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A dual existence

Two London scientists — Ken Powell, chief executive of Arrow Therapeutics, and Peter Shepherd, chairman and chief scientific officer of Xcellsys — were this month honoured for their industrial acumen. But they could equally be recognized for their agility in moving between academia and industry, and not losing contact with either.

Powell, who received the London Biotechnology Network's Entrepreneur of the Year Award (which was co-sponsored by *Naturejobs*), has a history of bridging sectors. As deputy director of the Wolfson Institute for Biomedical Research, he developed the institute's facilities and infrastructure. Before that, as head of biology at the Wellcome Foundation (now part of GlaxoSmithKline), he handled licensing deals. And, in setting up four separate biotech companies, he managed to maintain and expand his academic ties.

Shepherd, who received the London Biotechnology Network's Young Entrepreneur Award, has managed to live in both worlds simultaneously. In addition to his position at Xcellsys, of which he is a co-founder, Shepherd is a professor of biochemistry at University College London. He still carries a full teaching load there and continues to run a lab.

Career paths like his and Powell's were once unusual, Shepherd says. Academics who turned to industry were considered pariahs — once you chose that path, there was no turning back. Now more scientists are discovering that it makes sense to travel back and forth. New ideas come out of academia, but companies are better positioned to turn them into commercial products. And scientists who are comfortable in both spheres can recognize which ideas can become products, and assist in the translation. "It certainly is an advantage to have a foot in both worlds," says Shepherd.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



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