Macdonald

Information for Innovation

Managing Change from an Information Perspective

Information is not taken seriously. Much is said about the information age, the information economy, the information society, and particularly about information technology, but little about information itself. If these are important, then so is information. But information is not as other goods: it has some peculiar characteristics. It cannot be displayed for sale without giving it away in the process. Sold, it goes to the buyer but still remains with the seller. Buying entails expressing demand in ignorance for buyers who do not know just what it is that they do not know. Such characteristics have long been recognised by economists, but it is not generally economists who have most to say about the importance of information. This privilege is exercised by senior managers, who speak passionately about knowledge-based, learning organizations; by politicians and public servants, anxious to compensate with policy and programme for the information failure of organization and market; and by specialists in telecommunications and information technology, bent on adding value to what they treat as just a commodity. All are particularly enthusiastic about the innovation which springs from information. Information usually requires new information. Finding, acquiring, and mixing this new information with that already in use presents problems, not least because complex information transactions are required rather than simple information transfer. Solutions can be devised, but only by accommodating the characteristics of information. This book contrasts the way innovation is normally regarded in a variety of areas from eighteenth-century agriculture to high technology, from technology transfer to industrial espionage, from corporate strategy to patents and independent inventors with how it appears from what is termed an 'information perspective', that is one that puts information first. The results are intriguing, suggesting that radically different approaches to innovation (and organization) should be considered.

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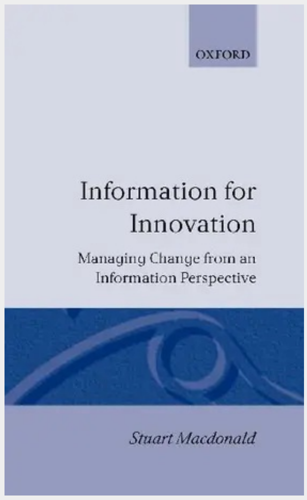

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