by offering new services and upgrading the qualifications of our personnel.

You've said that the job of your center is to recognize potential, seize opportunity and minimize risk. What specifically do you do to help your customers in these areas?

Having instant access to a network of over 1,700 experts involved in almost all areas of technology, makes it possible for us to assess even the most complex of projects and precisely analyze the technology or market potential. Our approach benefits clients, as they're in a better position to seize the opportunities related to their project. They know the risks up front and can minimize them.

Here's an example of what I mean: A company is going to be set up and it needs financing. It's developed a new medicine testing methodology that would make animal testing superfluous. One of our experts carries out an assessment of the newly developed technology and its market potential. As a part of the expert evaluation, other areas are also looked at, like how to protect the idea from copycats, or how marketable the new product would be. If we uncover any problems, our experts quickly come back with recommendations, with a strong focus on actual business practice and ways to take things forward.

When you set up your Steinbeis Enterprise in 1998, the goal was to support the endeavors of the financial market and to promote the interests of medium-sized companies and innovation projects, such as patents, product developments and startups. In what way have the

developments in the financial sector influenced your work in recent years?

One important development in recent years was the greater emphasis on fostering the interests of young, technology-oriented enterprises with the aim of providing a strong impetus to the German market for seed funding. At the same time, the aim has been to improve the funding conditions for technology startups in the long term.

Our work – especially through collaboration with the High-Tech Gründerfonds in Bonn, and the funding arm of the savings bank, the Sparkassenfinanzgruppe – has given us the opportunity to get to know lots of new and emerging technology companies, actually during the seed phase, and then work with them as they embark on their journey.

You wrote an article for Venture Capital Magazine called Tech-Guide 2012 and discussed the topics of innovation, technology transfer and competitive edge with Michael See. What do you feel SMEs in particular can do to safeguard competitive advantage versus their regional or even international rivals?

The key ingredient you need to differentiate yourself from the competition and remain competitive on a national or even international level is innovation. Especially for SMEs, which sometimes only have

limited access to resources, collaboration with Steinbeis Enterprises can be extremely fruitful. The process of technology transfer can result in a significant step forward in innovation. SMEs can benefit from this tremendously and in doing so enhance their innovative power and competitiveness.

Another factor that's become increasingly important is to protect in-house innovations from copycats, such as through patents. Otherwise, all that hard-earned competitive advantage can go to waste in an instant.



Steinbeis Foundation (Stuttgart)
stw@steinbeis.de



Prof. Dr. rer. pol. Udo Wupperfeld
Steinbeis Transfer Center Technology Evaluation and
Innovation Consultancy (Mannheim)
su0413@stw.de | www.steinbeis-tib.de

Steinbeis Transfer Center Technology Evaluation and Innovation Consultancy



Director:
Prof. Dr. Udo Wupperfeld

Friedrichstrasse 157
68199 Mannheim

Phone: 0621 83375-13
E-mail: su0413@stw.de

Services

- Market research
- Expert reports
- Consulting
- Funding

Key areas

- Market research
 - Market structure and market potential analysis inside and outside Germany
 - Competitive analysis
 - Analysis of strengths and weaknesses, benchmarking
 - Positioning and image analysis
 - Customer satisfaction analysis

- Price barrier analysis, determination of price/volume factors and price elasticity
- Analysis of market relevance of product features and services
- Sales analysis
- Procurement market research
- Fundamental research, e.g. market forecasts and technology trends
- **Expert reports**
 - Technical reports, feasibility studies
 - Market reports
 - Company evaluations
 - Patent assessments
- **Consulting**
 - Business start-ups in technology markets
 - Support with drafting of business plans
 - Strategy
 - Marketing/sales
 - Financial accounting
 - Utilization of patents
 - Company acquisition and corporate divestment/disposal
 - Setting up of business partnerships inside and outside Germany
- **Funding**
 - Financing models
 - Financial planning
 - Support with raising capital and negotiations with investors
 - Venture capital consulting
 - Support with applications for funding