



## **Leaders & Success** **Blaze The Newest Trail**

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September 9, 2010

Think it's best to be first? The path to success for groundbreaking products is anything but smooth. How innovators take the bumps:

- **Fight off attacks.** "If you have something good, people will try to steal it from you." So says Pure Bioscience (PURE) CEO Mike Krall.

In 1999, his company found a little molecule with enormous potential. Silver dihydrogen citrate kills strains such as H1N1 and E. coli with what Pure says are no bad side effects.

"Bacteria cannot form a tolerance or a resistance to it," Krall said. "The good that comes out of it is amazing."

Unfortunately, the wrong people took notice. A three-year legal dispute with international firms claiming rights to the molecule ensued. As company resources dwindled, Pure's senior managers used their paychecks to meet expenses.

"Everyone just hunkered down," Krall said. "The good news is now no one can ever dispute who owns the technology."

- **Navigate the maze.** Winning over federal regulators proved another epic journey.

"It takes time to push yourself into these programs," Krall said.

To earn an Environmental Protection Agency registration — a requirement for any product that claims to kill living organisms — Pure plodded through a six-year process.

- **Think long-haul.** "Persistence — it's the only thing that causes success in my experience," said architect Bob Noble.

That's what he drew on to push Envision Solar into new territory.

Now CEO of the market leader in sun-powered parking lot shelters, hybrid car charging stations and self-powering buildings, Noble had completed a single solar car port project when he founded the firm in 2006. Back then, an Internet search for similar structures turned up zero results. "That tells you how far ahead of the curve we were," he told IBD. "We were launching a new industry."

• **Rebound from a crash.** Envision Solar was developing a solid client base until 2008's national financial crisis put the brakes on construction spending.

"By the end of the year, all of our projects were dead," Noble said.

The firm's leaders steeled themselves for a rough patch of vendor debt and attrition.

"The personal sacrifices across our team were significant," Noble said. "But you not only survive; you continue to maintain a strong advocacy of the mission you set out to fulfill."

He says projects are coming back.

In 2009, Dell (DELL) looked to Envision for its Solar Trees. They shade parking lots while generating power to charge hybrid vehicles.

"That's become a giant driver for our business," Noble said.

• **Look down the road.** "It's just as dangerous to pick up on a trend too early as it is too late," said William Higham, author of "The Next Big Thing."

That's because unforeseen events can stop the next big thing in its tracks.

Or the trailblazer can simply run out of money waiting for his fledgling market to mature.

To determine if an innovation will set a new pace or fizzle like a fad, Higham weighs myriad details — such as a product's visibility and potential adoption speed.

"You have to get really quite specific with these things," Higham said. "It's not crystal ball gazing. It's actually a very straightforward marketing tool."