

Diasporas as Catalytic Agents for Accelerating Mexican Companies into the Global Market

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June 2007

1. Introduction

In September 2003, a key meeting was held in New York, organized by the Mexican Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), AMD and The US-Mexico Foundation for Science (FUMEC). This event was the spark that brought, one year later, the elaboration of a proposal from FUMEC to Secretaría of Economía to create the TechBA program. The distinguished participants in that meeting included the President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, the CEO of AMD, Hector Ruiz, high ranking officials from the Mexican government and a motivated group of Americans, Mexicans and members of the Hispanic Community in US. The meeting concluded with a recommendation to launch a Bi-National organization to enable cross-border collaboration for fostering the development of a high value industry in Mexico by building venture capital capability and by launching incubation programs to promote high-tech Mexican companies to fully reach their potential...

The TechBA program goal is to accelerate the most promising high-tech companies from Mexico, and help them to become global. The first TechBA office opened in Silicon Valley in early 2005. The acceleration program lasts one year although companies still retain some TechBA assistance after completion of the program. In its mere two and a half year of existence, TechBA Silicon Valley has accelerated 55 companies, pre-accelerated 30 and has built a solid presence in Silicon Valley. In a parallel process, the Mexican Diaspora of professionals has been organizing itself, and a new organization, Red de Talentos, has emerged recently. The Mexican and the Latin Diasporas have acted as entry point to the Silicon Valley ecosystem for TechBA and for its companies.

2. TechBA Model – Accelerating Mexican Companies

2.1 A Brief History of TechBA

In April of 2004 representatives of the Secretaría de Economía, The US-Mexico Foundation for Science (FUMEC) and of several leading Mexican institutions visited the Silicon Valley, under the hosting of the Mexican Consulate in San Jose, led by Bruno Figueroa, to learn first-hand about the high-tech industry and its impact in the creation of wealth and jobs. This short visit was the beginning of intensive discussions among these visitors and their institutions on the best way for Mexico to take advantage of the lessons from Silicon Valley. Two leading initiatives surged from the discussions: a) the creation of TechBA as a program to help high-potential small technology-based businesses from Mexico to reach the global market, and b) initiated the process of grouping Mexican innovators from Silicon Valley and the rest of USA interested in working with their colleagues in Mexico to capture opportunities available in global markets. These

two initiatives have been working together since then and are growing and evolving as lessons are learnt, momentum keeps building and critical mass is beginning to be reached.

Currently, TechBA has three additional offices around the world, in addition to the initial one in Silicon Valley. They are located in Austin, Montreal and Madrid and are focused on high tech business development with a various levels of integration with their “local” Mexican Diaspora.

TechBA Silicon Valley started to hold informal meetings with the “local” Mexican Diaspora every month. The concept of building the “Red de Talentos” to engage the Diaspora of Mexican professionals and build joint opportunities, originated in these meetings, and later an organization to carry out this objective was created. The effort has been strongly supported by the Consul of Mexico in San Jose, Bruno Figueroa. Additionally, the Instituto de Mexicanos en el Extranjero (IME) participated in this initial efforts and then extended the concept to other cities. These actions landed into the creation of local groups from the Red de Talentos in many cities including San Jose (Silicon Valley), San Diego, Houston and Detroit.

2.2 Acceleration vs. Incubation

Ideas for possible companies may be available everywhere, but transforming such ideas into successful products or services are complex processes that involved technical knowledge. On the other hand, the most important element for building a successful company is a thorough understanding of critical needs of potential customers (clearly distinguishing “must have” vs. “good to have”). Therefore, TechBA has been looking at the development of successful companies in two stages. The first step consists of converting an idea into a useful product or service. This stage is known as incubation. The second step consists of the commercialization of the product or service to reach a large market. This is known as acceleration. TechBA model stresses the second stage. The typical TechBA company already has a product and/or service, is already in the Mexican market, and has the potential to become a global company. Then TechBA helps this company to become global by launching it in the US market through a formal business development process.

