



Tapping into talent to boost an emerging biotechnology ecosystem

How Saudi Arabia can leverage global best practices of biotech clusters to attract world-class entrepreneurs.

Enticing interest and investment from entrepreneurs, as well as nurturing new talent, is essential for a successful biotechnology industry. At the Riyadh Global Medical Biotechnology Summit 2021, Richard Smith talked about the biotech

ecosystem in the Philadelphia region and events leading up to the emergence of cell and gene therapy within the region – now referred to as “Cellicon Valley.” He discusses how Saudi Arabia can leverage best practices of biotech clusters around the world to develop a flourishing

ecosystem that will attract the world’s best-in-class entrepreneurs.

What inspired you to work in the field of biotechnology?

My route to biotechnology came after decades in the financial services industry, where I was fortunate to work with the top professionals who managed key levers of the global economy. Working in that environment was fun and had a major impact on my career. However, having moved into biotechnology, I now work with heroes whose work carries the possibility of enhancing the health and wellbeing of people across the globe. Working in such an industry is humbling and inspiring every day.

What roles can individual entrepreneurs play in developing and promoting biotechnology?

The individual entrepreneur is the lynchpin. Countries who are seeking



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Saudi Arabia aims to develop a flourishing biotech ecosystem that can attract the world's best-in-class entrepreneurs.

to bolster and promote their fledgling biotech industry should nurture new entrepreneurs, as well as actively attract existing ones. Ultimately, it is the entrepreneurs who decide where to locate the research, development and manufacturing work that is needed to achieve a specific goal. An entrepreneur is looking for an advantage that accelerates their path to success. As Saudi Arabia is placing additional chips in the global biotech space, the country must create an attractive and resilient atmosphere for investment and business opportunities. Building a successful biotech ecosystem requires sustained collaboration and input from numerous multidisciplinary teams over time.

How do collaboration and multidisciplinary research fit into Rockland Immunochemicals?

As a small enterprise, Rockland embraces collaboration in every aspect

of our business. As a leader in antibody engineering, we work with academic and industrial researchers on the most complex problems in the life sciences. For example, our products and services are used to measure and enhance the quality of the bioprocessing facilities that produce the latest drugs and vaccines. Diversity, in every sense of the word, is critical to our ability to understand, analyse and provide solutions that make a real and meaningful difference.

What advice would you give countries like Saudi Arabia, who have the opportunity to invest in biotechnology?

It is critical to understand the history of your journey in which lies the secrets to past successes. Leverage the strengths inherent within and across other disciplines and industries to develop a unique and dynamic value proposition, which in turn will help

you attract and retain the essential elements of a strong and vibrant biotechnology ecosystem. Saudi Arabia, for example, has a tremendous cache of talented clinical physicians. The country can tap into this resource to produce a stream of highly qualified biotechnology entrepreneurs that build and define its biotech ecosystem.



Richard Smith, chief operating officer at Rockland Immunochemicals Inc.