



Stepping up the 'Start-up Nation'

Karin Mayer Rubinstein, one of the most influential ladies in Israel's life sciences and technology industries speaks about innovation and women in hi-tech

• BY DEBORAH DANAN

The story of Israel's entrepreneurial prowess has received so much attention that you'd be hard-pressed to find an Israeli who doesn't have a story about a buddy from the army who became an overnight millionaire with a splashy exit.

Today's start-up generation might be viewed as the followers of the country's early agricultural pioneers. The question is, what needs to happen for that generation to mature – so that the "Start-up Nation" will truly evolve into a nation of major international technology players?

Enter Karin Mayer Rubinstein, CEO of Israel Advanced Technology Industries, Israel's largest umbrella organization for the hi-tech and life science industries and one of the most prominent female figures in the country's most high-profile industry.

She has painstakingly ensured the continued development of the last decade's tech boom – most notably spearheading the merger of two seemingly polarized



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fields. "Until two years ago, life sciences and hi-tech were always kept apart from each other, and in Israel, each had their own organization. Of course, there are fundamental differences in the nature of each discipline;

whereas speed is the name of the game when it comes to hi-tech, the life sciences process is notoriously laborious with a much longer pipeline.

"Nevertheless, then-chairman Aaron Mankovski realized that the overlap between them was too great to ignore and that, at the end of the day, we needed a platform on which entrepreneurs, investors and multinationals, and the entire ecosystem from both sectors can freely collaborate and promote their joint objectives."

Representing approximately 500 companies and organizations in both industries, the IATI's membership list under Mayer Rubinstein's leadership is now a veritable "who's who" of Israel's hi-tech and life sciences ecosystems.

R&D centers of multinational tech giants, including IBM, Intel, HP, Microsoft, Google, eBay, General Motors and General Electric, are all members - as are international life-science companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Perigo, Teva and Merck. Some of Israel's hottest tech start-ups like Waze, Powermat, N-Trig, Payoneer and LiveU also belong to the organization, as do several well-known homegrown life science companies like Argo Medical Technologies, iMDsoft and Protalix.

MOREOVER, most of Israel's major venture capital funds are IATI members and the same goes for incubators, accelerators and even the tech transfer centers belonging to Israel's leading academic institutions. The IATI board includes leaders from many of the top international tech giants, and is co-chaired by Yoav Chelouche and Dr. Benny Zeevi, two veteran Israeli venture capitalists.

"Our goal is twofold: first, we have a national goal to position hi-tech and life sciences as the foremost industries in Israel, and provide a voice for those industries both inbound and outbound. Internally and externally, we work hard to promote regulations that support the hi-tech industry," says Mayer Rubinstein. "Our second goal is organizational - basically doing whatever it takes to grow business development and create inter-sector opportunities and relationships among our members. The IATI operates at once both as a peer-to-peer democracy and as a matchmaker between all the different players."

Science, Technology and Space Minister Yaakov Perry addresses the overlap between science and hi-tech. (Courtesy)



"Israel has proven to the world that it has the talent and ingenuity to be a world leader in technological advancements. The next step is to ensure that talent is given the tools and support system needed in which to grow and continue to cultivate a culture of cross-pollination and multidisciplinary collaboration."

One of the ways the IATI achieves this is by organizing hundreds of seminars, webinars, roundtables and speed-dating events every year – the largest of which is its first ever "MIXiii Israel Innovation Conference" set to take place in May 2014.

The Innovation Conference will combine three major conferences of previous years that cover the

country's entire innovation gambit: the IATI Biomed Conference, the IATI Hi-tech Convention and the Office of the Chief Scientist's Conference. With over 7,000 people expected to attend, it will be the largest technology and innovation gathering in Israel.

In addition to combining hi-tech and life sciences, the event will place special emphasis on emerging fields, such as cyber-security, agritech, adtech and fintech (financial tech), digital health as well as all tradition pharma and medical device sectors. "We represent and support the entire ecosystem," says Mayer Rubinstein.

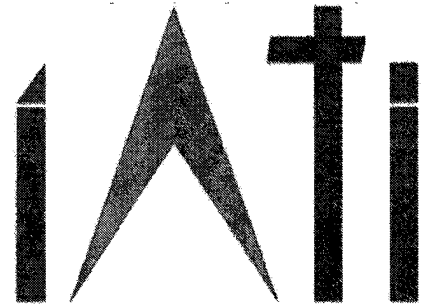
Another of the IATI's key tasks is to liaise

Courage involves dealing with your own fears, but need is an existential thing
 – Karin Mayer Rubinstein

directly with the government on behalf of the hi-tech community. The IATI interacts with policymakers, ministers and legislators to pass bills that foster industry growth and to prevent harmful regulations.

"At any given time, we are dealing with urgent and substantial regulation-related issues," says Mayer Rubinstein. "For example, the IATI was instrumental in introducing significant amendments to the country's 'R&D Law,' promoting the involvement of institutions in investments in hi-tech and life science companies, and promoting the employment of those over the age of 45."

Mayer Rubinstein, who aside from her law degree holds master's degrees in economics and finance, served as a university lecturer while practicing law at a few of the country's most prominent firms. But



Israel Advanced Technology Industries



From left: Economy Minister Naftali Bennett, IATI's CEO Karin Mayer Rubinstein and IATI co-chairmen Dr Benny Zeevi and Yoav Chelouche at IATI's MNC Conference 2013. (Courtesy)



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