2.3 Accelerator in Silicon Valley, why SV?

Silicon Valley has the largest concentration of venture capitalists, technology companies, entrepreneurs, scientists and technologists willing to transform their ideas and innovation into new companies. From the original Hewlett-Packard (HP) launched almost 70 years ago to the recent Google that started less than 9 years ago, many highly influential high-tech and life-sciences companies were

launched in Silicon Valley. The local environment greatly helps innovators to transform their ideas into products or services for the global market.

Once the Secretaría de Economía working jointly with FUMEC decided to establish an acceleration program for Mexican high-tech companies, Silicon Valley was selected as the natural location for a first site

The Silicon Valley Ecosystem

The Silicon Valley ecosystem includes top universities such as Stanford encouraging strong academic-industry collaboration, and with solid links to venture capital. Other top universities and research labs have also played key roles in the dynamics of Silicon Valley including the University of California at its various campuses, NASA, Lawrence Berkeley, Lawrence Livermore, etc. Key components of the ecosystem are vibrant companies, large and small, that compete and work together. Companies such as Intel, HP, Cisco, Google, Yahoo, Genentech, Gilead, etc. are fast growing public companies. Startups constantly generate innovation, are often started by former employees of some large companies, and if successful are then acquired by another (or sometimes the same) large company, so the cycle starts again.

Information flow is carried by agents (entrepreneurs, lawyers, accountants, service providers, etc.) in numerous forums (formal events such as meetings, talks, conferences, workshops, etc., or informal activities such as circumstantial encounters in e.g., parties, sport events, etc.). Many Diasporas have formal and informal activities in the Valley offering excellent opportunities for newcomers of a given ethnicity or nationality to get introduced into the SV culture. Some of these organizations include Indian organizations such as TiE, Chinese associations such as CSPA and the National University of Singapore Entrepreneurs Association in the Bay Area, Singaporean organizations such as SABA, etc.

The TechBA Ecosystem

TechBA has been actively building its ecosystem with strong links to that of the Silicon Valley. The Mexican and Latin Diasporas have acted as entry points to the SV Ecosystem. Hence, organizations such as the newly created “Red de Talentos”, Hispanic Net, Red de Amigos de TEC, etc., and interested individuals (executives from large firms, entrepreneurs that started or worked in startups, etc.) collaborate with TechBA. Individuals usually are introduced to TechBA by friends or at some events, and in many cases show high interest in learning more about the program and its participant companies, and about possibilities of joining the effort. Usually, they may offer some free help, but for sustained collaboration a win-win relationship has to be established.

In turn, these individuals bring their own network, and act as entry point to the much bigger Silicon Valley ecosystem.

2.4 TechBA Programs

TechBA has both, educational, and coaching and business development activities. Educational activities are targeted to a large audience and coaching and business development efforts focus on selected companies that are accepted to be part of the TechBA Programs of Acceleration and Pre-Acceleration. TechBA organizes seminars, workshops, and other events, both in the US and webcasted across Mexico. The audience for these educational activities includes entrepreneurs, executives, researchers, incubator managers, and other innovators. These webcast events are one of the many mechanisms for enhancing interaction among people on both sides of the border. TechBA organizes and participates in networking events, and has presence in newspapers, radios and TV to build awareness in US of the Mexican high-tech and life-sciences industries.

The Acceleration and Pre-Acceleration Programs are the core activities of TechBA. TechBA Silicon Valley so far had 55 companies in its Acceleration Program, and 30 companies in the Pre-Acceleration Program. These programs are described below.

Three Generations of TechBA Companies

The TechBA program recruits the top high-tech ventures in Mexico with potential to expand globally. There is a selection process that ranks companies according to their potential to succeed in US, and choose the top companies for participation in the Program. There have been three generations of TechBA companies. Companies accepted by the program have access to a) offices and conference rooms, including all needed infrastructure to operate (phone, internet access, etc.), b) matching grants for consulting support in US, and most importantly c) access to the SV ecosystem via consultants with actual experience of building companies in US. Many of them are from a Latin origin but have lived in Silicon Valley for many years. The consultant team is a very international group and reflects the Silicon Valley culture which has promoted the integration of the best ideas and people from around the world.

