

Dissertation title:

Tacit knowledge transfer within the factory planning processes of car manufacturing companies

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Demographic change in Germany is accompanied by a declining population of the working age and a simultaneous increase in the number of older workers. For companies, this means an increase in the average age of employees, extended periods of employment, and the release of large numbers of employees with great experience. For the employees, this means working together with other generations, developing their competencies and introducing their knowledge, motivation and self-reliance in the job, especially in the later years of employment. Results are shown in the question of how to manage the existing tacit knowledge and how to establish ways to transfer and save it.

At the same time, due to changes and transformation in global markets and IT-Technologies, new demands are emerging for manufacturing companies that require quick reaction times as well as tailor-made, customized and innovative products. This shortens the times of developing and producing products. IT provides companies with a higher level of availability and the access to the needed knowledge, but simultaneously it involves quicker times of coordination and fast decision making.

In between the long-term knowledge of the experienced staff which will leave the companies and short-term, organizational change-drivers, this research investigates how the systematic elaboration of the relevance of tacit knowledge in handling tasks in the context of production planning in manufacturing companies is systematically worked through and therefore how a sustainable transfer of knowledge can take place.

Moreover, the research work presents guidelines how experience and knowledge can be exchanged between employee generations through the daily forms of business.

Existing methods of knowledge transfer are limited in transferring the „tacit“ knowledge. The considered knowledge in this research work is characterized by practical experience and activities in the work field of production planning. In order to transfer this special knowledge, it is essential to focus on the daily business. Through the discussion and communication of tasks, problems and best practices employees use special forms of their daily business where tacit knowledge can be transferred.

Therefore, one result is the use of an informal Face-to-Face conversation between employees which characterizes the most chosen option for

discussing critical topics and therefore gain experience. This leads back to specific factors which can be described as the occasion and reason of starting a discussion, the level of interaction, the duration and the location.

An unexpected result is the formal forms of the daily cooperation is also qualified for a transfer of tacit knowledge if they adhere to „positive“ factors as reciprocal communication or the integration of different representatives from other functional departments.

In addition, a collaborative and explorative course of interaction while problem solving or self-initiative promotes the cooperation to facilitate tacit knowledge and experience exchange.

Recommendation will be addressed for manufacturing companies: Enriching existing formal collaboration forms through informal modules as e.g. reciprocal communication, spending more time on informal work exchange e.g. “Off-Times” and promoting self-regulated and autonomous ways of set up a meeting by the employee itself.

Supplementary guidelines for human resource departments will be developed through another three instruments.

For companies the identified transfer tools and methods of managing tacit knowledge transfer should be installed. A systematic illustration of which approach meets the specific requirement and demand of leaders and employees will support the engagement and usage of “knowledge-approaches” that however improves the current tacit knowledge transfer.