
Radoslav Bonk: CEO & Co-founder of a biotechnology start-up

„Our company is a biotech company providing innovative Cell Banks for vaccine and vector production. With our Cell Bank platform and vaccine production expertise, we help customers to reduce time to clinical evaluation and time to market, and to save money. We also support certain steps in the vaccine production process.“



Radoslav Bonk
Nitroterra Technology
Small enterprise (11 - 50 employees), start-up
Sector: biotechnology, agriculture
Position: Co-founder a Member of the Board (CEO)

I am a CEO & Co-founder at Nitroterra Technology - biotechnology start-up developing solutions to allow farmers produce tailor-made, sustainable biofertilisers on site. I have a PhD in geography and before starting my own company I also worked in public sector and corporate business in positions including both R&D and business development.

PhD graduates are an important part of the core team at Nitroterra. We also collaborate with researchers in academia on the regular basis. There are many benefits PhD holders can bring to innovative companies. Besides a deep expertise in their field and knowledge of research methods they have a set of other skills valuable for employers. They are advanced in analysing and interpreting data, many of them have advanced IT skills. On the same time, they have synergic thinking and can view problems in wider context. As many PhDs spend some time abroad, they can speak languages, are well connected to international community and have an experience of how international teams work. And finally, they are not only able to solve complex problems but also understand how complicated some solutions need to be.

On the other hand, PhD graduates might face some challenges when moving to the private sector. Everything revolves around them and their research during their PhD study. In business environment they need to adapt to what the company needs and switch from the individual mode to teamwork. They also need to realise that the result of their works is usually not a final outcome. Instead it is an intermediate product someone else is going to work with further and therefore they need to deliver it on time even though it is not that perfect as they would wish.

It is difficult to give some general recommendation on what skills should PhDs focus on. In the end, it depends on the specific career path they choose. Private sector offers both opportunities for those who want to focus on R&D and those who want to combine research with more business-oriented activities. But if they wish to try entrepreneurship they should certainly invest into soft skills. I would also encourage PhD students thinking about setting up their own business (and with some idea in mind already) to try out participation in the entrepreneurship accelerator.