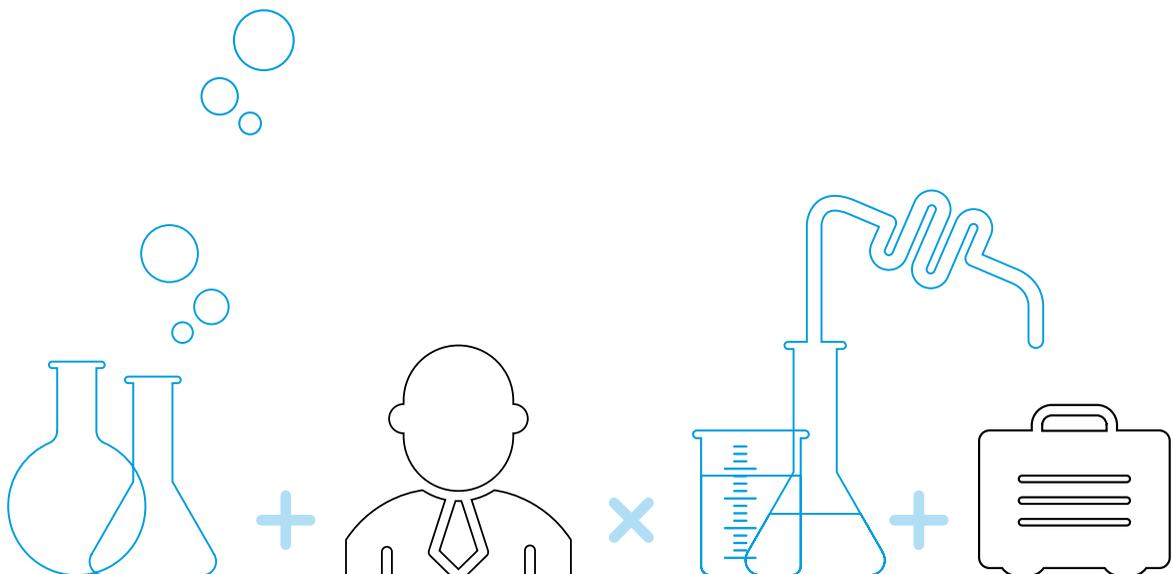


Business schools are increasingly looking to alliances to increase their strategic reach. **Julie Perrin-Halot** reports on one French attempt to break down the barriers between management and hard science

“” *Innovation campuses are characterised by their unique mix of science and technology, they are built on a triptych of fundamental and applied research, higher education, and industry and economic value*

One Giant step to collaboration & innovation?



In a time of shifting dynamics – economic, societal, geopolitical and more – business schools are finding it necessary to think more innovatively about their current and future business and academic models.

As a result, innovations are touching the way we teach, the way we learn, the way we work. They are taking place in our classrooms, our research agendas, our offices, our boardrooms and in our interactions with our communities.

They also affect the collaborative networks of alliances and partnerships that schools are developing.

For some schools, new forms of collaboration may be primarily a response to concerns about strategic positioning or brand leveraging. Collaboration may primarily serve the interest of offering new opportunities or, for some, may simply be a question of survival.

And yet, while for most schools the economic considerations may remain predominant, behind the choice to move towards new collaborative models is a desire to advance and differentiate the educational experience of their students while responding to the evolving needs of society.

The new alliances that schools are entering into are taking different forms. For example, certain schools may decide to initiate mergers with institutions very similar to their own to leverage their strategic positions and build on common denominators to create greater growth and presence.

A recent illustration (January 2012) was the announced merger of two triple-accredited French business schools – Bordeaux Ecole de Management and Euromed, based in Marseille. This merger is likely to produce the third-largest school in France in budgetary terms and one that will dominate the southern and Mediterranean areas of the country.

The Directors of the two schools refer to the critically strategic nature of this choice in the face of globalisation. A global brand must be leveraged and growth must accelerate for they predict that in ten years the French landscape will be dramatically different. While the venture is not without risk, the greater risk would be in not making a move.

Another example shows how schools may choose to collaborate through merging with organisations possessing different skill and knowledge sets in the interest of broadening their scope and impact.

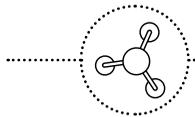
An example of this is the 2011 merger between Denmark’s Aarhus School of Business and Aarhus University’s Faculty of Social Sciences.

Undertaken as a part of a major reorganisation within Aarhus University, this merger has sought to create a structure better capable of responding to some of the greater challenges currently facing society by providing a broader interdisciplinary approach to business and management.

Because business leaders today must understand the impact their companies have not only on the economy but also on individuals, on society and on the environment, Aarhus has brought together business, management and the social sciences to provide these leaders with a more holistic awareness and approach.

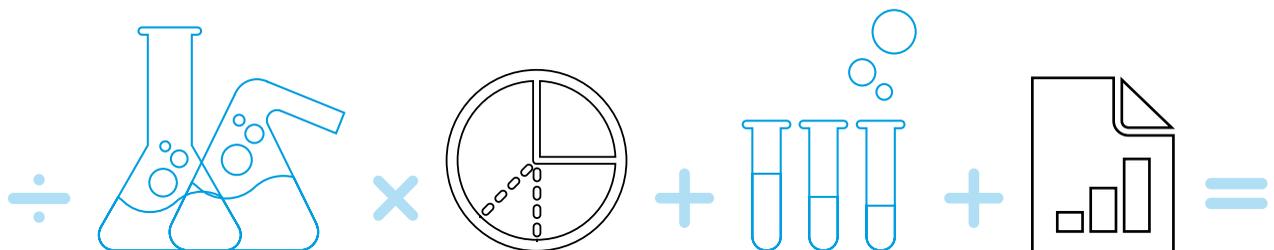
A final example – and the focus of this article – is that of Grenoble Ecole de Management and its unique alliance called GIANT – Grenoble Innovation for Advanced New Technologies.

