

It's not what you know; it's who you know...

May 14 2007

A UQ Business School student says the old cliché – it's not what you know; it's who you know – might be true after all.

PhD student Sam MacAulay said the informal relationships people developed at work were often critical to their effectiveness.

"Most people would probably agree that the average organisational chart doesn't begin to capture the relationships employees develop to get things done," he said.

"Instead, effective workers develop their own 'knowledge networks' as they build relationships with other staff in the course of their work."

"These knowledge networks have been shown to be critical in the innovation process."

Mr MacAulay will work with the world's leading producer of wind power systems to discover how knowledge networks enable the company to keep innovating.

After extensive negotiations led by Mr MacAulay's Danish supervisor Professor Lars Håkanson (Copenhagen Business School) the Danish wind turbine manufacturer Vestas has opened its doors to the business student. Mr MacAulay will complete his PhD under the guidance of Professor Håkanson and UQ Business School's John Steen and Tim Kastle.

Mr MacAulay said he was also planning to examine how knowledge networks change over time and in response to particular events such as the emergence of new technical capabilities within the industry.

"Vestas is going to open a new R&D to a new facility in Singapore next year and so will either be moving or hiring staff in significant numbers," he said.

"My research will look at the impact of the change on the knowledge networks within the organisation."

The project is partly supported by the Australian Research Council Centre for Complex Systems.

Vestas started to manufacture wind turbines in 1979 and has played an active role in this dynamic industry ever since. Since 1987, the company has developed from a pioneer in the industry to a global hi-tech market-leading group with more than 12,300 employees.

Source: University of Queensland

Citation: It's not what you know; it's who you know... (2007, May 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-05-it-not-what-you-who.html>

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