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The Organization of Innovation Brokers: An International Review

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Abstract

Research on networks of innovation has typically focused on relationships of competition and collaboration between firms in the network, sometimes extending the analysis to sources of new ideas such as universities. More recently, attention has been paid to the activities of intermediaries in such networks, which facilitate the innovation process, which are positioned between the sources and users of innovations. This paper focuses on the organization of a distinctive type of intermediary, which we have defined as an innovation broker, by providing an analysis of 10 case studies of organizations dedicated to innovation broking from around the world. Innovation brokers in our definition are organizations that are founded especially to undertake an intermediary role, rather than performing that role as a by-product of their principal activities. The results of this analysis suggest that the key role played by innovation brokers in the innovation process is the independent validation of new ideas, thereby facilitating diffusion. In order to carry out this task, innovation brokers are organized on

a not-for-profit basis, typically as a public–private partnership. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for innovation theory and research in networks of innovation.

Notes

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40. The co-ordination of this international task group was funded by the UK's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (award no. GR/R18734/01) and undertaken by the authors.

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