

Silverglide Surgical Technologies (A)

Abstract

From a rocky perch above the city of Boulder, Colorado, Jon Thorne gazed across the city and onto the great plains that stretched eastward before him. “There’s nothing like a vigorous mountain bike ride into the hills,” he thought, “when crucial decisions have to be deliberated.” It was a summer afternoon in 1999 and Thorne had devoted much of the past three years developing and taking to market a surgical instrument that he thought had the potential to significantly improve surgical practice. Though the feedback from surgeons had been excellent, Thorne’s company, Silverglide Surgical Technologies, Inc., had little to show for his efforts. The \$80,000 in start-up capital that Thorne had raised was nearly gone and his company’s sales to date “rounded to zero,” as a member of his Advisory Board had remarked at a board meeting earlier that week. Was it time to broaden his company’s market focus from plastic surgeons into other surgical specialities? Was it time to abandon the probe and develop a new product line? Or should he abandon his entrepreneurial dream and return to a salaried job in the medical products industry from which he had come?

John Mullins is Associate Professor of Management Practice at London Business School. This case was developed with the support of the Centre for Scientific Enterprise. The author thanks Julian Lloyd for his research assistance.

London Business School cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion and are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

© 2008 London Business School. All rights reserved. No part of this case study may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise without written permission of London Business school.