Though similar to Aarhus in its stated aims to find responses to society’s greatest challenges, it differs in that rather than combining management science and the social sciences it is mixing management and hard science. Here is a different kind of alliance, one that reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of business and into a very different and innovative context.



GIANT

Grenoble
Innovation for
Advanced
New
Technologies



A handful of “innovation campuses” currently exist, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology, Caltech, may come to mind.

These campuses are characterised by their unique mix of science and technology, serving to imagine responses for tomorrow’s world. They are built on a triptych of fundamental and applied research, higher education, and industry and economic value.

However, few innovation campuses include a strong business/management dimension in the higher education component.

GIANT is one of the rare cases where a business school is a founding member of a science and technology campus dedicated to working in the fields of information and communication technologies, renewable energy and the environment, healthcare and the biosciences.

The GIANT initiative, seeking to emulate an MIT-type structure and reputation, is about both a programme and a campus. The programme is based on a declared intention by the founding members to remove the traditional barriers between disciplines. They are looking to provoke and respond to the scientific and technological disruptions that will drive the economy in the decades to come.

To do so, they are combining fundamental research with higher education and integrating a strong economic and industrial dimension through the active participation of a business school with expertise in the area of management of technology.

So what does a school specialised in management education have to gain from such an alliance? To begin with, it represents an unique opportunity for a business school, especially one that has already identified itself as an authority in management of technology and innovation (MTI). Grenoble Ecole de Management’s contribution to the higher education area of the triptych is readily self-evident and a multitude of possibilities are opening up in the areas of research and industry.



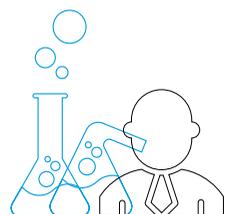
The effects of the school’s role in the GIANT project are multi-faceted. Many of the concrete manifestations to date primarily concern the school’s programmes, its people and its pedagogy.

Grenoble Ecole de Management finds itself in a position to capitalise on its existing expertise in the field of MTI, the niche it has occupied since 1984 when it was created to foster co-operation between scientists, engineers, managers and the corporate world.

A series of Advanced Masters programmes have been developed with concentrations such as energy marketing and management, biotechnology management, innovation, and strategy and entrepreneurship.

Executive Education programmes linking management and R&D, management and innovation, management and energy, nanotech and biotech management, and design and manufacturing of high-tech services are also being developed.

Furthermore, even the more generalist undergraduate and graduate curricula feature additional course offerings related to innovation and technology. Faculty, researchers and students at Grenoble Ecole de Management are being offered many new and diverse opportunities. A host





GIANT FOUNDERS INCLUDE:



RESEARCH FACILITIES

THE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY AND ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION (CEA)

THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (CNRS)

LARGE-SCALE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

THE EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY LABORATORY (EBML)

THE EUROPEAN SYNCHROTRON RADIATION FACILITY (ERSF)

THE LAUE-LANGEVIN INSTITUTE (ILL)

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GRENOBLE ECOLE DE MANAGEMENT (GEM)

GRENOBLE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (G-INP)

THE JOSEPH FOURIER UNIVERSITY (UJF)

8

A steering committee composed of the eight founding members acts as a central governance body. This is also an innovative approach considering the size and scope of the project as there is no legal structure binding the members. GIANT is an example of collegial project management and its success thus far is due to a clear vision of its objectives and the means required to attain them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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of events and forums linking local industry, researchers, faculty and students are regularly scheduled. Innovation seminars, research seminars and invitations to participate in nationally funded basic and applied research programmes concerning energy and innovation are being made available. In addition, cross-disciplinary projects and networks are being created.

Students at the school are offered increased possibilities to carry out innovation-related field missions within their programmes. Courses are being built around innovative projects mixing engineering and management students. Internships and missions for entrepreneurship students are proposed in GIANT start-ups. And new specialisation tracks have been created in marketing and energy, biotech strategy and management, architecture, and business and sustainable development.

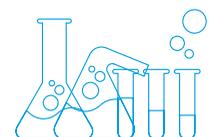
With its cross-disciplinary approach and focus on new technologies and innovation the GIANT project provides a superb platform for pedagogical innovations, both in content and in methods.

New cutting-edge technologies for teaching and learning will be tested with the aim of creating more and different interactive and distance learning opportunities. New blended learning techniques, greater diversification of populations in the classroom, increased experiential learning are all part of an ambitious project to put innovation to work to improve the quality of the teaching and learning experiences.

In addition, a new teaching and research oriented learning centre, combining library services with new technologies is under construction.

Finally, GIANT will be a campus – but not just any campus. Designed to be carbon-neutral with a co-operative approach to energy management, its buildings will be low-energy with vegetal roofs; a hydroelectric power station and solar panels will produce clean energy. A highly co-ordinated transportation system has been designed (trams, shuttles and electric vehicles) in order to drastically reduce single-occupancy vehicle use and eliminate congestion.

This is a unique urban community planning initiative that seeks to create a harmonious interweaving of spaces for work, residence and leisure – a perfect example of how innovations are not only touching the way we teach, the way we learn and the way we work but also the way we work together. **gf**



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