In the selection process, TechBA looks for candidate companies located anywhere in Mexico. Once accepted into the program after the TechBA's screening process, the company benefits from a well structure process to help the management team to understand the requirements to become a player in the global market. TechBA helps the team to define a marketing plan, the company positioning, sharpen the value proposition, etc. TechBA works on both, technical

and market validation. These validation processes provide a valuable assessment of the market potential for the company and for TechBA. Once the company is ready to attack the market, a go-to-market strategy is developed; an analysis of the needed resources is performed, and business plan is constructed. Such a plan is the blueprint to start the execution phase and a tool to ignite the enthusiasm needed to reach the proposed goals.

In the last two years and a half; TechBA Silicon Valley helped accelerate 55 companies in three generations, each generation lasted a year. Results have been quite positive, and we have seen the following outcomes: a) some companies found that they were not yet ready for US market, but have used the lessons from the program to grow in Mexico , b) other companies expanded their markets to several geographical areas, e.g., opening offices in San Diego, Virginia, Boise in Idaho, etc. , c) many companies have built alliances and/or partnerships with US companies d) several companies established collaboration with leading US universities for further product development to strengthen their US market positions, e) some companies have obtained venture funding or are in the process of obtaining funding The most successful company in the portfolio is JackBe, a company that has got two rounds of venture funding, and is currently seeking its third round. Several others are seeking investments, are developing alliances and are ready to capture a piece of the market share in the global market.

Pre-Acceleration Program: Getting Ready for Globalization

In the process of helping Mexican companies to expand into the US market, TechBA has learned that it is quite helpful to start the assessment, training and coaching of companies that have strong intentions of becoming global before they make a full commitment to launch themselves into the effort. For such cases, TechBA has designed a short duration program (4 month long) that a) produces an assessment of the potential for such a company to become global, b) provides recommendations to the management team to attack weaknesses and threads, c) helps the management team build a short business plan for globalizing the company.

A group of 30 companies were invited to participate in this new program in December 2006. The Pre-Acceleration Program was implemented making extensive use of eLearning platforms and leveraging feedback and comments from previous participants. The companies stayed home in Mexico most the time; and phone conferencing tools such as Skype and Asterisk were use for communication between the company in Mexico and their consultants in US. Regularly we held virtual events using Interwise collaboration, as well as wiki technology and related tools to share knowledge and create participation in open groups that included people in both countries. The integration of technology with the day to day activities opened new opportunities to create, discuss and

enhance ideas and to explore the potential for these ideas to be converted into real companies.

3. Diaspora as Catalytic Agent - Some Examples

3.1 TechBA and Diasporas in Silicon Valley

TechBA has been in Silicon Valley for over two years, has impacted the Silicon Valley ecosystem and has built relationships with many local organizations such as universities, investor groups, Fortune 500 companies, etc., and with various Diasporas.

Here we just mention a few examples:

