

## Track no. 4: Management in knowledge intensive business services

Knowledge intensive business services (KIBS) are often defined as private companies or organizations; relying heavily on professional knowledge, i.e. knowledge or expertise related to a specific (technical) discipline or (technical) functional domain; and, supplying intermediate products and services that are knowledge based. (Hertog et al 2000). So, KIBS firms are professional organizations whose primary value is creating activities comprising the accumulation, creation, or dissemination of knowledge to provide a customized service or solution that satisfies client needs (Bettencourt et al., 2002).

KIBS form a category of service activities that is often highly innovative in its own right, as well as facilitating innovation in other economic sectors, including both industrial and manufacturing sectors. (Hertog et al 2000). Transferring knowledge within these kind of businesses is described as problematic, both in literature and in practice. Ideas, information and knowledge are shared through a multitude of formal and informal channels within the organization. Some claim that only information can be transferred, whilst knowledge can be conveyed, but must thereafter be learnt by the recipient. This means that knowledge management between employees in KIBS companies is extremely important, but at the same time the diffusion of knowledge is difficult and complex.

To conclude, KIBS are professional in nature: they focus on customized problem solving for the client, which typically involves the use of expert knowledge and a high degree of credence qualities for the customer.

Within the KUTA research project<sup>1</sup> we have identified a need for research that focuses on how work organizing and operations management is executed in knowledge intensive business services. This since industrial and technological companies often stand as raw models for KIBS companies when it comes to organizing. By adopting the same kind of management methods as industry, companies within the service sector might be seen to increase their legitimacy and status among their clients and other stakeholders (DiMaggio, 1983/1991). The adoption of a specific management method can thus be interpreted as having more to do with legitimacy and rhetoric than actual use for it in the daily work (cf Abrahamson, 1996; Czarniawska, 2002). Another interpretation of this import of industrial management ideas by the service sector might be seen as a result of a lack of alternatives, i.e. that the knowledge regarding how the service industry is managed and organize is not enough developed to such a large extent so far. Even though people within the service sector express their

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<sup>1</sup> *Competitive service work* (KUTA) is a research project that was initiated in early 2010 at the Royal Institute of technology (KTH). The purpose of the project is to develop understanding for operations management and work organization in professional service companies.

doubts about “forcing us into the industrial model” (Almega, 2008-03-18), there are not so many alternatives when it comes to describing and understanding the service industry from its specific conditions (cf \Crevani, 2009).

The purpose of this track is therefore to attract researchers that discuss and develop the understanding for industrial management in KIBS. This track therefore wishes to attract papers that describes and discuss KIBS, with a specific focus on (but not limited to) for instance:

- Work organizing
- Operations management
- Organizing collaborated creativity
- Execution of the service development by for instance projects
- Human resource management
- Knowledge Integration
- Knowledge Management

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