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Emerging trends of knowledge management in organizations (2)

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SHARING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

Cooperation with another space agency allows the realization of missions that would otherwise be inaccessible, scientifically, technologically or economically. But these advantages are to be put in comparison with the constraints which do not miss to appear for all the parties involved as soon as a cooperation starts. On this occasion, knowledge sharing necessarily takes place, even if meticulous care is generally taken to clearly delimit what one agrees to show to others and what one imposes on oneself not to reveal. What is referred to as "knowledge sharing" and which must be distinguished from information sharing (such as interface specifications) will be this set of knowledge, know-how and behavioral skills that it is inevitable to show when a common "object" is created with other partners. That is to say, when it is a question of justifying an analysis (wrt. to knowledge), negotiating a way of doing things (wrt. know-how) or a way of apprehending a problem, a risk, a commitment (wrt. know-how). In a recent paper we analyzed the multi-cultural constraints that are bound to arise in any cooperation between an agency and another agency or with its national industrialists. But these cultural difficulties are only one facet of the problem of sharing knowledge in a cooperation between agencies and their industrialists. When cooperation is indispensable, the question of knowledge sharing becomes unavoidable. We start by distinguishing two types of situations. First, there is the situation of two organizations that have carried out activities together or that have joint projects. In this case, under certain conditions, knowledge can be produced that can be shared and/or exchanged. For example, lessons learned in terms of feedback. Two or more organizations may have the common objective of exchanging technological data, sharing equipment. This concerns, for example, the problems of Model Based System Engineering or digital continuity. This leads to a common semantic knowledge reference system. Another type of situation concerns the case of organizations (space agencies, companies, start-ups) that plan to share knowledge among themselves, expecting mutual benefits. To analyze this situation and the problem as a whole, we will rely on notions such as viewpoints, ecosystem and on the concept of "self-centered world", which allows to say that if a laboratory and a space agency are in the same ecosystem, they are not in the same "self-centered world". We will conclude with some recommendations.