

Barriers as opportunities – improving innovation capability in organizations is a project focusing on how barriers and enablers related to the innovation work and process as well as the change process itself is managed within organizations aiming at improving their innovation capability.

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Project runs 090601-130531

Partners: St Jude Medical AB, 5-7 companies (TBD).

Why

The purpose of this project is to both improve the course of action for the innovation work and process in a company as well as to lead to a deeper understanding on how organizations develop their innovation capability i.e the capability to generate and realize ideas that creates value.

What

In order to improve its innovation capability, an organization takes several actions. What is considered to be the most important areas to focus on when organizing for improving this capability? What are the perceived and what are the experienced barriers and enablers and how manage them properly? Can barriers transform into enablers? Can enabler's become barriers?

The implementation and effect of the different actions an organization performs in order to improve its innovation capability is mapped out and problematized. Questions of interest relates to what is driving organizations to improve its innovation capability. How is this initiated and by who? How is innovation capability and innovation work/processes defined and optimized? What is learnt and how is learning spread?

The management of barriers and opportunities in relation to the innovation work as well as to the change process itself are identified and analyzed.

The project has a systems theory perspective which means that the interplay between the parts in an organization and between the parts and the whole organization is in focus.

The parts of the organization relates both to the micro-level i.e. the interplay between individuals/teams and their tasks, the macro-level i.e. the interplay between the individuals/teams and the organization and to the meta-level which relates the organization to its environment.

How

The project is performed using an action or interactive research approach. Action research/interactive research can be described as a family of research methodologies which pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. It can thus be defined as a form of research intended to have both action and research outcomes.

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Participants in one company are closely involved and the researcher is active in the initiation, implementation and follow-up of the innovation capability improvement work in the company. The project will combine the longitudinal study of one company, working to improve its innovation capability with 5-7 other companies that either are in the process to improve their innovation capability or has undergone such a process.

The project is relating to theories within the area of innovation engineering and management and is due between June 2009 and June 2013. The project is initially explorative and takes a broad perspective on organizational innovation capability and aims to converge and narrow down its scope along the research process.

The project uses a cyclic or spiral process which alternates between action and critical reflection to create continuous learning for both the researcher and the practitioners (participants from the companies). The researcher collects, analyzes, and presents data on an ongoing, cyclical basis. The following main activities are included in the research project:

1. Literature study on research and best practice on how to improve innovation capability in organizations. Scientific papers, journals and conference papers as well as consultant handbooks and information are gathered and categorized. Specific questions for the literature search is:
 - a. How is organizational innovation capability defined? Historically and present.
 - b. How is innovation capability improved in organization and what parameters are considered to influence?
 1. Improvements made within an organization (micro and macro level)
 2. Improvements made that relates to its market and customers (its industry - meta level)
 3. Improvements made that relates to its outer environment (actors and market outside its industry – meta level)
 - c. How is innovation capability improvements measured? (micro, meta and macro level)
 - d. How does systems theory/thinking relate to innovation capability? What alternative or competing organizational theories are important to consider?
2. The initiation, implementation and follow-up of specific improvement actions at St Jude Medical AB together with a description of the innovation capability improvement work performed (historically and ongoing). The description will relate to the questions used in the literature search.
3. Identify selection criteria's for what companies to include in the project. Perform quantitative and qualitative studies of their past and/or ongoing innovation capability improvement work.