

COOPERATION BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND UNIVERSITY, DIFFERENT WORLDS BUT COMMON INTEREST

Åke Erlandsson

Environmental Manager, AB Gustaf Kähr Nybro, Sweden

ABSTRACT

In the industry we shall support our customers with good products in a way to earn money. We shall also be a fair member of the society which includes legality and a good environmental profile. The main interest of the University is examination of students, produce papers in the most respectable sites and find external money. The industry has problems that need qualified solutions as soon as possible. Why is then the cooperation about environmental issues between the industry and university are of great interest and importance? In the industry we have the activities that are a part of many environmental problems but not the full competence over all aspects connected to them. In my over twenty years of experience in different Swedish companies located in south east Sweden I have had many contacts with the University of Kalmar, regarding different environmental questions. First of all, there is a great competence and a great interest to be a part in developing of the cooperation with the industry. Parts that could be better include the following:

- Easier use and cooperation with other parts of the University have competence or resources
- Short term cooperation for the industry in longer projects
- General contacts between the academic world and the local industry which both are parts in a fast growing global environmental impact
- In the industry we most learn that work by students or researchers are not free of charge
- Lack of efficient administrative routines and project management at the university
- In the industry we most learn that work by students or researchers are not free of charge
- Lack of efficient administrative routines and project management at the university. What we can do locally is to build network both formal and informal.

Industry cooperation, project management, network

KEYWORDS

Industry; University; Cooperation.

1 INTRODUCTION

The wood industry has not been in the frontline of cooperation with different academic institutes, except for the pulp and paper industry. I will give you some of my experiences and notes from 25 year in different industry companies in Sweden. My purpose is to get a discussion in the university and in the industry how to develop the cooperation. Kährs is

situated in Nybro, in the heart of the forests of the Småland in Sweden, on the same site where everything began 150 years ago. In 1857, Johan Kähr started a small turning shop and began producing wooden articles for the local farmers.

Today, the Kährs group is Europe's biggest wood flooring manufacturer, and one of the world's most innovative companies involved in the processing of wood. The combination of a long tradition, craftsmanship and a passionate interest in design and new technology has kept us at the forefront of the development of modern wood flooring. Kährs is owned by Nybron Flooring International (Switzerland). NFI Group is Europe's leading wooden flooring company. founded through the merger of Bauwerk, Kährs and Marty.

2 DIFFERENT TARGETS

An industrial company has one priority to earn money. To do that we have to deliver something which our customer are prepared to pay for. The target of the University is to examine scientists, engineers and publish papers and get financial support. The basic common interest is of course well prepared engineers or scientist from the university to work in the industry. The industry organizations are today very tight and give very little time for a new engineer to have a long learning period, especially in companies with few employed with academic examine. In cooperation in project it is important to be aware of the different targets. I see four areas to develop, to make the cooperation more efficient.

3 OPEN RESOURCES

Use the competence of the entire University. If we have cooperation with an Institute it should be an advantage if it was a contact to other competences or equipment in the same organization/University in an easy way. A company is an organization with different competences and processes but with the same target. In the same way could the University use the strength of different competence and resources to support an Institution which has cooperation with an industry. A more open resource and contacts between the different institutions at the university would give new network and input to more cooperation.

4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A project can be defined in different ways. Roughly, a project has a start and end and don't handle something that is regularly done. Start and management of project is one of the most important procedures if you want to succeed. A project has to have a clear order and objective. The objective should be clear and measurable about what shall be reached and when they shall be reached. It is also important that the objectives are accepted and seen as realistic by all parts. In the industry the project plan describes how you reach the objective. In the academic world I have found that the project plan describes what gives the best impression on other external financial supporting organizations. In the project management, I see one of the most important and greatest opportunities to develop the cooperation between industry and university.

5 ACADEMIC RESOURCES NOT FREE OF CHARGE

One way to spare money is to use free resources. It's very important that we in industry understand and accept that students and researchers are not free from costs. If we want to get good long term cooperation and well prepared engineers we have to take the cost for the

investigations they do in the industries during their master or graduate studies. Otherwise they will go to other branches or the best students will choose other ways for their career.

6 GENERAL CONTACTS

A natural way to increase the understanding between different cultures is to build up network. The development of the general pressure in all organizations has occupied the time for participation in different network, seminars, associations where you could meet colleagues in more free discussions. A meeting together with researcher, students and colleagues about some interesting issue will every time give new influences and strengthen the ground of cooperation. One way is to invite industrial partners to lectures or to informal meetings with the students and researchers. We from the industry invite researchers to our different meetings or to local associations or branch meetings. The important result to reach is better contacts and more cooperation.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In a region as south east Sweden we have to cooperate very efficient to strengthen us in the global competition. Today when the competition is world wide the cooperation with a university, that's have an international area, is a good way to get new inputs from other parts of the world. More contacts and better project management are as I see two main things to develop to get strong and long term cooperation.