

ABSTRACT

We have conducted interviews with Research and development and patents managers in three large smart cards firms which are part of the JavaCard Forum. We chose that sector as it is pointing the way to the future of many businesses. We hypothesized that collective competencies enabled by Knowledge Management and present electronic tools would facilitate the generation of technological innovations. How does the JavaCard Forum develops collective competencies? Collective competencies start with individuals and their specialized Knowledge, who share a common language, use the same work methods and codes, share common objectives are willing and have fun on exchanging and working together. We found that the most fruitful training took place in these interchange between engineers of the various firms. Project management takes place with many uncertainties (duration, availability of staff, skills of individuals, etc) but collective competencies allow to accommodate them. Coordination between individuals and firms relies heavily on mutual adjustment and standardization of procedures. The only hierarchy is the project manager. This only works because engineers share common objectives, are strongly motivated by their work and believe on value and collective competencies. The resulting innovations take many forms (products, applications...). Human Resources managers must facilitate and not hinder this type of management otherwise the best people leave.

KEYWORDS : innovation, collective competence, change