

Analysis of DuPont Nanotechnology Practices

DuPont is an example of a multinational company that is developing nanotechnology products. The company board of directors is comprised of stakeholders from academic, government, and non-profit organizations as well as people from other businesses. DuPont is a significant company to study because they specialize in virtually every industry, meaning any nanotechnology advances they make could easily converge with other DuPont innovations. This convergence of technologies could result in unforeseen consumer consequences, especially if other companies follow DuPont's lead. This global influence in the academic, military, and business sectors also makes DuPont an important case study for this IPRO because DuPont's actions dealing with nanotechnology literally affect the rest of the world.

Tentatively, it appears that DuPont is conducting nanotechnology research very responsibly. As of last October, DuPont and Environmental Defense, a non-profit organization which has been a partner of DuPont for decades, announced they are developing a set of guidelines for themselves and other businesses to use to develop, produce, and market nanoproducts ethically, without scaring the consumer away. This set of guidelines is going to be tested in the business world first by DuPont, during the development and sale of nanoproducts currently still in research. Then, the project description states that the next step is to develop a protocol for other nanotechnology-oriented businesses to use within three years [1]. This program is significant because of DuPont's vast business network it has the potential to affect the nanotechnology practices of a vast number of businesses all over the world. The DuPont website did not list any instances in which this protocol is being employed, but since the intention to start the research phase of this project was only announced last October, this is understandable.

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However, DuPont is also closely involved in military applications of nanotechnology. In 2003 DuPont founded the Institute for Soldier Nanotechnology (ISN), along with the U.S. Army, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Partners Healthcare, and Raytheon. Most of the research is conducted by the Army and MIT, and the businesses belonging to the Institute mainly serve as advisors [2]. Since DuPont has the goal of initiating responsible nanotechnology research practices in the business world with its partnership with Environmental Defense, it is conceivable that DuPont could positively influence the practices of the government through its involvement in ISN as well.

The DuPont website is very easy to navigate, and a link to contact the company's Corporate Information Center is present on each new link the user opens. One can email the Corporate Information Center or call a toll-free hotline that is open twenty-four hours a day. The link to email the company was broken, but the numbers for several hotlines were given. While it is depressing that one cannot contact any executive directly, the contact information that the company does provide is readily accessible and this is commendable.

DuPont has been around since 1802, so longevity is not something that they have to fear. This enables the company to take financial risks such as the initiative with Environmental Defense to develop a standardized set of ethical nanotechnology business practices for all businesses. Their influence in multiple countries and in the government makes them a very interesting company to watch. DuPont appears to be a very positive role model for all companies researching nanotechnology, but only time will tell if this is true.

REFERENCES:

[1] Ruta, Gwen and Fisher, Linda. DuPont-Environmental Defense Framework for Responsible Nanotechnology Standards Project Description.
<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/5130_DuPontNanoPartnership010905.pdf>. 2005.

[2] <http://web.mit.edu/ISN>

<http://www.dupont.com>