
Managing Knowledge Work and Innovation is grounded in an extensive body of international research and analysis. The book demonstrates that knowledge work depends primarily on the behaviours, attitudes and motivations of those who undertake and manage it and not simply on the implementation of information systems technology. The authors are accomplished experts on this topic area. This book is primarily a student text, especially helpful for MBAs looking for an introduction to the importance of knowledge in today’s workplace and for postgraduates attempting a dissertation on knowledge management. It may also be of interest to knowledge management practitioners and R&D managers because there are thoughtful case studies presented at the end of each chapter that explain strategies for managing knowledge-intensive workplaces.

The book contains 10 chapters of which the following should be of particular interest to readers of R&D Management: Chapter 4 (Managing Knowledge Creation in Teams); Chapter 5 (Project-Based Organizations and Knowledge Work); Chapter 8 (The Role of Social Networks and Boundary-Spanners) and Chapter 9 (Managing Knowledge for Innovation).

Throughout the book there is an emphasis on combining theories with practical examples and case studies. The practical examples are drawn from a good variety of sources, which include Buckman Laboratories, Xerox, Midlands Hospital (NHS Trust) as well as biotechnology and other industry sectors. One of the key messages of this book is that knowledge creation within organisations, leading to the development of new products, services and processes, typically occurs within teams and projects. This process depends on achieving a synergy between members so that, through ‘creative abra-

sion’, something new and useful will emerge. However, some creative teams might suffer from potential problems including a propensity to conformity and group polarisation effects. To overcome such problems there needs to be the development of trust between team members. The authors state that as trust is not easy to develop, there should be prolonged interaction between team members to develop the shared understanding necessary for trust to build up and for knowledge sharing to be possible. Also linked to this issue is the need to better understand the politics of innovation processes. Interestingly, here the authors stress the need to deploy different forms of power so that stakeholders are willing to engage and share what knowledge they have, so that conflict can actually be used to mobilize rather than resist change.

Recently, ‘open innovation’ has attracted considerable interest from management scholars and practitioners, including special issues in R&D Management and other management journals. This book contains a brief section on open innovation in Chapter 9, where it is stated that managing knowledge to achieve open innovation rests on many of the processes discussed in this book (including team work, network building and supportive human resource management (HRM) practices). The authors add that we must be very careful about depicting the open innovation model as a new panacea for innovation as there is uncertainty about whether organisations actually have the human or organisational capabilities required to support an open innovation business model. The inclusion of a discussion of why the authors believe this to be the case with many organisations may have been enlightening, as we can learn as much from the drawbacks of open innovation as from its successes. One other interesting point to note here is that the authors attempt to show how managing knowledge for open innovation hinges on developing networks and exploiting complementary skills of partner organisations while securing a share of the final profits. This point is summarised in a diagram (figure 9.5) entitled ‘an open innovation system’. The extent to which this notion can be
Operationalised is debatable as it seems to emerge without any theoretical or practical underpinning. Therefore, more explanation of this model would have been helpful for readers.

Overall, this book provides a good contribution to the field of knowledge management where students and tutors should find it a worthwhile book. There is also a complementary web site available for a range of lecture resources.

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