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**Beyond Managing Dyadic Relationships:  
Initial Findings From Four In-Depth Case Studies Investigating the Challenges  
of Managing Innovation in Networks**

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## **Beyond Managing Dyadic Relationships: Initial Findings From Four In-Depth Case Studies Investigating the Challenges of Managing Innovation in Networks**

A key premise of the IMP research is that no business is an island (Håkansson and Snehota, 1990) and that individual companies and dyadic relationships are but part of a large complex network of inter-connected relationships. However, the problem of *managing* beyond dyadic relationships, is still rather unexplored, in terms of the different strategies which companies can apply and the problems and constraints which networks exert on specific management activities.

This paper concerns the problem of how companies, who seek to develop new products which apply new product or process technology, can successfully capitalise on the whole pool of resources and technologies available within their network, whilst at the same time cope with the problem of loss of control of knowledge and technologies to other parties in their network. Taking point of departure from their previous conceptual and empirical work (e.g. Johnsen and Ford, 1999; 2000), the authors begin by briefly introducing the conceptual framework, and its theoretical foundation forming the basis of the case studies.

The paper reports on the initial findings from four in-depth case studies of collaborative innovation in networks. The cases centre on a set of product innovation projects which have applied new process and/or product technology; they involve in total app. 40 semi-structured interviews with managers at different levels and from a variety of functions within the focal firms and with a selection a key suppliers and customers. The case studies are conducted from a focal firm perspective, although as the unit of analysis is the process of collaborative innovation the focus is on their supplier and customer relationships.

The case studies illustrate different ways and strategies applied by companies seeking to capitalise on their network. However, the findings also illustrate the other side of the coin: they problems that are associated with collaborating with suppliers and customers for innovation. The paper concludes with a discussion of the managerial implications of the findings.

### **References:**

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