



Discussion

Is open innovation a field of study or a communication barrier to theory development?

Aard J. Groen^{a,*}, Jonathan D. Linton^b

^a NIKOS, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands

^b Management of Technological Enterprises, Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

Since Chesbrough's (2003a) influential book on open innovation, there have been hundreds of papers and conference presentations on the topic of open innovation (examples include Chesbrough (2003b), Huston and Sakkab (2006), Henkel (2006), Young et al. (2008), van de Vrande et al. (2009), and Kohler et al. (2009). His work is truly seminal in this regard, but is the term open innovation hindering growth in research and understanding and if so should the term be used as it is currently?

One of the few two word technical terms that appear in the business and management literature more frequently than *open innovation* is *supply chain*. In fact, Linton et al. (2009) found that the term *supply chain* was the most commonly used two-word term in recent business and management abstracts. Supply Chain Management (SCM) integrates "key business processes from end user through original suppliers that provides products, services, and information that add value for customers and other stakeholders" (Lambert and Cooper, 2000). In other words, supply chain management focuses on the creation of value by reaching beyond the traditional borders of a firm including suppliers, customers and other stakeholders. As open innovation fits well within this definition, the question being asked in this brief note is whether the term open innovation should be modified or even abandoned in favor of the term supply chain management—a term that is older and has broader use.

As there is no clear link between the two terms – open innovation in technology innovation management and supply chain management in other fields – are we creating false barriers that inhibit communication between different groups of academics? While open innovation has moved us away from the old orthodoxy of a solid demarcation at the boundary of organization's in a way that von Hippel's (1986, 1987) work with users/customers (1986) and competitors (1987) and Leenders and Blenkhorn's (1989) work with suppliers has not been able to do,

its liberating contribution may now act as a constraint to future research by acting as a communication barrier.

Editors note: The intent of this note is to engage the community in discussion on *Open Innovation* an important practitioner oriented book that has led to much research activity in our field. Brief letters (under 1000 words+references can be submitted for consideration for publication in a future issue that will appear within the next 6 months).

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: a.j.groen@utwente.nl (A.J. Groen), Linton@telfer.uottawa.ca (J.D. Linton).