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Author: Ikhlaq Sidhu

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Case Study: Imprint Energy and Christine Ho

From Research to Company to Behaviors

Imprint Energy was co-founded by Christine Ho and Brooks Kincaid in 2010. The company commercialized an ultra-thin, flexible, rechargeable battery technology that could be printed. The case is useful because it shows the journey from university research to venture formation, business validation, and leadership development.

Figure 15. Imprint Energy's decision-maker validation map.

Initial Conditions

The roots of the company came from Christine Ho's Berkeley materials science research. Her work explored very thin batteries that could be printed and made environmentally safer. The venture began with research, then the intent to commercialize, then founding team formation, and then business development.

Research can be the initial condition for a venture, but research evidence is not the same as customer or business evidence.

Story

The team already had demonstrations and technical papers. The story therefore had to connect the technology to a product, market, and business need. The key question was not only whether the battery worked, but who needed it badly enough to help bring it into a real product.

A deep technology story must translate technical possibility into customer value, adoption path, and decision-maker urgency.

Execution While Learning

Imprint Energy learned through customer and partner conversations, product experiments, funding processes, and attempts to identify the right commercial applications. One recurring lesson was the difference between people who are technically interested and people who can make business decisions.

Behaviors Learned for Developing the Business

The case also shows the personal transition from researcher to executive. The leader must learn to communicate beyond the technical community, find decision-makers, negotiate partnerships, and keep the venture moving through uncertainty.

Validation is incomplete until the team reaches someone with authority, urgency, and a path to action.

Summary

Imprint Energy shows that technical progress and business progress are different but connected. A successful deep-technology project must advance both.