Inter-firm knowledge transfer in the industrial goods industry – An empirical study of distribution and protection mechanisms

Abstract:

Companies designing and manufacturing industrial goods readily share their product creation knowledge in order to benefit from low-cost wages and available manufacturing capacities of partner companies within product creation networks. Yet, with the possibility of saving money in the short term comes the risk of providing sourcing partners with the product creation knowledge they need to reproduce unique features of the original products. This dilemma makes decisions on knowledge sharing difficult. Scientific contributions on the issue mainly propose “threat scenarios” caused by counterfeiting and “opportunities” through globalized sourcing, and do not focus on the knowledge transfer aspect. Still, there is little understanding of the mechanisms by which knowledge is transferred and the mechanisms by which such knowledge transfer can be controlled (i.e. restricted or fostered), especially for engineering knowledge. In order to provide a more detailed understanding of the implications of transferring knowledge in multi-firm product creation networks, we need a more detailed picture of such mechanisms. In this article we present results of an interview study providing an insight into
mechanisms of knowledge transfer and its control in multi-firm networks in the industrial goods industry.

Stichworte:
Knowledge transfer; Inter-firm networks; Industrial goods; Interview study; Bottom-up analysis

Herausgeber:
Schiuma, Giovanni; Spender, J. C.; Weir, Maria

Kongress- / Buchtitel:
International Forum on Knowledge Asset Design

Kongress / Zusatzinformationen:
24.-26.06.2010

Konferenzort:
Matera, Italien

Verlag / Institution:
Università degli Studi della Basilicata

Verlagsort:
Potenza

Jahr:
2010

Semester (für SAP-Datenerfassung):
SS 10

Occurences:

· Einrichtungen > Fakultäten > Fakultät für Maschinenwesen > Institut für Mechatronik > Lehrstuhl für Produktentwicklung (Prof. Volk komm.) > Konferenzbeiträge
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