

**CASE
STUDY**

**QED BIO-ENTREPRENEUR SCHOOL
2007**

**Dr KEVIN SLATER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
PETSCREEN**

Dr Kevin Slater is a self-confessed rebel. Although parental disapproval kept this in check during his formative education, the drive to break new ground was already in his DNA. Small wonder that his Nottingham-based bioscience enterprise PetScreen is now leading the way in British post-genomic technology by combining screening, early detection and directed treatment for canine cancer.

Dr Slater would not have believed he possessed an ounce of entrepreneurial flare as he graduated in applied biology and followed this with a PhD on the regulation of white blood cells in leukaemias. The 'typical academic' was persuaded to leave his laboratory comfort zone and risk the ridicule of his peers to enter the dark world of commerce: "I was totally unprepared and feared I would loose touch and then credibility with academic colleagues - I couldn't have been more wrong." Dr Slater's work involved extensive travel, conference presentations and discussions with international bio-scientists, so his knowledge grew and ideas flowed.

The rebellious streak is matched by impetuosity. In 1994, and with very little planning, he launched LumiTech Ltd with a former PhD student. Between them they developed the procedures to allow speedy testing of new drugs and successfully sold out to a US corporation. "The deal meant staying with the company for three years, quite common in these situations. The first six months were fine" Once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur.



Cricket matches can conjure-up all manner of pleasures not least the distraction of good company if you don't know one end of a cricket racket from the other. It so happened that Dr Slater was introduced to his future business partner Professor Graeme Radcliffe as leather met willow; both recognised immediately a synergy in their work and interests. Prof Radcliffe had lost a four-year-old curly coat retriever to cancer and the two soon decided to research the market potential for exploiting Slater's work on cancer and proteomics. PetScreen launched in 2004 to provide directed canine chemotherapy through veterinary practices and has gone on to develop cancer screening services using Dr Slater's early bioscience breakthroughs and contacts.

The partnership is quite unique in its combination of individual experience and success. The scientist-cum-entrepreneur now works alongside a foremost developer of information management systems whose earliest company NEWSdesk provided networked news feeds to journalists. Prof. Radcliffe went on to sell NEWSdesk but maintained his wide media experience, as well as Chairmanship of the Hive at Nottingham Trent University which provides innovative support for entrepreneurial spin outs from students and academics. Given PetScreen's strong consumer market focus, both men find themselves embedded in media and marketing campaigns which should eventually take the company global.

Chairman and Chief Executive are passionate about the business. Their advice to potential bio-entrepreneurs is to be open to new possibilities but to be prepared to compromise if this will bring commercial success. "Technology is never a product; it must be simplified and made accessible. It needs to close loops that have never been closed before. Then you need to ask, can we sell it like that?" says Dr Slater.

"We are breaking new ground" adds Prof Radcliffe, "no one else is providing international comparative analysis in this field and we are the first post-genome company with a fully-commercial offering. Success doesn't come easily but our advice to any entrepreneur is to stick at it."

Perhaps a penchant for cricket helps too.