

## Phil Whiting

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Phil is the President and CEO of Mirexus, a start-up company commercializing a breakthrough new nanomaterial. With the high cost and the hazardous nature of synthetic nanomaterials restricting their adoption and limiting their applications, Mirexus has solved these problems by developing a new nanomaterial that is extracted from sweet corn, is affordable, and is completely safe (edible). It's the world's only safe, non-toxic, edible, organic, mono-disperse nanomaterial that you can grow in the field next door. Such innovation is a testimony of application of science at work and is what motivated me to have a chat with Phil.

### **Academic Background**

Phil had his BSc in Science at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia where he also pursued his Master's degree in Science. He then moved to McGill University where he was awarded Excellence in PhD Chemistry and was the 1982 top PhD Graduate student in Physical Sciences and Engineering. After school Phil went into industry which is what he always wanted to do. He has had many positions, first as a research scientist and later in management in many different companies and industries.

### **What is Mirexus about?**

At Mirexus they extract glycogen from sweet corn for applications in skin care and nutrition. They also produce modifications of the extracted particles to convert them to derivatives that have many exciting human and animal health – including immunomodulation, drug delivery and cancer therapy. .



### **How does it feel to be CEO and what does it take to start your own company?**

For Phil being CEO does not feel any different than doing any other thing. Being good in fast-paced environments and commercializing science his role provides him with opportunities to bring the benefits of new science to the world. With a start-up company you must protect your innovation by having control over your intellectual property. You must be a hard worker willing to do everything yourself in the early days of the company and hire as the company grows. Connect with people with experience because investors like people with experience and extensive knowledge of what they are doing. You must be confident and coachable; investors do not invest in an idea they invest in people who have the credibility to implement an idea. You must be willing to use your own resources because sometimes it may be long before you start realizing profits and work hard in continuing to attract investments. Investment is what you need to take the business further.

### **Advise for a graduate student**

Know what you want. If you want to own your own company one day, find a start-up company with somebody who is already doing something and work for a few years and learn how they are doing it. Aim to get a PhD which gives you more management and leadership focused positions in industry. Build relationships with good people – they will have a great impact on your career.