

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF A TECHNOLOGY CENTER IN TROUBLE

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I have [a friend](#) who says that in this life to survive the best thing is to be ugly like hitting God in Lent, which taste disgusting and smell like burnt horns. Of course he's referring to those cute critters, whose charming appearance or coveted shiny skin has pushed them to the brink of extinction, but the reality is that when the going gets tough, all species develop their own survival strategies in one go. or another way.

[Let's talk about bugs again](#).? Well no, this time we are not going to talk about bugs, but about endangered species and specifically about a species that in recent years no longer knows what color to turn in order to survive. Who am I talking about? Well yes, from small technology centers.

If you're one of them, you know what I'm talking about. Among other things, the crisis has brought with it a considerable reduction in public support and private companies looking twice at their pockets before dropping a euro. In addition, in this maelstrom [of mergers](#), of [collaboration agreements](#) and births of < a

[href="http://www.sciencebusiness.net/news/74886/UK-government-announces-first-Technology-and-Innovation-Centre"](http://www.sciencebusiness.net/news/74886/UK-government-announces-first-Technology-and-Innovation-Centre) target="_blank" rel="noopener">big, well-fed babies , being a small tech center sucks.

How to survive when resources dwindle and the competition is bigger than us?

First Commandment: find a patronage that loves you

...as I said [the song](#) "and may your head be full fridge".

The word patron comes from the Latin *patronus*, which means defender, protector. Patron and Parasite start with the same letters, but they don't mean the same thing. If you are a small center it is more important than ever to forget about the Patrons-Canapé (those who only make an appearance once a year in the patronages, eat the prawn cocktail and leave) and the Patrons-Vampire (the who are convinced that you are a charming free service provider).

If you are a technology center that has evolved from being a test lab or something similar, and now you are trying to generate cutting-edge technology and knowledge, surround yourself with patrons who have good relational capital that you can use, who represent companies moving in the circle of target customers that you have set for yourself, and who have a good knowledge of your sector. They will give you good advice, they will provide you with resources and they will give you some guidelines for action that will help you to be a first-rate center.

If you are an association, you can apply the same advice to your Board of Directors.

Second Commandment: be independent from dad public administration

Regardless of whether you are public or private, and depending on which Autonomous Community you are located in, the support of the public administration is greater or less, but in all cases the crisis has caused a reduction in public budgets that has meant that even the more generous administrations begin to look at their technology centers as a suspicious lump.

If, despite everything, you are one of the lucky ones who has non-competitive financing, use it to train yourself. Invest this funding in carrying out research projects that help you generate more specialized knowledge. The more you know, the better the service you can provide to your companies and the greater your prestige and your autonomy from the administration.

Try to access competitive financing outside of your local area. If your size does not allow you to access such large projects, collaborate (see Sixth Commandment). Participating in larger projects with people better trained than you, in addition to providing you with financing, will allow you to

generate new knowledge and technology that will increase the level of services you offer in the future, will position you on the map of agents who research in this field and it will improve your relational capital for future collaborations. Something that will facilitate your entry into these projects is the Fifth Commandment: specialize. It is not necessary (or possible) that you be good at everything, it is enough that you are the best at something that adds differential value to the project.

Exploit your results. As my English teacher used to tell me when I was little "don't be ashamed to speak because you know more than you think". You also produce more than you think. Periodically review your R&D projects and analyze which of them can materialize in products and services that mean new returns for you. Explore the possibility of applying for a patent, a license, or exploiting the result through the creation of a new company. Sometimes research projects end when the funding runs out and before you can exploit their results, the search for funding for new projects eats up your day to day and you don't have the money or time to take this last step. If this is your case, know that there are specific financing programs that help you finance a patent application or the necessary procedures to launch a new company. There are also professionals who can help you in this process (for example, us).

A patent, a license or a new company speak for you (and speak well), they allow you to expand the portfolio of services to your clients, they position you as a knowledge and technology generating center and, last but not least, they help you to meet one of the main demands of the public administration to continue financing you: to have results.

Third Commandment: know yourself

If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up anywhere. Take the time you need to answer the three big questions: who am I?, where do I come from?, where am I going?.

SWOT analysis is like a fly swatter: it's a tool from the Jurassic but it's still terribly effective. Put black on white your weaknesses and your strengths, and explore your environment to see what threatens you and where opportunities fly. Prepare proactive, offensive and reactive strategies, classify them in time and choose the actions and resources you need to carry out each of them. Have your main strategic concepts very clear and present: mission, vision, values and objectives.

As Grandmaster [Savielly Tartakower](#) said: "Tactics is knowing what to do when can do something, strategy is knowing what to do when nothing can be done". If this crisis situation drowns you and you think you can't do anything: strategy.

Fourth Commandment: know them

And since we're talking about bombastic phrases, in the [second part of The Godfather](#) there are one I love: "Keep your friends close, but your enemies even closer." Look up and find out who does what, how they do it, what they do it with and why they do it better than you. Analyze the centers inside and outside that have something in common with you and learn from their experiences, visit them (the centers are usually happy to open their doors and show what they do), look for possibilities of collaboration and start them.

