Chapter 9

Professional and Managerial Language in Hybrid Industry–Research Organizations and within the Hybrid Clinician Manager Role

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ABSTRACT

Interactions between professionals and managers are vital to medical and commercialization outcomes. This chapter considers how boundaries between professionals and managers are expressed through language in two contexts: between researchers and managers in temporary Australian hybrid industry-research organizations and within the same individual performing a hybrid clinician-manager role in Australian health care organizations. Semi-structured interviews of twenty scientists, engineers, and managers, focusing on their experiences, and perceptions of occupational culture, revealed that language norms contributed to knowledge creation, and played a role in maintaining a hierarchy among research institutions. Semi-structured interviews of twenty doctors and managers, focusing on their perception and experience of the hybrid clinician manager’s role within health care organizations, revealed that professional identity influenced language norms used by doctors and managers and contributed to the tensions experienced in their interactions. Distinctive patterns of argumentation and language were identified as typical of commercial and research occupations and were also distinctive in doctors working in hybrid clinician manager’s roles. The scientists, engineers, and managers working in hybrid industry-research organizations and the doctors and managers working in health care organizations reported frustration and reduced effectiveness of argumentation due to different norms for dissent.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1836-7.ch009
INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results and implications of a two-part research study and considers how boundaries between professionals and managers can be expressed through differences in language in two Australian contexts: between researchers and managers in temporary hybrid industry-research organizations and within the same individual performing a hybrid clinician-manager role in hospital settings. The results of these two studies add to the professional identity and culture literature and may benefit organizations experiencing communication challenges between professionals and managers. An overview of the two contexts is provided, first the Australian Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) context is introduced, followed by the creation of the hybrid clinician manager in Australian health care organizations. This is followed by examples of how professional identity influences communication between professionals and managers.

Corporate Research Centre’s as Hybrid Industry-Research Organizations

From the 1980s, governments of industrialized economies have looked to innovations involving the generation and reconfiguration of knowledge as a path to achieving a competitive advantage (Gibbons, et al., 1994; Lehrer & Asakawa, 2004; Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001; Premus, 2002). From a commercial perspective, the attractions of entering collaborative research partnerships include access to complementary physical and intellectual assets, reductions in product development time, cost, and risk, and increased organizational and financial flexibility (Senker & Sharpe, 1997). The creation of hybrid research organizations, that use resources and/or governance structures from more than one existing organization (Borys & Jemison, 1989), has been a feature of the response to government and business pressures for increased innovation. The evolution of “Triple Helix” organizations, in which private firms and publicly funded research groups collaborate with the support of government funding, has been traced across Europe, the USA, Latin America and Asia (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). In addition to a rapid geographical spread, the number of hybrid industry-research centers in operation has also quickly increased (Gray, Lindblad, & Rudolph, 2001; Premus, 2002) as has the percentage of industry and government funding they attract (Gray, et al., 2001). Clearly, the operation of hybrid organizations composed of government, business, and research groups within national systems of innovation is a subject worthy of attention.

Hybrid industry-research organizations share some of the management challenges encountered by joint-venture partners from the same industry. Boundary issues between the partner organizations, threats to the hybrid organizations stability from the sovereignty of member organizations, and the challenge of reconciling disparate goals, technologies and organizational cultures can occur even when commercial organizations, in the same industry combine (Borys & Jemison, 1989). The merger of HP and Compaq (Burgelman & McKinney, 2006) provides a recent and instructive example of the difficulties that can be encountered even between commercial organizations from the same industry segment. Temporary collaborations between industry and research partners present even more complicated structural, managerial, and organizational cultural challenges than those that have made mergers and acquisitions between comparable commercial organizations into acknowledged high-risk endeavors (Barringer & Harrison, 2000).

The context for the first part of this study is four hybrid industry-research organizations in the Australian Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) program. The Australian CRC program provides an example of government intervention to stimulate innovation through encouraging col-