

Foreword

With a modern society that is seeing fast changing social, economic, political and cultural developments never before has innovation been more important for small businesses. As a consequence the study of innovation is a fast developing area with publication of a number of leading texts. These however tend to investigate innovation management activities in large businesses with limited consideration of the small business area. This is disproportional to the amount of research activity that is being undertaken in the small business field. These seminal texts into innovation management in large organizations have previously considered popular, as well as requisite, concepts such as disruptive technology and more recently open innovation and the “fuzzy front end”. Moreover, innovation is seen in terms of creativity and the generation of new ideas. It is evident that whereas large companies are good at implementing innovation, small companies are better at generating new ideas although research tells us that only around 10% will be commercially viable. Contributing to this innovation activity there will also be different forms of innovation including product, process and service innovations and also radical and incremental innovations.

In response to this gap this volume considers innovation and small business with particular reference to the innovation process. Here an approach appropriate to small businesses is taken by considering the distinction between invention and innovation as well as research and development in the context of the small firms. In addition, technology diffusion, clusters and knowledge flows, higher education spin-offs, global start-ups and innovation performance indicators are also considered with particular reference to the small business sector.

The second volume considers industrial settings and essentially attempts to apply the theory considered in volume one. Furthermore, this volume recognizes the contributions of small firms to these industries, firmly establishing the pivotal role they play in future economic development and prosperity. This is achieved by investigating a number of industries such as agri-food, health, energy, construction and heritage. In particular there is consideration of innovative and sustainable solutions, the assessment of research and development, technology and multimedia knowledge management systems.

Whilst it is recommended to read volume one before progressing to volume two, each volume has been constructed so that they can be read independently of one another. Given this exciting and new approach it is a pleasure to commend this text not only to students, researchers and scholars of small business but also to policy makers, small business practitioners and owner managers.

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