

IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Spanning Boundaries agents need basic knowledge of the ecosystem and environment in which they are operating, thus both contextual and cultural knowledge, as well as of the science behind the technology/innovation in their field. Practical experience in both the real market (industry) and academia is crucial to understand the internal processes.

On the other hand, skills such as being able to undertake market analysis and the ability to see the long-term and “big-picture” view are essential. While personality traits such as having an entrepreneurial mindset, a desire for constant learning and a positive attitude can stand one in good stead for success.

BARRIERS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

According to Jurgen, the best intermediaries are academics themselves who, ideally, should be the Spanning Boundaries agents. Having an interdisciplinary approach to collaboration and undertaking an effective needs analysis is the cornerstone of cooperative activities. Furthermore, having a strong network and access to the players in the field is an important driver, as well as an affiliation with the academic world.

Barriers include bureaucracy that dictates the terms and conditions for interaction between universities and companies; a lack of understanding of what university-business collaboration entails; and a lack of understanding of the organisation’s own needs (be it business or university).

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Jurgen Raizner

Founder and Director,
Steinbeis Transfer Centre

Originally from West Germany, Jurgen Raizner is an economist by training and has over 20 years of practical experience in technology transfer and innovation management. Jurgen is the founder and director of Steinbeis Transfer Centre, which aims to foster synergies in Europe. On top of his business activities, he is a Project Management and Economics lecturer at his alma-mater, University of Applied Sciences of Nürtingen-Geislingen (HfWU). Jurgen's journey in technology transfer and innovation management started almost 30 years ago, when he observed the limited competitiveness of businesses and industries in Eastern Europe.

SPANNING BOUNDARIES ACTIVITIES

- The Steinbeis Transfer Center for East-West Cooperation Training and continuous professional development: the branches of the company offer professional training to academics;
- Establishment of the first fully-fledged independent technology transfer centers in Romania, followed by Ukraine and their western counterparts in Germany and Austria.

MAIN MOTIVATION

Upon a prolonged trip to Russia (then Soviet Union), Jurgen observed the limited competitiveness of businesses and industries in Eastern Europe. With his desire to support the competitiveness of Eastern European industrial markets, Jurgen also saw a clear disconnect between the industrial and academic worlds for innovation and, therefore, lack of good practices in the East. His primary motivation was the cultural change from a more passive mentality of "there is nothing more we can offer" to a more optimistic and active "we can break through and innovate as much as the others" in the Eastern European regions.