



Invited Plenary Speech

The Digital and Social Foundations of Collaborative Innovation in SMEs

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Speaker Biography:

Andrew Lyons is Professor and Head of the Operations & Supply Chain Management Subject Group at the University of Liverpool Management School. Professor Lyons has wide-ranging research interests in operations strategy and supply chain design, and has published over 60 articles in the areas of operations and supply chain management including Customer-Driven Supply Chains, a book published in 2012. He is a visiting professor at the Universities of Valencia and Grenoble. He is also a member of CILT and has worked as a consultant and trainer, and provided research support to several dozen manufacturing businesses.

Abstract/Outline

Most SMEs have insufficient resources and expertise to innovate beyond repeating previous incremental successes. The nature of innovation is increasingly recognised as a shared one and new innovations that lead to step changes in performance increasingly demand that SMEs collaborate. SMEs can and should use external ideas as well as those generated internally in order to advance their products and processes. Vertical collaboration is concerned with partnerships formed along a linear, upstream-downstream supply chain. Conventional customer-supplier relationships are vertical in nature. Horizontal collaboration is a growing trend in contemporary supply chain design. It concerns collaboration between organisational entities providing the same or similar service. Horizontal collaboration can be “co-opetitive” – collaboration between competitors. Effective collaborative innovation is dependent on well-structured social as well as digital networks, the design of which help redefine the boundary between an SME and its surrounding environment, making it more porous and integrated into loosely-coupled networks of different organisations, collectively and individually working toward boosting performance and commercialising new knowledge.