1. Red de Talentos: organization of the Mexican Professional Diaspora – has participated of many TechBA events, and as discussed above, its origins are intertwined with those of TechBA. Its members have been active in many TechBA activities, have worked with several TechBA companies and have benefited from several joint business opportunities.
2. Hispanic Net: network of Hispanic Professionals, initially in Silicon Valley, and now expanding across the US. Hispanic Net organizes monthly events in SV about entrepreneurship, investments, technology reports, etc. TechBA has been collaborating with Hispanic Net in various events and activities.
3. ECODAR: stands for “**E**ncuentro de **C**olaboración **D**íaspورا-**A**rgentina”, and it is the Red de Talentos’ sister organization of the Argentinean Professional Diaspora with nodes in Silicon Valley, Washington, New York, Miami and London. There has been both, strong synergies among both diasporas in Silicon Valley, and direct engagements of members of the Argentinean Diaspora with TechBA companies and with the TechBA Program.
4. LatIPnet: recently established non-profit organization for enhancing the value of innovation and Intellectual Property (IP) in Latin countries by creating synergistic opportunities with the global demand. LatIPnet has nodes in Spain, Argentina and Mexico, and headquarters in Silicon Valley. LatIPNet is collaborating with TechBA by helping to accelerate its companies, bringing additional companies to its pipeline, and establishing collaborations among companies bringing resources from Latin countries and their Diasporas.
5. Silicom Ventures: one of the largest investor networks in the US was originally started by the Israeli-Jewish Diaspora in Silicon Valley and initially focused on IT. Now has expanded in both, its composition that includes locals and individuals from several Diasporas, and its areas of interest which also include life-sciences and nanotech. Silicon Ventures and TechBA jointly organized a highly successful event in December 2005, the “Mexico Technology Showcase” that brought over 300 guests including leading investors, Fortune 500 executives, managers of startups and corporations, etc.

6. SUN Microsystems and Hewlett Packard (HP): leading computer and networking solutions companies. Some Mexican and Latin Professionals of SUN and HP have been helping TechBA companies, and participate of TechBA programs and activities. In return, this is providing SUN and HP of additional business opportunities, both, in US and in Mexico.
7. University of San Francisco: a leading Jesuit University in San Francisco has a joint program with TechBA that was launched over a year ago. This program is led by Prof. Carlos Baradello, member of the Argentinean Diaspora. Prof. Baradello has engaged not only USF students and professors with TechBA (and the TechBA ecosystem) but also members of the USF Board of Trustees and the USF community. The joint program has already produced valuable results (see examples below).

3.2 TechBA Leveraging Diasporas: Some Examples

In this section we briefly describe some cases that show early results of the TechBA Program, and of its synergistic relationships with the Red de Talentos (Mexican Diaspora of Professionals), with the Latin Diasporas, and with the Silicon Valley ecosystem at large. TechBA has greatly benefited from this ecosystem and, in turn, it has provided new opportunities to members of the ecosystem. This is a typical win-win relationship greatly encouraged by the local dynamics of the Silicon Valley.

Innovative Food Company Entering US Mass Market

In July 2006, two brothers that own a dairy farm in Aguascalientes, Mexico, joined the TechBA program. They brought an innovative set of milk-based food and beverage products that they developed for over two years, working in collaboration with food technology researchers from Guadalajara. The dairy industry in Mexico is in a difficult situation, and survival of that industry is in question. Adding value to milk, allowing for higher prices and volumes, and expanding markets would be not just a good business for these farsighted brothers but also it might greatly help an ailing industry in Mexico. TechBA team has been working with the company for almost a year, and a substantial progress has been made toward bringing their products to the mass market in a near future. Mexican and Latin Diasporas have been playing a key role in this story.

Some of the key initial tasks for the company to attack the US market included: technical validation, commercial validation, defining IP strategy and applying for initial patents. Other key activities include building US team, getting ready for pilot production in US and then for scaling processes to reach mass markets. Some key researchers in food industry and dairy sciences from the University of California, Davis and from CalPoly are members of the Guatemalan and the Mexican Diasporas. These researchers were totally receptive to the Mexican company. After validating the potential of the technology, they became excited to

have the opportunity for working together, and became members of the scientific advisory board. Their help has been enormous in several fronts: a) technical validation, b) some commercial validation, c) help engaging some key customers, d) providing facilities for pilot plant, e) helping with process improvements, f) joint grants with CalPoly and University of California for further developments.

