Bridging Gaps:
Relevance, Success Factors and Challenges of Implementing Personnel Exchange in Intersectoral Energy R&D Collaboration

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Abstract

R&D collaborations, including intersectoral partnerships involving both academia and industry, have a proven track record of fostering innovation, especially in highly specialized technological fields. However, challenges can arise in terms of knowledge transfer and trust building between the partners due to differences regarding strategic objectives, motivations and interests, organizational culture as well as the often ‘virtual’ nature of such initiatives. Appropriate HRM measures to counteract this risk are therefore required. Personnel exchange (PE) between R&D partners of different sectors and institutions is one such potential measure. However, PE is currently not a routine tool in intersectoral R&D collaboration. To gain insights into key factors influencing the successful implementation of PE in an intersectoral context, a qualitative survey with 24 key executives in both academia and industry has been carried out. Results indicate that there is an underlying interest in such measures. However, implementation suffers from important barriers such as (1) missing personnel resources, (2) employee motivation, (3) career considerations, (4) IP/disclosure issues and (5) financial resources. Furthermore, a need to increasingly raise awareness in academia and industry regarding the value and benefits of intersectoral PE as well as to enhance information flow in terms of existing concepts has been identified.

Keywords: Intersectoral collaboration, knowledge transfer, personnel exchange, R&D collaboration, trust