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Transferability and applicability of alliance tools in publicly funded R&D alliances transform alliance management from an art into a science

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Transferability and Applicability of Alliance Tools in Publicly Funded R&D Alliances

Transform Alliance Management from an Art into a Science

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Abstract

This research focused on alliance tools in order to improve alliance capabilities within Philips EuroPartners to support publicly funded R&D alliances. Alliance tools form an important means to capture, codify, communicate and create and coach alliance know-how and best practices throughout the company (Duysters and Heimeriks, 2002). The Philips Alliance Office investigates criteria important to the development of alliance tools and developed a set of tools to support the Philips business manager to set up, manage and evaluate an alliance. However, the transferability and applicability of these alliance tools within EuroPartners to support publicly funded R&D alliances was questioned. Therefore the transferability and applicability of the identified set of alliance tools to support publicly funded R&D alliances in EuroPartners has been evaluated and an adapted alliance tool fit for use in EuroPartners to improve the support to publicly funded R&D alliances has been developed.

Executive Summary

This research focused on alliance tools in order to improve alliance capabilities within Philips EuroPartners to support publicly funded R&D alliances. Management of the publicly funded R&D alliances in EuroPartners has been mainly based on experience. From literature can be concluded that although alliance experience is important, it plays a relatively minor role in building alliance skills or alliance capabilities. Companies also need to focus on mechanisms that formalize lessons learned and transfer alliance best practices inside companies (Spekman and Isabella, 2000; Kale et al., 2001). Alliance tools form an important means to capture, codify, communicate and create and coach alliance know-how and best practices throughout the company (Duysters and Heimeriks, 2002).

The Philips Alliance Office investigates criteria important to the development of alliance tools and developed a set of tools to support the Philips business manager to set up, manage and evaluate an alliance. However, the transferability and applicability of these alliance tools within EuroPartners to support publicly funded R&D alliances is questioned. Based on these observations, the following research objectives were formulated:

- Evaluation of the transferability and applicability of the identified set of alliance tools to support publicly funded R&D alliances in EuroPartners
- Development of an adapted alliance tool fit for use in EuroPartners to improve the support to publicly funded R&D alliances

This research was based on mainly qualitative research consisting of a literature study regarding alliance management and R&D alliances in public programmes, extensive interviewing of experts and desk research.

Transferability and Applicability of the Alliance Tools

Based on the differences and similarities between the alliance lifecycles of EuroPartners and the Alliance Office and the analysis of the current tools in EuroPartners can be concluded that the identified set of alliance tools are not directly transferable and only partly applicable in EuroPartners. The tools of the alliance office do not fit the scope & framework of the public programmes, pre-competitive R&D activities and multi-partner alliances. In addition due to the strong influence of the public programmes and research culture a part of these tools becomes superfluous.

Development of the selected tool

A theoretical framework (based on the 'merge/acquire, cooperate or go-it-alone' tool) was developed to structure the decision making process regarding R&D cooperation in public programmes in the first part of the initiative phase of the EuroPartners Project Lifecycle to assure that cooperation on technology development has been the right decision and subsequently to support decision-making regarding participation in public programmes and the choice of the most suitable programme. The framework is based on three steps and related modes regarding technology development. Eight experts in Philips R&D have tested this framework. It can be concluded that the strategic analysis in the initiative phase consists of three steps:

- Step 1: Selection of the technology development mode (R&D subcontracting, (non-equity) R&D cooperation or internal development);
- Step 2: Participation in public programmes (publicly funded R&D or non-publicly funded R&D);
- Step 3: Selection of a specific programme (FP programmes, EUREKA or National Support Schemes).

The decision-making process is a top-down process but during that top-down process it is necessary to take the availability of opportunities (availability of calls, the framework and the opportunity to be invited by another partner) into account. In each step factors are considered

that should be all taken into account during decision-making in the specific step. The factors perceived as most important in Philips R&D are given below:

Factors Step 1:

1. Competitive impact of the technology
2. Intellectual property rights (IPR)
3. Technical competences

Factors Step 2:

1. Intellectual property rights (IPR)
2. Level of speed
3. Pre-competitive R&D

Factors Step 3:

1. Availability of calls
2. Focus area of the programme
3. Funding source

Hereafter, this model was further operationalized into the EuroPartners Strategic Analysis Tool, an (excel) tool to improve the support (by account managers and programme managers in EuroPartners) to the customers of EuroPartners. It provides R&D management and R&D project leaders and EuroPartners (in specific account managers and programme managers) with an overview of which factors are well considered and which other important factors have not yet been taken into account so attention can be paid to them in order to develop a well-considered decision regarding participation in public programmes.