

# Letter from the Editor

## What's ahead in 2011?

Although the chemical industry has recovered strongly from the crisis, a potential double-dip recession still frightens even the greatest optimists. Further exacerbated by unstable economic conditions, emerging markets, and shifting political power relations, decision makers in the chemical industry seek to prepare their companies for 2011. Apart from aligning existing resources and capabilities with established markets and customers, the long-term success of chemical companies is dependent on the openness to new, promising business opportunities, such as bio- and nanotechnology, sustainability-oriented innovation, or health care applications. Accordingly, chemical companies not only have to derive their goals from widely diverging forecasts, but also to resolve the core trade-off between flexible strategies and efficient operations. In order to present promising avenues for dealing with this challenge, this issue of the Journal of Business Chemistry comprises the following articles:

In his commentary "Industrial biotechnology becomes a key competitive factor", Manfred Kircher highlights the potential role of biotechnology in the future. To lever the inherent business opportunities, he recommends a cluster approach that is marked by partnering along the whole biotechnological value chain. Thereby, he draws upon the German Graduate Cluster Industrial Biotechnology [CLIB] to substantiate his commentary by means of a best practice example.

With regard to the question of how companies should behave in turbulent environments, Mattia Bianchi, Alberto Di Minin, and Federico Frattini, then, introduce a new amphibious organization type. Based on a paradigmatic case study of an Italian chemical company, their article "Towards a phenotype of the amphibious company: an illustrative case from the chemical industry" comprises the development and discussion of specific behavioral traits that are associated with amphibious companies, i.e. doing different jobs good, diversifying in multiple market arenas, brokering and bridging across business networks and absorbing knowledge from the outside. According to the authors, firms that successfully implement these practices are likely to be the "fittest economic species in today's hypercompetitive business arenas".

In the second research article "Exploring market knowledge in product development of chemical firms", Armand Smits, Geert Vissers, and Ben Dankbaar identify important market knowledge dimensions that underlie the innovation process of chemical firms. They emphasize segment knowledge, application knowledge, product usage knowledge, and customer knowledge as the building blocks of successful innovation and introduce an overarching knowledge framework for market-oriented product development. Their findings are grounded on a qualitative research approach that comprises a multiple case study of six product innovation projects in six chemical companies.

In our practitioner's section, Ralf Schmidt presents success factors for effective pricing in times of crises. To determine the specific impact of the financial and economic crisis 2008 / 2009 on the chemical industry, he and his team conducted interviews with 80 pricing managers. These experts emphasize, for example, the importance of the structuring of pricing processes or a result-oriented alignment of the pricing in general to survive a crisis unscathed.

Now, please enjoy reading the first issue of the eighth volume of the Journal of Business Chemistry. We would like to thank all authors and reviewers who have contributed to this new issue. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to send us an email at [contact@businesschemistry.org](mailto:contact@businesschemistry.org).

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