

MOVERS

Harry Stylli, chief executive and president, Sequenom, San Diego, California



2004-05: President and chief executive, Xencor, Monrovia, California

2002-03: President and chief executive, CovX Pharmaceuticals, San Diego

1995-2001: Senior vice-president, Aurora, San Diego

1985-95: Drug-discovery research manager, Glaxo, London

Harry Stylli's hobby, cryptozoology, speaks volumes about his career choice. Cryptozoology is the search for and study of animals whose existence is disputed. In some ways, it is not much different from his career in drug discovery, where he looks for therapies that don't yet exist.

Stylli began his career by combining science with industry: he worked on his PhD in pharmacological chemistry at King's College London with the help of a grant from Amersham International, a diagnostic imaging company now part of GE Healthcare.

His next stop was at industry giant Glaxo (now GlaxoSmithKline) where the self-described "frustrated entrepreneur" did something considered unusual at the time: he completed an MBA degree through the Open University. The degree allowed him to combine his understanding of science with the knowledge of the demands of business. He applied these lessons to his job, integrating elements of manufacturing strategy to the drug-discovery process.

After almost ten years of working in big pharma, in 1995 Stylli left to pursue his entrepreneurial bent in San Diego, California. There, he co-founded Aurora Biosciences. Taking a chance at Aurora was an invaluable experience that helped define his career, explains Stylli. It allowed him to go through an entire life cycle of a company, from founding to building and eventually leaving.

In 2001, the company was sold to Vertex Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge, Massachusetts, providing an objective measure of success for the firm and making Stylli a healthy profit. He is proud that the technology and people associated with Aurora early on remain leaders in the biotech industry. "Aurora 'DNA' is very much alive in other companies," he says.

Since then, Stylli has been at the helm of Xencor in Monrovia, California, and San Diego-based CovX. But he says his most significant challenge will be in his current job as chief executive and president of Sequenom, a San Diego genetic-analysis tool maker. "This is a company that has tremendous potential and promise, and hasn't managed to realize it yet," he says.

Stylli believes that biotechnology will be the engine of innovation in the forthcoming "age of healthcare". In this new age he predicts there will be dramatic changes in healthcare, with biotech bringing into development therapies that will move what was once viewed as science fiction or myth into reality. ■

NUTS & BOLTS

Change management

You've probably heard the saying "the only thing constant is change". When it comes to careers, that axiom certainly holds true. My career is no exception. After an interesting and rewarding year of writing in this space, my role is evolving, as is the column. In response to reader interest, the column is moving to an electronic medium, and we're adopting a Q&A format.

It seems only fitting, then, that I devote this column to adapting to change. From Charles Darwin to management guru Peter Drucker, writers have been fascinated by this topic, which is relevant to both research and workplace survival.

The questions I'll leave with you relate to three key skills for adapting to change and evolving in your career. Those skills are your ability to continuously develop, to establish a niche, and to let go of what is no longer useful or meaningful.

In response to changing influences, particularly in the continuously evolving world of science, the ability to keep developing takes on added significance. Ask yourself: "In what areas do I want to focus my own learning and development to continually recreate my career?"



With Deb Koen
Careers consultant

Establishing a niche to address emerging needs in science is a second strategy for career management. Survival in today's work world requires that you find a balance between differentiating and fitting in. Ask yourself: "How can I build on my unique qualities to fill a gap?"

Along with building on strengths, adapting to

change means you must say good-bye to the familiar and let go of that which is no longer useful or meaningful. With limited resources and changing agendas, distinguishing between what is essential or extraneous becomes a critical survival skill. Ask yourself: "Which core qualities, skills and responsibilities are integral to my work and identity, and which can I let go of?"

As your career evolves, please join me in my new setting and format (www.naturejobs.com). Here you'll have an opportunity to submit your own career management and job-search-related questions as well as review suggestions to questions posed by readers throughout the scientific community. ■

Deb Koen is acting president and chief executive of Career Development Services and a columnist for *The Wall Street Journal's CareerJournal.com*.

GRADUATE JOURNAL

The cost of moving abroad

I was chatting with a company manager in mid-career who was being transferred to Brazil for international training. I was amazed at how much his company helped him and his family in the move. This included renting a house, searching for a good school, paying the school fees, finding a job for his wife and arranging to get the family an extra car.

During our talk, I couldn't help drawing parallels with scientists. Many choose to pursue a PhD in a US lab, so they look for a suitable position and relocate. Should they be keen on a postdoctoral position in, say, Spain afterwards, they move again. And so on. Hence, the scenarios for those in business and science seem similar, except of course for how much help they're likely to get from an employer. Although some universities do their best to help find housing, a spouse's job and childcare, the level of help depends on the institution and country. Rarely does a university provide all the assistance of a large company.

Why do business managers require an economic incentive to move, whereas researchers are left to make do mostly on their own? Is it supply and demand? Are there many scientists but a dearth of qualified businesspeople to tap for international experience? I doubt it: the business world is just as competitive as that of science. But traditionally, each world emphasizes different rewards. Also, of course, public universities just don't have the money. ■

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