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Abstract

How crowdsourcing could help university-business cooperation

We analyse some crowdsourcing and open innovation platforms, and we meet with some companies (in Portugal) to better understand their point of view about crowdsourcing to connect university and business. We can say for some areas like design and information technology this type of platform is well developed and it works, but in other areas we will not find one which match business and universities knowledge. We spoke with some companies developing their own, but they are experiencing some problems, like “How to attract solvers for the problems submitted?” and “How to can we maintain active participant interest?” By developing this platform, we aim to help companies overcome the difficulties by increasing the number of people (students and professors) using crowdsourcing platforms, and as result they will maintain their interest in being there.

Another problem identified (Goduscheit, Jørgensen and Bergenholtz, 2010), is the lack of understanding of the open innovation process and managerial implications. We will put together, companies and HEI’s discussing difficulties and advantages of mind-set changes. We also can contribute to the understanding of the open innovation value to the energy companies and find areas for European researchers to work together. According to Hakkim and Heidrick (2008) a constant flow of ideas and technology will contribute to knowledge networks and alliances that will foster competitiveness. However, some of the studies show some risks in integrating an open innovation model, namely in areas where machines and property rights are fundamental and could increase the competitiveness from one company to another in the same area. The project will contribute to better understanding of the critical areas in the energy field to be worked on in an open innovation basis.



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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



It seems that it has been becoming harder to produce innovative ideas individually and all companies world become more open to the power of networking and sharing knowledge. As a result, it is necessary for institutions to branch out in order to become more innovative and effective, enhancing their brainpower with ideas from outside their business. The company's competitiveness is related to innovation; companies need to develop new methods, products and processes in order to foster their sustainability. This leads us to the need to reinforce the communication and knowledge transference. Although steps have been taken in order to promote the relation between universities and business, there are patterns to break because both sides are closed into themselves. Our project aims to promote the creation of an open cooperation model, "struggling" against internally focused models. This work involves changing the mindsets established, promoting the exchange of ideas and enhancing synergy's to create positive, open and trustful relations between universities and business. It is necessary to find alternative ways of dialogue in order to achieve company's needs. universities need to work closely with companies and, as a result, they can develop applied research to solve practical problems. The challenge is how to manage efforts to implement new strategies of interaction and closeness between these target groups. In this sense, some projects that aimed to bring together the business and academia realities, by enhancing synergies and know-how of each part involved, have been developed and financed.

We are aware that "The mind-sets of HEI's and also industry are changing, and collaborations bring people and skills together, both through interdisciplinary and through inter-sectorial projects. But there is a need to remember the different mission and roles of university and of business, and respect these differences. It takes time to work together, to build up trust, but Europe is making progress" (Curell, Jordi; 2011). Our project respects these differences and represents gains to both parts: A) Companies will get solutions to their challenges and take advantage of the knowledge inside the HEI's; B) HEI's will collect information about the company's needs, respond to them and, at the same time, collect material and ideas for future research projects that are line up with real problems.

We will present the platform, called Challenge Academy, some of the previous results about the implementation and we will practice and discuss further uses to improve the cooperation and go throughout the main barriers to this kind of partnerships.



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