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Five Hard-Learned Lessons from a Medical Device Start-Up

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Just the idea of starting something from scratch can be overwhelming. Ask the average shopper at your local grocer how they prepare a simple meal at home and you'll find the majority who cook use prepared ingredients, making the whole "home-cooked meal" more of a "dump-and-stir" kind of event because cooking from scratch is a task that is too time-consuming, maybe too expensive or requires too many specialized skills. Maybe the whole idea of starting a meal from scratch is just too overwhelming when you put together all the moving parts and it's just easier to feast off of something that someone else put together for you.



Now complicate things and take cooking dinner into a lab where starting from scratch means just that: developing an idea that originated as a concept scratched on the back of a piece of scrap paper.

The medical device industry is an area of technological development that has changed radically over the last twenty years, yet very few medical device technology companies can trace their journeys from a time that pre-dates Google and Facebook. This is because medical device development is a constant uphill battle.

TecMed, Inc. [1] is one such medical device IP company, recently shared their five rules of thumb which have led to sustainability in a field that is exceedingly difficult to thrive in.

1) Nothing is ever easy

TecMed President once stated, "I wake up every day knowing that every day is going to be a challenge." He explains that when you are in a field that requires levels of unprecedented precision and your game is innovation, be prepared for one obstacle solved by another obstacle. The rewards for overcoming problems are rich, however, rewards are also commonly coupled with the discovery of yet another mountain to climb.

2) No such thing as a bad piece of information

Information is something that is mined for, and any tiny pebble of information has value, even when the information seems irrelevant or simplistic. Part of innovation is dealing with failure. Information is commonly masked as your own, or another organization's

failure, and should be guarded as a treasure. You never know when the missing link to the next technological success is information you once deemed as bad.

3) **Tomorrow might be easier, but the mountain steeper**

Principal researcher and President Alan Leszinske noted that as years have gone by, some pieces of the business have gotten easier. For example, during the early years at TecMed, nearly every tiny piece of every single device they produced had to be made my hand. This required time and energy and was expensive. Now, many of the parts and pieces can be purchased, saving time and energy. The other side of the argument is that although some aspects of business are easier, the competition is stiffer, the costs continue to increase, government regulations tighten and legal mandates change and the ever-increasing bank of knowledge changes the face of the game sometimes on a daily basis. This means that keeping up with change, and staying in front of change, is a nearly impossible feat.

4) **Persistence counts**

Persistence is key: A vital aspect to longevity and success. Developing a device from an idea takes time. It takes money. It takes patience. Many companies currently rest peacefully in what is known as “The Graveyard” because the challenges overtook their organization. Dealing in a detail oriented business where the difference between a measurement of .001 and .0001 is life altering, the meticulous and painstaking nature of the work requires levels of persistence unknown, or even recognized, within many other fields.

5) **People over knowledge**

Another interesting point that TecMed leadership emphasized is this idea that people are more important than the information they may have. Alan Leszinske explained that no matter how brilliant or driven an individual was, if they didn’t work well with the scientific team, their knowledge was almost useless. Leszinske said that ‘information can be learned. It can be accessed. But people. Well, you can’t make people work nicely with other people. And if they can’t work nicely, they don’t need to be here.’

Lessons from a medical device IP company that has persevered through years of obstacles, struggles, hard-learned lessons yet continues to develop and refine medical device technology that outshines technology that is currently commercially available can be life-treads for new companies coming up the ranks. As Leszinske mentioned, no information is bad information. So, learn from the “old guys” in the field and prepare yourself for the climb.

Source URL (retrieved on 05/12/2014 - 5:07pm): <http://www.mdtmag.com/blogs/2014/05/five-hard-learned-lessons-medical-device-start>

Links:

[1] <http://www.tecmed.com/>