

## Stevens Alliance Commemorates Tenth Anniversary

### Lawrence Gastwirt

The close of 2001 marks the completion of ten years of Alliance operation in identifying and facilitating the deployment of more effective practices for the development and utilization of technology. The founding Sponsors who came together in 1991 to form the Alliance were AT&T Bell Laboratories, Allied-Signal Corporation, Engelhard Industries, Exxon Research and Engineering Company, and IBM, along with Stevens Institute of Technology. We are grateful to them, as well as to our current Sponsors who, in addition to Stevens Institute, are AT&T Corporation, ExxonMobil Research and Engineering Company, ISO (formerly Insurance Services Office), Lucent Technologies, Pershing, Teknor Apex, Unilever-Bestfoods, and the U.S. Army Research, Development, and Engineering Center.

The objective of the Alliance has remained the same as was envisioned at the outset: a collaboration that would advance the practice of technology management through education, research, and the transfer of best practices among sponsoring organizations. The Alliance looks back with satisfaction upon the achievements of the last decade, highlights of which are recounted here:

- In the education arena, the Alliance played a seminal role in the initiation of a unique Executive Master's Program in the management of technology, an executive-level program designed to educate future technology and business leaders. The Alliance provided initial funding for curriculum development,

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which was done under Alliance auspices and with the active participation of the Alliance Sponsors, who continue to provide guidance and direction to the program. Initially available only to employees of Sponsor organizations, the program is now open to all applicants. Some 650 technical professionals and executives from scores of organizations have received the coveted Master of Technology Management degree since 1994.

- Under the umbrella of "technology transfer", the Alliance has conducted more than forty Roundtable Forums and a dozen Conferences since 1992 on topics selected by Sponsors and relevant to their current needs. Among the subjects discussed have been metrics for measuring R&D effectiveness, achieving effective multi-disciplinary teaming, using non-traditional reward systems, technology strategic planning, project selection, R&D portfolio balancing, business process re-engineering, motivating innovation, the "fuzzy front end" of the innovation process, achieving "radical" innovation, how to "kill" a project, training to maintain critical competencies, knowledge management, intellectual property management, stage-gate processes, project management, and many others. These meetings have proven to be very effective vehicles for the sharing of knowledge among Sponsors on timely issues.

Another knowledge transfer vehicle is this newsletter, which is marking five years of publication with this issue. Feature articles usually deal with topics addressed at Roundtables and Conferences, providing additional perspectives and insights. Over 1000 subscribers receive this quarterly publication. Past issues can be downloaded from the Alliance web site (<http://attila.stevens-tech.edu/stmm/satm/index.htm>).

Finally, in the area of research, the Alliance has sponsored a highly acclaimed study on innovation. It resulted in the Alliance Innovation Model, which identifies behaviors and management practices for improving the process of idea generation and use. A tool that permits organizations to benchmark their behaviors and practices against those of a "best-of-breed" sample has been developed based on this research; the tool has been applied by a number of Alliance companies to improve their own practices. Over a dozen research projects currently underway by the faculty of the Wesley J. Howe School of Management Technology benefit from grants contributed by the Alliance, as well as from the inputs of Alliance Sponsors. (See page 6 for a sum-

mary of two of these projects).

A number of awards were presented at this year's Alliance Conference in recognition of this significant milestone in Alliance history. AT&T Corporation, Lucent Technologies, and ExxonMobil Research and Engineering Company were honored as corporate successors of founding Sponsors. Dr. Donald Merino, Professor of Technology Management at Stevens, was honored for his contribution as Education Director of the Alliance at its inception, in which position he played a leadership role in the development of the Executive Master's Program in Technology Management. Dr. Lemuel Tarshis, who has been Director of Technology Transfer since the founding of the organization, received recognition for his ten years of leadership with the Alliance. The week before the Conference, a plaque was presented to Steven Shulman, a Stevens alumnus and member of the Board of Trustees, whose start-up contribution helped fund the formation of the Alliance in 1991.

Many of the issues addressed by the Alliance in its Roundtable Forums, Conferences, and educational programs have been "around", in various guises, since the early days of the twentieth century, when industrial R&D began to be done in a systematic way in the laboratories of du Pont in Wilmington and General Electric in Schenectady. The fact that we are still concerned today with seeking improvements in such areas as technology strategic planning, motivating scientists and engineers, achieving rapid innovation, managing projects, selecting projects to work on, et. al., should not be considered a condemnation of our predecessors in technology management. Rather, it is a symptom of the changes that are occurring in all fields of endeavor, and the need to come up with solutions relevant to today's environment.

The emphasis on individual contributors shifts to an emphasis on teams as projects become more complex and many competencies need to be marshaled to bring a new product to rapid commercial introduction.....Societal changes bring the need for changes in reward systems.....The need for shorter and shorter cycle times, as the pace of competition and technological change accelerates, brings the need for new techniques in project management.....etc., etc.

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For the past decade, the Alliance has provided a forum in which such issues have been looked at afresh, providing answers to such questions as: Which parts of the conventional wisdoms still apply, and which should be abandoned? What new approaches have been tried? Which ones have worked? What are the pitfalls others have encountered? And so forth. The Alliance has provided the opportunity to address these questions in a collegial atmosphere, taking advantage of the most recent academic findings and the experiences of fellow technology managers from industry and government.

Through its educational programs, its research, and its transfer of management practices among Sponsors, the Alliance has developed a large body of intellectual property over the past decade. The knowledge it has generated has impacted the professional lives of many hundreds of technology professionals and executives, as well as the management practices of their organizations. We look forward to continuing this contribution in the next decade.

*Dr. Lawrence Gastwirt has been Director of the Alliance for the past nine years. He retired in 1992 from Exxon Chemical Company, where he held progressively senior positions in technology and business management, domestic and international, during his 30-year career. He is co-author of the book, "Turning Research and Development into Profits -- A Systematic Approach".*

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