Study well the business fabric that is your potential client, do not limit yourself to companies in the same sector as you and explore the possibilities of applying the technologies and knowledge that you can develop in companies in sectors totally different from yours. Your expert knowledge is probably enough to identify who all your potential clients are, but it is worth reviewing who are the clients of national and international centers that are like you and the reports on future sector trends that are published periodically by numerous organizations such as the [Observatory for Industrial Technological Prospective](#) or the [European Commission](#) among others. In addition, many private and public agents in the different autonomous communities make technology surveillance tools available that can be very useful.

Fifth Commandment: make companies fall in love

The "let the companies come to me" policy worked for Jesus, but it won't work for you. Unless you're already an established, reputable, and excellent technology provider, if you wait around for companies to approach you on their own initiative, you're going to be eaten by the cobwebs. Be proactive.

Locate your target companies, gather all the information you can about them and their sector, visit them, find out what their needs are, what worries them. Go a step further and use everything you've learned to figure out what will worry them tomorrow and help them advance solutions for the problems they will have to face.

For today's problems, offer them useful services that respond to their needs, intensive services in technology and knowledge, services that provide them with a differential value that no one else can provide. Be agile and keep pace with your times: the company is of no use if you hand over the shotgun when it has already been eaten by lions.

More than 90% of the business fabric of this country is made up of small and medium-sized companies, which do not have time for experiments and do not have plenty of money. Since you scrupulously comply with the Fourth Commandment, it means that you know very well what the competitiveness factors of your sector are, and since you also comply with the Third, it means that you have the ability to detect R&D projects in which either you can develop skills that it she will need in the future, or she can accompany you to develop together a project that benefits both of you. In any case, when the company sees that your knowledge and technology translate into an improvement in its income statement, the reluctance to collaborate with you will end. That easy.

One more thing. I know you have to pay the salaries. But don't sell low-level consulting. We know that you can sell innovation agendas and EFQMs better than anyone, but that's not what you're for. You were created for a much more ambitious destiny. And if, despite everything, you have no choice but to do it temporarily (paying salaries regularly is a great good practice that I do not intend to revile), do not call it consulting. Advanced knowledge services, for example, is more suitable. In any case, think that if companies perceive you as a low-level service provider, it will be difficult for them to trust you to embark on a research project under contract or for the transfer of cutting-edge technology.

Sixth Commandment: Specialize

The French say you can't have a full wineskin and a drunk mother-in-law. Translated into the language of technology centers, it means that if you have 15 people on your staff and you have 15 areas of expertise, what you have is a big problem.

Know your real and potential markets and focus your R&D activity with sufficient critical mass in a few areas in which you can differentiate yourself from other agents and that position you in a visible way in your field of action. You know: the one who has the most is not happier, but the one who specializes the most :-)

Seventh Commandment: network and collaborate

You do not have the best in all fields in your squad. Nor do you have enough budget to be able to assemble all the equipment you would like and access all the projects you covet.

How can you get around this problem?

One way to be able to develop more lines than your critical mass reasonably allows you is to expand your radius of action and attract capacities from abroad that allow you to develop projects in a network that you could not do alone. There are very interesting capabilities in universities, research centers, technology centers and companies that can help you carry out the projects you want but cannot. Create networks and collaborate with them.

Foster spaces for cooperation and synergies, solid alliances and understanding with the agents in your environment. Take advantage of the abilities and knowledge of those around you to grow more and go further than you would on your own.

Eighth Commandment: do not grow up like crazy

Grow responsibly and sustainably, consistent with what you have planned in your strategy and in line with what is happening around you or what you expect to happen in the future (for example, do not hire people because your company says so). strategic plan, if you sense that a financial crisis is coming your way that will leave you trembling).

A few days ago [I read an interview by McKinsey with Howard Schultz of Starbucks](#) on the one that spoke about the need to "grow with discipline". Among other things he said: "When you think of growth as a strategy, it becomes seductive, addictive. But growth should not be a strategy, growth is a tactic."

As you grow, keep in mind that not only the size of your workforce changes, but also your needs, your challenges, and your internal culture and philosophy.

Ninth Commandment: take care of people

To say that people are the most IMPORTANT thing in your organization, to say that people ARE your organization, to say that people are the CENTER of your organization is probably the most untrue and most cynical hypocrisy I have heard since working in this field. The further an organization is from respecting its people, the more it repeats it.

Don't ever say it.

Do it.

Surround yourself with the best people in their field that you can afford with the budget that you contemplate at all times. It encourages them to do everything necessary to improve their level of excellence in the field in which they have specialized. Whenever you can, encourage their participation in the processes that affect them in one way or another, so that they feel like their own and also promote them.

Promotes learning capacity and also self-criticism, flexibility, an open attitude to change, creativity and recognition of all those who make up your team. Remember that a fair salary is important but it is not everything.

Suggestion 10: call us.

The last commandment is an invitation. At Naider we have a human team that knows the strategy and operations of the centers well, just like you. We have developed strategies for other centers and support policies from the public administration, we have participated in technology center merger processes, we have helped exploit research results to turn them into returns, and we have designed concrete responses in times of crisis and growth. We will listen to you and we will put at your disposal all our knowledge, our experience and our time.

We'd love to meet you.

There are no comments yet.