

EXPERIENCES OF COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA

*Åke Erlandsson,
AB Gustaf Kährs,
Sweden*

Abstract

The foundation for development and continuous improvement are increased knowledge, evaluation and monitoring of performance. Environmental issues are not often the highest priority in the business idea for an industrial activity. Therefore, it is particularly critical to establish cooperation between industry and academia in regard to environmental and resource issues.

In order to achieve a successful project it is important that there are clear, common goals of cooperation and understanding for each other's roles. Shortcomings in mutual understanding between partners puts the project at risk of missing its intended goal or purpose. Industry, by its nature, has a different starting point for cooperation than academia. Therefore it is vital that there is a mutual understanding and recognition of the objectives, planning and implementation in order to achieve a successful outcome.

Environmental issues in general and water issues in particular have received considerable attention from different perspectives, financially and morally, but mostly as fundamental resource issues for society and nature. Financial Interests have increased its scrutiny of how industry handles these issues. Therefore, one must be able to show good examples.

Increased cooperation with academia is a way to gain greater knowledge of the environmental impact of industrial processes in order to implement sound environmental practices. Maintaining open and factual communication between various stakeholders, from customers to financial institutions is imperative. And it requires that the industry partner communicates, at a scientific and transparent level, the work being done.

There are several aspects that need to be improved upon to create better cooperation between industry and academia.

- Increase participation in venues of various types and activities where extensive networks can be formed.
- Understand that each cooperation leads to increased knowledge and experience, both in academia as well as industry.
- Collaborative projects and research should have the potential to run long enough as to develop offshoot projects all sharing a common ground. And projects should run long enough in order to achieve the major transformational shifts that take time to mature, both in the necessary decisions to be taken and in their implementation.

Good cooperation combined with the exchange of experiences and knowledge in different areas of expertise offers no limits as to what can be achieved. In this time of great global environmental challenges, each meeting is like a drop of water, and *one of these drops could be the one that caused the cup to overflow.*