Knowledge Transfer to Partners: A Firm Level Perspective

Abstract:

Purpose – Firms at the center of an organizational network may benefit from educating and building up competencies of their partners. For that reason, centers often seek to transfer knowledge from the center to partner firms. They even set up systems of interorganizational knowledge transfer to plan, to coordinate, and to control such transfers on a firm level instead of managing single knowledge transfer projects individually. However, little systematic attention has yet been paid to such systems on a firm level. This paper seeks to analyze the managerial mechanism to decide what knowledge to transfer to what partners.

Design/methodology/approach – To address this gap, data were gathered on nine leading multinational center firms. An explorative approach was adopted using case study research to look at the characteristics of network centers, network partners, knowledge, transfer channels, and programmes. Findings – It was found that center firms offered knowledge transfer products to partners and set up portfolios of knowledge transfer programmes targeted at specific partner groups. There is further
elaboration on fundamental decisions on the programmes' design, communication, access, and pricing. Originality/value – The research contributes to shed light on how center firms manage knowledge transfer activities from the center to partners on the firm level and how they structure it in the form of programmes. Therefore, the paper does not focus on the management of knowledge transfer in particular partnerships or networks, but also considers interdependencies between individual knowledge transfer initiatives.

Stichworte: Knowledge management; Knowledge transfer; Multinational companies; Partnership

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