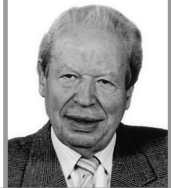


Pierre Laffitte

President of Fondation Sophia Antipolis.
France



INCUBATORS OR INCUBATION

- Senator for the Alpes-Maritimes Department.
- Vice President of the Senate Cultural Affairs Commission.
- President of the Sophia Antipolis Foundation.
- President of the Franco-German Association for Science and Technology (AFAST).
- Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences.

CONTENTS

In 1984, I wrote a report on US science Parks and incubators! Most incubators in Europe are nowadays of the type, described in 1984. High tech incubation is often different. In Sophia Antipolis, the eldest Science Park in Europe, where IASP was born in 1984, incubation does not already need to be connected to real estate, walls and low renting offices.

In Sophia Antipolis, we give a priority to a specific entrepreneurial and innovative culture and business rapid expansion conditions.

Different organizations of the park are helping to expand this strategy which favourish mushrooming of start ups. The Fondation Sophia Antipolis (www.sophia-antipolis.org), in charge of the animation of the park, is the most important in developing the specific innovative culture.

Innovation proceeds, from direct contacts between people who think different because their ethics, values and fields of interest are diverse.

Artists and scientists, businessmen and lawyers must discuss and exchange. The cross-

fertilization gives way to creativity. This is true in the fields of arts, sciences, techniques but also in business.

High cross fertilization develops a smart community. The globalisation of the world economy, may become positive for the future of humanity, if such innovative smart communities develop a world wide network.

This new global world modernity has to be mixed with local traditions. Both, modernity and tradition, will enhance productivity and conviviality. This "Weltanschauung", the German word meaning the philosophy of existence, is a positive background, the first step, the priority to successful incubation.

In Sophia Antipolis, this concept by public and private (educational, research and business) institutions is now widely spread. Every organization is aware of the importance for their everyday management. They agree to work together in many different clubs. The result is that the speed of reaction is much faster than in most European cities. If a start up needs to contact a specialist (technical, lawyer or management, or in training or in

head hunting), this can be done asked for half an hour, just phoning or sending e-mails. The answer is most of the time in the same scale of time. Somewhat less rapid, I must say than in the Silicon Valley, in problems connected with seed money, venture capital or international lawyers.

The result is what we call the snow ball effect. This effect seems to be able to attract skilled men and women (managers, consultants, lawyers, business angels etc.), start ups and big corporations. Recently venture capitalists of any stage also show an interest and come.

Another important point is important for rapidly growing start ups: the availability, besides financing, of another form of angels: those which may held in advising to any specific need of the growing company.

Different type of competencies must be available - sometimes on the very early stage:

- access to public contacts and contracts on local, national, or international level.
- head hunting for high level management.
- lawyers knowing how to connect with the best people internationally.
- fiscalists, specialists in intellectual and industrial property, insurance, etc.
- The start up in high technologies need early clients and specially big corporations (international references gives a good way to rapid growth).

Networking gives an easy contact in other cities, Paris, London, New York, Bilbao, Madrid, Yokohama, Munich etc., and also in

the developing world.

This needs to be effective not only e-mail, or phone with other start-ups, complementary or concurrent. It needs also physical knowledge - eye to eye between people.

This is what the foundation Sophia Antipolis and many other institutions of the park (business schools, research labs, companies etc.) have been doing for years now.

For instance, the foundation develops, business breakfasts with teams of major companies (Schlumberger, Solvay, France Telecom etc.).

The Sophia Start Up Club organizes, a monthly meeting with venture capitalists, international lawyers, big companies, and presentation of product champion offering innovative products sometimes coming from different countries (Finland, Germany, UK, etc.) (website : sophia-startup.com). And we are developing a network of start up clubs (my presentation in Bilbao for current IASP meeting).

This new incubation process needs time to be developed. But in most technology regions, for instance in Bavaria or Cambridge it is in work. If renting space is available, if the global culture is incubation oriented, any good Science Park is by itself, the best incubation system of the future. It needs time and it needs a will, supported by an organization devoted to work for the future, with an openness to cooperation.

Think and work, local and global, through networking.