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## **The BIRD Foundation: Catalyst for US-Israeli Partnerships**

BIRD has been supporting US-Israeli partnerships for almost 29 years. Since coming on board as Executive Director on January 1, 2006, I have met a variety of companies and individuals that have benefited from BIRD's support in the past, or are still benefiting from it today. It is impossible not to be impressed by the feedback I get from managers and entrepreneurs from well established companies and from much smaller, relatively new companies, both in Israel and in the US. There are a myriad of success stories across the spectrum, which is certainly very rewarding to all those that have taken part in making it happen. As a newcomer to BIRD, I can only say that I am very proud to become part of this endeavor.

Israel is effervescent with innovation and new ideas. This is apparent in many areas, as in networking, security, wireless technology, homeland security, biotechnology, medical devices, and more. However, many companies struggle to introduce their technologies and capabilities in the global market, especially in the US. Not only is the US market huge in of itself, but it typically opens additional opportunities in other global markets. It is here where we at BIRD can be of great value to Israeli companies, by supporting partnerships with US companies. BIRD funding can become a catalyst to an emerging partnership. In addition, our highly networked team can be very instrumental in helping a company to find a partner.

The US industry, often the global leader in many sectors, generally has an overwhelming advantage over the rest of the world. The main challenge that many US companies face is fierce competition from home and from abroad. Small and medium size companies are always looking for means to be ahead of their competitors while maintaining profitability. Large enterprises are typically concerned about disruptive technologies emerging from smaller, innovative competitors. A large number of US companies, recognizing that in many areas Israel is a fertile ground for innovation, have become proactive in searching for partnering opportunities. We at BIRD can assist US companies in finding these opportunities and, no less important, we can provide funding for innovative, relatively risky projects.

“It is change that always provides the opportunity for the new and the different. *Systematic innovation consists in the purposeful and organized search for changes, and in the systematic analysis of the opportunities such changes might offer for economic or social innovation.*” These words, now well known and widely accepted, were written in 1985 by the late Peter F. Drucker (exp. November 11, 2005 at the age of 95). Our contemporary world is one of fast-paced changes, resulting from socio-political events, globalization and technology. These changes open wide opportunities for innovation in many areas of our life. We are witnessing this phenomenon in “real time” for example, in the areas of wireless and internet technology. As another example, an upswing of innovation is imminent in technologies related to energy alternatives due to the global dependence on resources which are under political control.

As Drucker stated it, successful entrepreneurs should *practice systematic innovation* if they want to reveal creative business opportunities. We at BIRD have adopted Drucker's approach. Our state of mind is to be in a constant search for innovation and business potential, while fostering US-Israeli partnerships. The "meeting of the minds", i.e. the brainstorming that takes place during the encounters between companies from two very different environments, produces new ideas characterized by enhanced "market-match," and eventually become successful BIRD projects. This is our version of *synergic innovation*.

The BIRD model is a proven one. We do not retreat from funding a risky project, as long as it is based on sound capabilities and proven access to the market, as demonstrated by the US and the Israeli partners. We share the risk with the companies but are rewarded by fostering an evolving, fruitful partnership. Of course, the ultimate reward for us, as for the business partners, is the successful commercialization of the technology developed in a BIRD funded project.

As part of our constant search for innovation and business potential in US-Israeli partnerships, we are open to projects in new areas. In addition to the more well-established areas of communications, electronics, life sciences, software and more recently, homeland security, we are also interested in nanotechnology as well as technologies related to energy alternatives and the environment.

We look forward to supporting new partnerships between US and Israeli companies and facilitating synergic innovation.

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