TechBA has a program with the University of San Francisco (USF) led by Prof. Baradello, from the Argentinean Diaspora. One of the members of the Board of Trustees of USF is a well known executive from the food industry, and this individual has proven to be an enormous asset for the Mexican Food Company. This executive was brought on board by Prof. Baradello. The executive has helped with the following a) facilitated the engagement of the Mexican Company with the leading product development company of the food and beverage industry. In particular, its founder and chairman of the Board became personally engaged, b) provided invaluable feedback about the business, c) helped recruiting key people.

The Mexican company is now working in partnership with the leading product development company in the industry and will have products in the mass market in 2008, has built a first-class advisory board, has consolidated its Intellectual Property position and has been talking with leading investors. Overall, is in an excellent position to enter the US market attacking the highest growth food and beverage segment with innovative products led by a first class team. Practically all these accomplishments have been catalyzed by the Mexican and Latin Diasporas.

Medical Device Company Building Partnerships in US

Sergio Aguirre, a young and bright entrepreneur from Tijuana, Mexico, is the founder of Echopixel, a medical device company started in Monterrey, in 2005. Sergio studied at the Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) and has been living there for over 10 years. He had previously worked on 3D stereo visualization for the oil and geographical information system industry, and found ways to adapt and improve the existing visualization techniques for medical applications. Echopixel joined TechBA in July 2006. At that time, many tasks were required to launch Echopixel into the US market including: a) technology validation, b) market validation, c) building an ecosystem of partners, collaborators, etc. that could help the company approach the US market, e) fundraising. Again in this case we found that Mexican and Latin Diaspora were effective at opening doors, and learning about a new (Silicon Valley) culture in a friendlier manner.

Technical validation has been done in part, by presenting Echopixel's technology and product to academic researchers in close contact with the industry at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and at the University of Minnesota (UMN). These centers are, respectively, leaders in gastroenterology research and in 3D visualization for medical applications. The Diaspora provided

contacts to open doors at UCSF. Prof. Guillermo Sapiro, a leading researcher at UMN and a member of the Uruguayan Diaspora, soon after completing validation became a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of Echopixel. Moreover, a recent Ph.D. from Sapiro's group is joining Echopixel in summer 2007, and is bringing a critical expertise that provides Echopixel of additional competitive advantages. The TechBA program with USF has also helped Echopixel, in at least two fronts: a) interested a leading venture capitalist (VC), member of the Board of Trustees of USF in Echopixel. Echopixel had two meetings with this VC and has continued its engagement since then; b) two interns from USF have been working on marketing and competitive analysis for Echopixel.

Echopixel is building key partnerships with leading medical device and health-care companies, assembling a first-class advisory board, improving its technology and product based on customers' feedback. Echopixel is also applying for grants and engaging with potential investors. Echopixel received the Intel Prize in a business plan competition in Mexico in September, and was one of the finalists of the worldwide business plan competition organized by UC Berkeley and Intel in October. In November, Echopixel was invited to present at an Investor Forum held in, Canary Islands, which counted with the participation of top startups from USA, EU and the Americas. Many of these activities and accomplishments have received substantial assistance from members of the Mexican and Latin Diasporas.

3D Inspection Company – From Academic to the Global Market

Miguel Arias, CEO and founder of Prefixa is a professor of the INAOE in Puebla and for the last few years has been doing leading edge research on machine learning, visual inspection and 3D recovery. His interest in not just scientific research leading to publication of more papers, he also has pursued commercial applications of his work. Prefixa joined the TechBA program in 2006, brought visual inspection technology and a product under development, and was interested in commercialization of its technology and/or products in US.

In order to launch the US effort, several tasks were undertaken by the TechBA team working with Prefixa. Among them are: a) technical validation, b) commercial validation, c) market analysis, d) IP strategy and patent filing, e) acquiring beta customers— As in previous examples, the Mexican and Latin Diasporas have proven to be quite valuable. The Mexican Diaspora provided access to relevant researchers at Stanford University. One of the researchers, former chairman of the Computer Science Department is originally from Monterrey, and alumni of the Tecnológico de Monterrey. This effort helped validate the technology and enhance the IP. Prefixa has then filed for a utility patent covering its inventions.

