

POSTIVE PARTNERING

Apjohn Group Article

The Office of Business Development Newsletter at University of Minnesota

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In a field of advanced knowledge and cutting-edge research, commercialization of sophisticated scientific technology is not an easy process. The Apjohn Group, LLC, (www.apjohngroup.com) founded in 2001, is a business accelerator based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Apjohn consists of 14 partners with significant scientific expertise and experience who are focused on commercializing pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Together, Apjohn and the University of Minnesota have a special relationship to accelerate commercialization; the University, through Patents and Technology Marketing and the Office of Business Development, can connect Apjohn to pioneering research, and Apjohn offers the University expertise on pharmaceuticals, medical devices, business start-up, and intellectual property.

Ron Shebuski, Ph.D., a University of Minnesota alum (1985, Pharmacology) and adjunct associate professor of Pharmacology in the Medical School, joined the Apjohn Group in 2003. Utilizing his connections at the University of Minnesota, Ron began to investigate novel University technology for commercialization. “The University of Minnesota offers a high level of science with an organized system of providing information on scientist’s research through portfolios [summaries] provided by the Office of Patents and Technology Marketing,” says Shebuski. This helps groups like Apjohn identify available opportunities for commercialization. In this way, the University is a catalyst for creating relationships and presenting opportunities to Apjohn.

According to Charanjeet Guron, Ph.D., senior licensing associate in Patents and Technology Marketing, Apjohn helps the University by providing advice on which direction to move with a certain technology. “Each technology poses its own challenge in commercialization,” says Guron, “Shebuski brings tremendous expertise with Apjohn to help evaluate technology.”

When Apjohn is interested in pursuing technology from the portfolios, they are provided an option to license it from the University for one year. During this year, the Apjohn Group assists in identifying funding opportunities to support the research and concomitantly evaluates the technology. Both the University and Apjohn receive founder shares, and the University is provided royalties on the intellectual property.

Intellectual property is more likely to be successfully commercialized when a team of technology experts can contribute their specific understanding to the project. The University and Apjohn are each stronger through this relationship. According to Dick Sommerstad, associate director of the Office of Business Development, “This is a good long-term relationship. We hope to do more together in the future.”