

Los Determinantes de la Generación y la Transferencia del Conocimiento en Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas del Sector de las Tecnologías de la Información de Barcelona

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Abstract

The abilities to create and to replicate knowledge are critical for enterprises which operate in dynamic environments. These specific firms need not only have relevant technological resources but they must demonstrate flexibility and administrative capacity to coordinate their internal competition effectively. In this doctoral thesis the processes of knowledge generation and knowledge transfer are analysed in the context of small and medium enterprises working in the information technology sector in Barcelona.

As a current phenomenon with few studies published on the subject this research has been developed in two phases: the first phase through qualitative research using the case study technique. The conclusions drawn from this phase have allowed the designing of a conceptual model. This model is empirically tested in the second phase, which was conducted utilizing quantitative research. In this second phase the focus of the study was the organizational and individual elements that are necessary to accomplish the knowledge generation and knowledge transfer processes. This test was carried out with a sample of 105 personal questionnaires that were administered to 4 medium and 11 small enterprises, and the structural equations model as a statistics technique. At the same time the relevance of knowledge characteristics as a firm value resource has been tested.

The results of the study suggest a model in which the knowledge generation process is feasible through external knowledge acquisition and internal knowledge creation. This last process is facilitated by personal motivation and the learning opportunities it offers to the organizations' employees. In these types of firms the employees play a key role as initiative and suggestion carriers. These employees' commitment level shows that organizational structures must be less hierarchized, and leadership styles should be based on interactivity in order to create the conditions to preserve flexibility among workers.

On the other hand, the study of knowledge transfer in these kinds of enterprises shows that this process is possible using formal and informal communication means. Even with formal communication means such as documents and Internet support employees prefer to share their knowledge through face to face contact and coffee sessions. These informal communication means are facilitated by office layout, organizational culture, time availability, and the personality traits of the people who participate in the process (sender and recipient). In contrast to other research the knowledge transfer study shows that top management support and the level of communication technology available are not relevant.