Another member of the Mexican Diaspora is a key executive of one of the leading Programmable Logic companies, and met with the Prefixa team a couple of times. He also arranged meetings with relevant people at his organization. Discussions are progressing well, and it appears that some partnership would be established between both companies in the coming months. A partnership with such an organization gives a solid boost to efforts to enter the US market. The TechBA program has brought a market developer specialist in micro-technology, who helped Prefixa acquiring a key beta customer: a large wafer inspection company that, if beta testing is successful, could sign a multi-million contract.

More Examples: Diasporas bringing the Power of Networking

C3 - Nearshore Merger – A Sonora - Silicon Valley Marriage

Roberto Martinez, a visionary entrepreneur that came to Silicon Valley in early 2006, had a small company in Hermosillo, Sonora with 8 people. He was offering custom software development to companies in the USA and had the vision to create a large software factory. When, he came to the USA he met Javier Quezada, a California native with Mexican parents affiliated with TechBA, and told him about his idea. Javier then invited Matt Perez, a Cuban born who grew up in the US and has been involved with the Mexican Diaspora via friends and associates. Roberto and Matt worked together for a few months, and now their companies have merged leveraging Matt's contacts and Roberto's capability to acquire the top human resources in the Sonora region.

Wireless Sensor Technology – Value of Strong Academic Partners

A wireless sensor technology company, based on Tijuana, Mexico, joined the TechBA program in 2005. A well known expert in the field is Professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This professor is originally from Mexico and became member of the Advisory Board. This proven to be an excellent way to have door opened for technical validation and collaboration. Another world expert, from the University of California at Berkeley, a colleague of the Mexican researcher also became member of the Scientific Advisory Board, and collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley was established to further develop the company's technology and to build some product prototypes. The collaboration with world class experts in the field gave credibility to the company, not only with technical people but with potential customers, partners and investors.

Building Critical Mass – Moving IEEE Top Scientific Event to Mexico

This example does not refer to TechBA's core activities of accelerating top Mexican companies, but is about the synergetic Red de Talentos – TechBA interaction, which have proven instrumental for bringing to Mexico one of the most important events in the Database field: the “International Conference on Data Engineering”, ICDE, which is to be held in Cancun in April 2008.

Malu Castellanos, a Mexican born scientist working at HP Labs, started to promote the idea to take ICDE to Mexico. Malu sought help from other Mexicans in her field to organize the event and recruited the following colleagues and members of the Mexican Diaspora: Alex Buchmann, from TU Darmstadt, Germany, José Blakeley, Microsoft, USA, and Pedro Celis, Microsoft, USA. These four Mexican did the promotion and made the proper arrangements to take this important conference to Mexico in collaboration with top colleagues in Mexico including Juan Carlos Lavariega, ITESM, Guillermo Jimenez, ITESM, and Adolfo Guzmán Arenas, Instituto Politécnico Nacional. This event opens a forum to introduce to a large audience of students, professors and researchers the state of the art in Database technology. The idea to take the event to Mexico originally came from the Mexicans Abroad who are pushing the development of Mexico from outside the borders. TechBA acted as a bridge connecting various members of the Mexican Diaspora among themselves and with colleagues in Mexico.

Plaza Bank – Building a Latin Bank for Low Income Hispanic Entrepreneurs

A small group of Latin-Americans in Seattle identified a need and an opportunity by helping low income Hispanic communities. They decided to provide access to small lines of credit to members of the community interested in developing their own business or in expanding or remodeling their own properties. This group raised 25 million dollars and created a bank in the Seattle area. This is an example of an organization that is part of TechBA ecosystem. Both organizations, TechBA and the Plaza Bank can help each other building win-win relationships; e.g., the Bank can acquire services from TechBA companies, and in turn TechBA can help advertise services to entrepreneurs provided by the Bank.

