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Innovative Decontamination Solutions



Harnessing the crowd

Crowdsourcing and crowdfunding

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About the author

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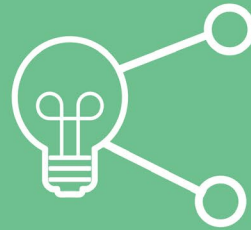
CROWDFUNDING



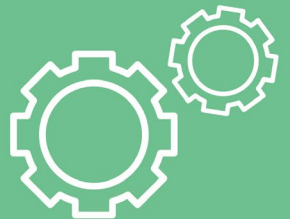
PROJECT



STARTUP COMPANY



SHARE PROJECT



TURN YOUR PROJECT
INTO REALITY

Previously

I explored the need for a proper research programme for Decontamination Sciences and looked at the prospect of creating two different branches of this research programme. One that would deal with the advanced scientific research and the other that would look at the more applied, or practical, aspects of medical device decontamination.

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I suggested that the latter would open the

possibilities of crowdsourcing research topics and crowdfunding solutions.

Now I want to explore both concepts a little further.

For the record, Oxford dictionary defines crowdsourcing as *“the practice of obtaining information or input into a task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet”*, and crowdfunding as *“the practice of funding a project or venture by raising money from a large number of people who each contribute a relatively small amount, typically via the Internet”*.

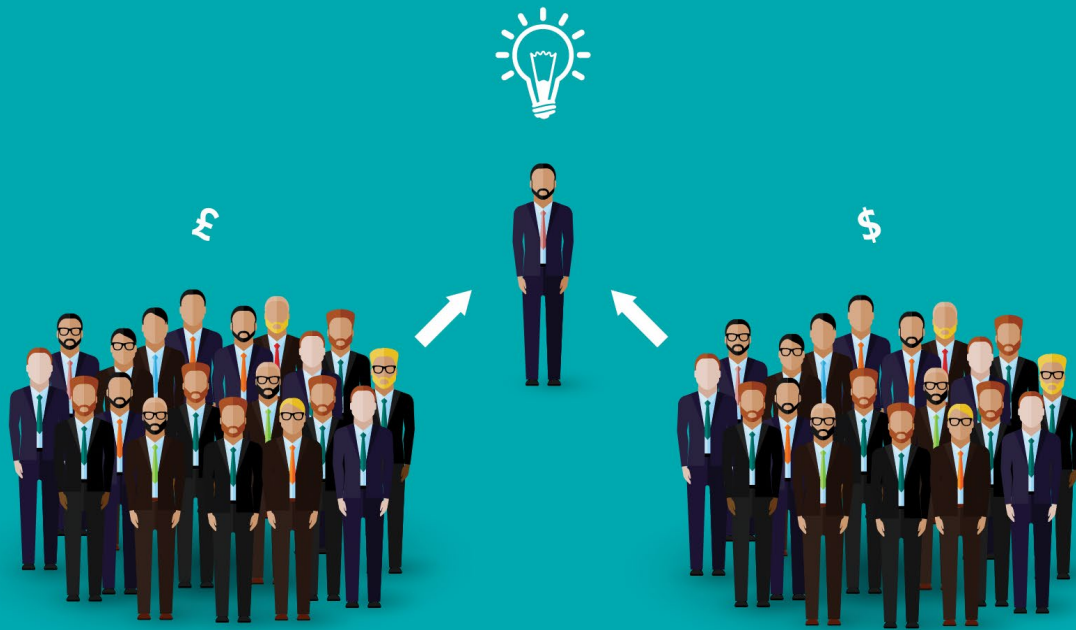
In the news we hear about the ongoing high financial pressure on the health services and the demand for more efficiency and productivity. This means that there is very little, if any, money for even such research that produces tangible and cost saving outcomes. It gets even worse: what little is available is often dedicated to one-off, bespoke projects with limited reach and impact.

The question is, whether we could do it better.

My company develops new technologies for decontamination of complex instrumentation and we deal with the problem of unique solutions on daily basis, as most of “proof of concept” projects are built from one-off components.

“I do realise it is a bit of a blue sky thinking, but crowdfunding and crowdsourcing work very well in the commercial world...”

~ Pawel de Sternberg Stojalowski



To give you an example how costly one-offs are, I just received a quote for a new set of few stainless steel components for a new prototype of a washing disinfecter. The unit price for a single set is £1830 compared to £660 when 10 sets are ordered.

Yes, in this case just 10 sets make such a difference. In general, the more unique and exotic the solution the more the price will differ with quantity. Same principle applies to pretty much any bespoke component so the trick is to find ways to use economies of scale.

Where does the crowdsourcing and crowdfunding come to the equation?


When it comes to crowdsourcing, it allows to gather people with similar challenges and look for solutions (including research) that could be easily adapted to avoid the high cost of one-offs. At the same time, it proves the demand and gives the solution provider more confidence in the viability of the answer. Typically, social media groups and especially discussion forums are a great aggregate of ideas and sometimes even solutions. What is needed here is a facilitator – a platform to turn these into projects.



Additionally, when several parties express the interest in a particular solution their individual input and their perspectives will make the projects much more interesting and better thought through. When it comes to the research outcome, it has got an additional benefit, since all interested parties will get the same research methodology and obtain results that are comparable.

Crowdfunding comes as the other side of the same coin. Projects, research, as well as equipment can be crowdfunded in order to take advantage of the economies of scale. In this scenario a supplier would pitch an idea to the interested crowd who would pay the money upfront - just like on kickstarter, crowdfunder and many other online platforms that facilitate this new form of financing projects. In this case we, yet again, benefit from the economies of scale.

In both cases it is a win-win scenario for solution suppliers and customers. The former is guaranteed a demand of certain magnitude and usually gets the funding for the project upfront, while the latter gets a desired solution at a better price and usually more refined one since it was developed for more than one customer. The added value here is the sense of community, creation of social



capital, crosspollination of ideas and multiplication of knowledge.

I would certainly like to see a crowdsourcing and crowdfunding platform for research, as well as development of practical solutions like for example simple instrument baskets, consumables and perhaps even bigger projects like custom size washers or sterilisers. All we need is a new platform or a partnership with an existing provider to build awareness in the industry that something like this has been launched. I do realise that it is a bit of a blue sky thinking but crowdfunding and crowdsourcing platforms work very well in the commercial world and perhaps it is time we look at transplanting these ideas into the realm of decontamination technologies and science.



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