CASE STUDY

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

NovaBiotics Ltd

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Deborah O'Neil, Chief Executive and Scientific Officer

BACKGROUND

Size:	16 employees
Sector:	Life Sciences - Biotechnology
Location:	Aberdeen
Status:	First achieved Investors in People accreditation in 2007

THE ORGANISATION

Founded in 2004, Aberdeen-based NovaBiotics Ltd is a biotechnology company focused on the design, development and application of novel products to treat infectious conditions and diseases for which there are no effective, safe or resistance-free treatments. The first application of this technology will be a topical treatment for nail fungus.
It's unique technology has already demonstrated enhanced efficiency and safety over current and emerging competition as well as the potential for a fast track route to market.
Although small, the organisation can be characterised by a culture of co-operation, innovation and a strong drive to succeed.

- **100% staff retention**
- **100% positive feedback from new employees**
- **Progress in developing the company Quality Management System**
- **A supportive, innovation-driven and engaging culture**

THE CHALLENGE

Small innovative companies in the bioscience sector need a highly engaged and motivated workforce in order to succeed against competitors, in an industry where it can take many years to develop a viable product.

Aberdeen based NovaBiotics Ltd had reached a critical stage in the development of it's lead product and had to formalise it's quality management system in order to obtain the necessary industry accreditation to develop further. During the process it was decided to build on this momentum and take it to the next level. The company had "started from scratch" in 2004 and there was now the opportunity to ensure that the organisation had the practices and procedures in place to really support the innovation-driven culture needed to help the organisation succeed now and in the future. Investors in People was chosen as a method of assessing company systems and driving forward key changes where necessary.

A key element for the organisaton was tightening up the company induction procedures. As a small company it was critical to them that they have the systems in place to ensure they obtain the right employees and support them properly to succeed.

THE STRATEGY

For Paul McIntosh, Head of Administration and Deborah O'Neil, Chief Executive and Scientific Officer, transparency was important. Paul and Deborah attended Investors in People workshops, where possible with additional staff members, and then fed the information back to the whole team at weekly all employee lab meetings.

Each meeting had an Investors in People and Quality Management System component to keep everyone informed and, importantly, involve everyone in the process. Every staff member could have input into the direction the organisation could move forward and the results the whole organisation was aiming to achieve. "Everyone realised that Investors in People was key to success," says Deborah, "and we got everyone's buyin."

THE RESULTS

NovaBiotics Ltd has a culture of information sharing, cooperation and support. Rather than relying on external support, internal training, passing on experience and mentoring other members of staff outside their areas of expertise is simply part of the organisational culture. Paul gives an example: "When attending seminars and training events, we encourage staff members to put notes on what they've learned on the shared server for the rest of the organisation. That's just part of our culture." "Everyone is aware of the bigger picture, Deborah continues, "and what they can do as individuals to bring about success."

The weekly planning meetings actively encourage staff to discuss their work and experiment results. Staff members play a part in planning the experiments and can present their findings to the rest of the company and receive feedback from everyone. Each member of staff can see that their work has a direct contribution to achieving the company objectives.

The company now has individual training files for each staff member including formal induction and appraisal procedures. The induction procedures have resulted in 100% positive feedback from recruits and staff turnover remains at zero. The induction process is designed to empower and support new staff members as quickly as possible. "From my non scientist perspective," Paul explains, "I can see people are recruited and within weeks they're speaking up and making contributions. They're getting involved straight away!"

The organisation has progressed significantly in developing the Quality Management System (QMS) due to the strong engagement in the company objectives from employees. "The clarity Investors in People gives us has helped feed into this process," says Deborah. This success has resulted in the first commercial deals for the company. "Everyone remains committed to the organisation and this allows us to progress. We look forward to progressing even further. "[Investors in People] has benefited everyone in the company. It's given us the validation we needed about what we were doing well, but set things up for continuous improvement and involved and empowered the whole staff. I really think Investors in People benefits small innovative companies like ourselves. Everyone should do it!"

In July 2008, Investors in People Scotland introduced New Choices, a new way of working with Investors in People that allows an organisation to select areas of further development from the framework in order to drive development towards their own business objectives. "Going forward we'll continue to work with Investors in People and link it with our work in continuing to develop our QMS and industry accreditation," says Paul, "The new way of working with Investors in People should be really helpful.