NUMMI – Auto links for Mexican Companies

A group of five companies in the automobile industry sector participated of the TechBA Pre-Acceleration program in 2007. The last part of the program included meetings with potential customers to validate their value proposition. The TechBA program worked with the San Francisco University. The joint program lead by Prof. Baradello, identified key contacts in the auto plant of New United

Motor Manufacturing Inc (NUMMI). The plant is located in Northern California, not too far away from TechBA. NUMMI resulted from the joint effort of two large manufacturing companies Toyota and General Motors. The Mexican companies visited NUMMI and got valuable feedback that greatly helped these companies with their strategy to enter the US market.

Montellano Estructuras – From Carrots to Lettuce

Alfredo, a brilliant mechanical engineer from Celaya, Guanajuato developed a machine to harvest carrots. He decided to take his invention to the global market. Already in the United States, he found that there was no market for his invention. At an event organized by TechBA Austin, Alfredo met a Mexican fellow that has been in the USA for long time and owns some land in Texas where he grows lettuce. After some conversation, Alfredo found an opportunity to build a business in US by adapting his machines to now harvest lettuce.

Red de Talentos – Silicon Valley Pointing to Detroit

Lucia, a woman entrepreneur from Chihuahua came to Silicon Valley to participate of a TechBA workshop. In her visit to the Valley, Lucia met several members of the Red de Talentos at a social event. One of them told Lucia that there is a good market in Detroit for the services she offers. This person put Lucia in touch with a group of Mexicans in the Detroit area. Additional contacts were provided by the Mexican Consulate in Detroit that has been holding events for the Mexican Talent Network. Some weeks later Lucia started her first negotiations in Detroit to sell her services.

A Mexican IPO in Silicon Valley – Rafael Bracho

How you find a hidden start? This has been the big question for the Mexican Talent Network in Silicon Valley. One of our (TechBA) dreams is to take a high-tech Mexican company to the public market, via an Initial Public Offering (IPO). A successful company requires a good idea in a growing market, a team of brilliant and persistent people and a set of magical conditions that helps in the process. This process has been realized successfully by Rafael Bracho. Rafael, originally from Mexico, is a friend of TechBA, and is giving us advice in how to help high-potential Mexican companies follow the path of rapid grow to eventually become public. Rafael, who had previously worked at Sun Micro, launched ActiveSoftware in the 90's to pursue his own ideas. Later he found himself on road-shows promoting his company in its way to an IPO. Some time later his company merged with WebMethods, and finally he retired in 2003 looking for his next idea. Now he is on his way into new ventures with a strong desire to help other entrepreneurs.

4. Conclusion

TechBA has been in Silicon Valley over two years, and in such a short period has made substantial progress helping Mexican companies to become global, becoming part of the Silicon Valley ecosystem and providing access to this ecosystem to Mexican entrepreneurs and innovators.

Innovation processes are not linear nor are predictable. In fact, innovation may arise, in some instances from chaotic input and serendipitous ideas. In an environment such as Silicon Valley, one should always be open to new opportunities, and if (or when) they happen, act fast to take advantage of these opportunities since the time-window is always limited. All the short histories presented in this paper always involved motivated people that requested help and support from the ecosystem that TechBA has provided, and, in turn, they offered back business opportunities to this ecosystem. Usually people with new ideas and clear questions get answers. One should be not afraid to ask for help. Usually when somebody helps, she or he also gets an opportunity to participate (as advisor, investor, employee, consultant, etc.) in a new project, a new company, etc.

One usually finds that people from one's country (Mexicans), and region and/or culture (Latin Americans, Hispanics) may open doors first and that interacting with them is easier. This (Mexican and Latin Diaspora) is usually the entry point to the ecosystem of Silicon Valley. Once there, one finds that people help people sharing common interest even when they may be in possibly competing companies. At the end, building dreams into reality is the only element that nurtures an entrepreneur's soul. A dynamic ecosystem such as that of Silicon Valley keeps entrepreneurs going until they succeed, and then these entrepreneurs help others to accomplish their own dreams.