

## The ideas man

**Technology business leader Ken Morse is a man on a mission to create more world-leading companies**

Googling Ken Morse results in a huge list of links, the text of most being punctuated with the words 'serial entrepreneur'. But this phrase does not fully represent Morse's achievements as co-founder of six high-tech global companies, including 3Com Corporation, Aspen Technology, a China trade company, a biotech venture and an expert systems business.

For thirteen years, Morse also served as Founding Managing Director of the renowned MIT Entrepreneurship Center (1996-2009), growing the number of students taking entrepreneurship courses from 220 to 1,600 per year.

He has been appointed to the National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship by former Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and President Obama, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and is currently teaching innovation and sales courses at the ESADE Business School in Barcelona.



With strong views on what it takes for companies to achieve global success, Morse is an enthusiastic supporter of Open Innovation – businesses adopting inflows and outflows of knowledge to encourage groundbreaking ideas. He explains: *“There has been a steady increase in the awareness by established firms that some of the best sources of innovation come from outside their company. They are realising that not all of the smart people work for them. There’s a general acceptance that innovation is a source of competitive advantage and that in-house R&D labs can’t possibly create all the innovation necessary to maintain their market position.”*

*“Thanks to the internet, product and service distribution is becoming easier, meaning competition arises faster and is increasingly global. Easier access to global markets can be a huge opportunity but also a warning against complacency because you may have to go global earlier than you would otherwise choose to.”*

Which sectors does Morse feel will be most impacted by Open Innovation? *“Any company with true global potential, driven by executives with large ambitions. Victoria’s Secret, for instance, sought out Mast Industries to help become more globally competitive: Mast’s ability to design new products and react to market needs faster derives from a huge room full of computers in Ohio and state-of-the-art factories in Sri Lanka. It is the IT component which has accelerated the design, manufacturing and distribution processes. Marty Trust, who started Mast Industries after he graduated from the MIT Sloan School, is an inspiration to all MIT entrepreneurship students.”*

Morse feels governments in Europe and North America can do much more to encourage proper levels of innovation and entrepreneurship. *“The US starts about 20 companies a year that achieve revenue levels of over a billion dollars in 8-15 years. We need to start 40 such giants each year. Many business incubators and local governments focus on the wrong things. They want to create more start-ups, so that is what they measure. But the world doesn’t need more minnows – watched, protected and fed daily in cosy tanks – which fail to grow into big fish. We shouldn’t be providing the minnows with easy artificial fish food. To be able to compete with fish spawned in the Indus and Yangtze Rivers, our start-ups need demanding customers, not easy funding.*

*“To maintain our standards of living we need to create and grow more billion-dollar companies. Many EU governments unfortunately favour large firms which are not growing and not creating more jobs.”*

Governments should also be wary of over-legislating if they want to create a thriving business environment, says Morse. *“Regulation is the enemy of innovation.”*

*“Looking to the future, we need phoenixes to rise from the wreckage of the economic downturn. We need ambitious entrepreneurs who see an opportunity and are able to go for it, because they are supported, or at least not impeded, by governments which work hard to remove potential barriers to their growth.”*

Ken is one of three professors leading the Open Innovation and Corporate Entrepreneurship course, held every year for executives at ESADE Business School in Barcelona. The next course takes place 28 May-1 June 2012, with the final date for registration on 20 May.

For more information visit: [http://itemsweb.esade.edu/exed/Microsites/open\\_innovation/index.php](http://itemsweb.esade.edu/exed/Microsites/open_innovation/index.php)

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Santander UK plc. Registered Office: 2 Triton Square, Regent's Place, London NW1 3AN, United Kingdom, [www.santander.co.uk](http://www.santander.co.uk),

Telephone 0870 607 6000.