

Summary

Conference "Innovation Success Through R&D Reputation"

September 22, 2009 - Rüschiikon

Prof. Dr. Kaiserswerth, Director of the IBM Research Laboratory Zurich, opened the conference presentations by explaining that the project on R&D reputation was initiated by the question: "Is IBM really the premier research organization in the IT industry and how can this be measured?"

Being the premier research organization is of utmost importance because of two major reasons. Firstly, because it is necessary to attract excellent people as the best only want to work with the best. And secondly, investment into R&D has to pay off eventually. A good example for the substantial sums IBM is spending in Switzerland is the newly arising nanotechnology center in Rüschiikon which is set up together with the ETH Zurich.

Subsequently, Prof. Dr. Oliver Gassmann, Professor of Technology Management and Director of the Institute of Technology Management at the University of St. Gallen, continued asserting that "Lab coat researchers are essential but not enough". This means that unfortunately the reputation of research is often neglected in the management field. Furthermore, Prof. Gassmann initiated the question: "What can be seen as the output of research?". An increased number of patents and products are usually seen as an output of R&D; however, there are other results that are equally important but very often not recognized. These are the establishment of an absorptive capacity to attract talents and resources as well as an increased brand value through an outstanding R&D reputation.

The next speaker, Wolf-Christian Rumsch, Doctor designate from the University of St. Gallen, presented the results of his research, which has initiated the organization of this conference. In his doctoral thesis he provides a scientific foundation for the assertion that R&D reputation positively influences a company's overall reputation. Additionally, he also presented the factors which have the strongest impact on an organization's R&D reputation – like, for instance, institutional openness, public visibility and scientific output. As an implication of these results, he emphasized the importance for companies to professionalize their research communication approach.

Dr. Erich Rüttsche, Business Development & Relations IBM, introduced the Zurich Research Laboratory and presented one successful example of IBM's research branding and marketing approach. He showed the preparation activities leading to the prototype launch of IBM's water-cooled computer technology called "Aquasar". A key element of this project was a coordinated publication strategy matched to the underlying technology roadmap. Furthermore, he pointed out the importance of the use of new "web 2.0 – technologies" like *YouTube* to keep IBM's innovativeness present in people's minds externally as well as internally.

After a lunch break with lively discussions, speakers from Nestlé and Empa presented innovation communication approaches of their companies, which definitely can be seen as successful practice examples.

Dr. Frank Lehmann, Head of Innovation Strategy & Deployment at Nestlé, presented the five generation roadmap Nestlé is using to develop and launch a new product. A video of a new milk powder product for a developing country exemplified the communication message directed toward consumers. Within the company borders, innovation acceleration teams are formed to ensure the flow of ideas through the innovation process. An open innovation award is given for successful projects with external partners.

Dr. Michael Hagmann, Head of the communication department at Empa, spoke about research marketing and communication from the viewpoint of a national research organization. He presented many examples of Empa's highly professionalized research communication activities – different publications, podcasts and events. One innovative example is science speed dating, a new format to match problem and solution holders in certain areas Empa's research is covering. For Empa it is key to coordinate all these activities in order to convey a clear message to all stakeholders – out of which industrial partners are Empa's single most important ones.

After these best practice examples, Dr. Christoph H. Wecht concluded the presentation part of the conference. He is managing partner of BGW AG, a management advisory group. He introduced new service offerings which came out of the R&D reputation project, called "IMPACT", "REPUTATION" and "VALUE". The first two are aimed at improving a company's internal or external innovation communication whereas the latter offers a scientifically based approach of quantifying the contribution of the R&D reputation to a company's brand value.

The final agenda point – a market place with information booths – gave room for additional questions and deep discussions on all topics presented.

<http://www.bgw-sg.com/researchreputation.html>

