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ABSTRACT  
**BOOK**

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## Academic Start-Up and Professional Service Firms: How to Develop Collaboration in Drug Development Process

Rosangela Feola<sup>307</sup> Valentina Cucino<sup>308</sup> Roberto Parente<sup>309</sup>

### Abstract

In the last year the innovation chain of the pharmaceutical industry has become more and more complex and it represents a very peculiar scenario for the application of open innovation approaches in R&D strategies. Nowadays, in fact, the innovation process in life sciences is based on the coordinated efforts of different types of organizations: universities, start-ups and big pharma companies. In this context, the start-ups founded by researchers named Academic Start-up have proven to be particularly effective in the first steps of exploring new, radically innovative technologies, while Big Pharma have progressively focused themselves in the final stages of development of new drugs. However, the connection between Academic Start-Ups and Big Pharma has always been difficult because of deep cultural differences between the two. To overcome these limits, what academic start-ups require the most is a collaborative linkage with Big Biotech and Pharma companies. To such end, Business Development Professionals are offering their services to academic start-ups, to set up a collaborative linkage with potential partners. Starting from these premises, our article investigates the process of engagement between Academic Start-ups and Business Development Professionals and in particular, we focus on the factors that prevent collaboration between Academic Start-ups and Business Development Professionals. In order to investigate the process of engagement between Academic Start-ups and Business Development Professionals we conducted an exploratory study through the submission of a semi-structured questionnaire covering different aspects of the engagement process to a sample of business professionals. Our study provides first evidence about the main factors that prevent the development of collaborations between Academic Start-ups and Business Development Professionals in drug development process. From the analysis, we identify two distinct main elements that represent obstacles for the development of a collaboration between Business Development Professionals and Academic Start-Ups in the drug development process. Our paper has shed light on the process of cooperation between Academic Start-Ups and Business Development Professionals and provides some suggestions to overcome the challenges that both parts found in the collaboration process. The study opens the field for further and future research projects to understand in more details the role of bridging points and intermediaries in the full deployment of an open innovation strategy in a high-tech industry.

**Keywords:** *Open Innovation, Life Science Sector, Academic Start-Up, Business Developer, Collaboration.*

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