

Visit & Meet the KM Champions in Germany

REPORT ON KM TOUR

Background

"The amount of practical KM sharing was phenomenal, and I only realise the extent thereof now as I report back to my colleagues on what I have learned and revisiting the presentations in the tour manual" – Riaan Joubert, Knowledge Management Champion, Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa Limited.

This is just one of the many positive feedbacks from delegates, KM Champion speakers and hosts alike after the very successful Knowledge Management Tour of Germany from 26 to 30 April 2009. All 18 delegates from 13 countries reported that they would recommend a similar study tour to others. Delegates originated from Austria, Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Germany and South Africa.

A unique triad partnership of expertise organised and facilitated the Tour as per below:

Organisation	Relational Capital	Structural Capital	Human Capital
Dr Peter Heisig, Director, eureki / Cambridge University	Recruited the companies and organisations that participated as hosts and speakers	Designed the KM content coverage of the tour	Provided key KM expertise
Terry and Brenda Pilcher, Directors, BCS Management Services, UK	Brought the triad partnership together as an expert team	Logistics organisation and co-ordination	Co-facilitated the Tour
Bruce Searles, Director, Benchmarking Partnerships, Australia	Introduced the Asian Productivity Organisation as major sponsor	Supplied proven methodology of sharing and learning	Co-facilitated the Tour



The Tour was sponsored by the Asian Productivity Organisation with strong support from Ms. Duangthip Chomprang, APO Program Officer. Supporters included the Global Benchmarking Network (GBN), the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and bpir.com.

The following comments were received from Ms Duangthip Chomprang, APO Program Officer - *Excellent program, impressive line of experts and practitioner-champions and unsurpassed professionalism from the organisers/partners and insightful journey into the German KM story!*

The Tour schedule, hosts and speaker organizations are shown on the map.

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Learning and Sharing Process

The tour methodology had the following features:

- Obtaining key learning needs and KM experience information from delegates, the sponsor, speakers and hosts to focus the sharing and learning during the tour.
- Opportunity for hosts to not only share their ups and downs experience of over a decade of KM but also to find out best practices and cultural difference from the delegates e.g. Airbus KM colleagues facilitated a session with delegates using one of their key KM tools.
- Small group discussions amongst delegates on the coach while travelling between sites to identify key learnings gained.
- Action planning after each day by each delegate, culminating in a final action plan for each delegate to assist them on their return to their own organisation.



- Code of Conduct for the Tour which protects the confidentiality of all knowledge exchange.
- Memory Jogger Notes collated by the Tour facilitators for approval by the hosts and speakers and dissemination to delegates.
- Cultural visits and experiencing the German

hospitality to help delegates to share ideas informally and adapt their learnings to their own country e.g. medieval Gottingen Town Hall entry and traditional dinner.

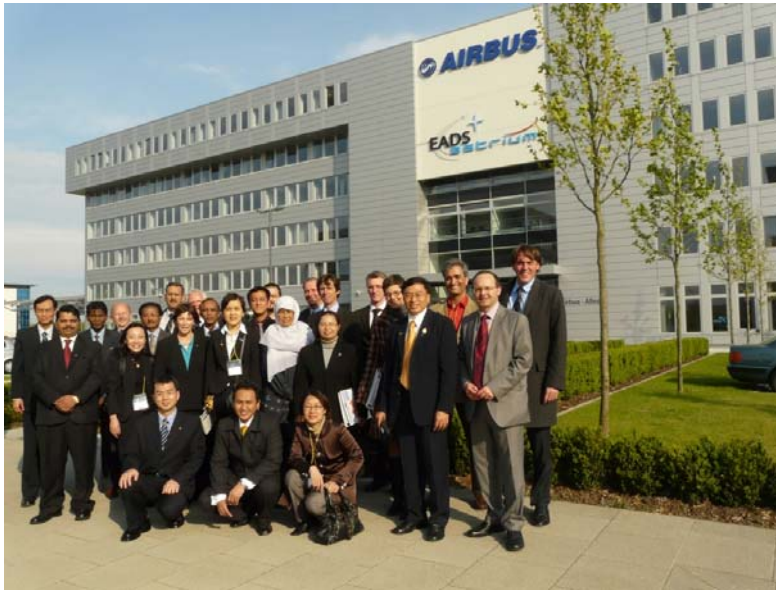
- Speed dating with members of the German KM Association matching needs and experience.

Dr Hochreiter, a key German government official, joined the tour and talked about his experiences and interacted with the delegates. He was responsible, through his department, for funding a major project aimed at companies in Germany applying the Intellectual Capital Statement (Wissensbilanz – Made in Germany) methodology. This approach has been taken forward into the InCaS project sponsored by European Commission to test the approach within 25 small and medium-sized companies across Europe.

What we Learned

Most of our hosting companies have lived the KM journey since 1998/2000 and "survived"! So they have experienced the ups and downs of KM so we were able to learn how we can survive the KM journey and provide significant benefits for our organisations in the long term.

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We visited different companies from small business to large corporations and the public sector. We experienced different approaches in new product development (Blaupunkt-BOSCH Group, Airbus, ATLAS Elektronik, Schaeffler), KM for Mergers & Acquisitions (Siemens), KM world-wide (GTZ), and small businesses Burgel with their KM network and Reinisch using Intellectual Capital Statements to improve their intangible success factors. We saw Web 2.0 (Siemens) and semantic knowledge maps (ATLAS) and

experiences with Expertise Transfer (Airbus, ATLAS), which addresses the consequences of the retirements of the baby boomers in the next years.

In Frankfurt/Main we had an exchange session with around 30 members from the German Association of Knowledge Management including organisations like Umicore, BRANTA, BMWi, Siemens, Ashurst, Clariant, FAZ, Fraport, IPK Fraunhofer, Lufthansa, Merck, Neckermann, Nationalbibliothek, etc.

We learned how to link KM to Innovation in enabling transfer of concepts from one discipline / team to another. We also learned how KM contributes to productivity, profitability and sustainability of organizations, particularly when they assess and close gaps in their human, structural and relationship capital. However the direct link to KPI results (cause and effect) is a matter for further research. The companies we visited can certainly demonstrate the benefits for KM for individuals in saving them time, costs and frustration.

KM can definitely enhance organisational, team and individual capability and must be linked to the organisation's strategy for most success in deploying the strategic plan. The strategic benefits of KM were obvious like at Airbus (30 year product lifecycle), Bosch (innovation and problem solving in design), gtz (global human aid programs with teams in various countries) and Burgel (innovative marketing).

Certainly, technology is only an enabling factor for KM; the real players and beneficiaries are the people who have the tacit knowledge which you cannot write down and make accessible by means other than appropriate and timely communication between people.

To keep KM sustainable in larger organisations it should be supported by a centralized KM team – but these people do not do the KM – they just facilitate it and provide the training and tools. Most importantly the KM facilitators should also encourage the sharing of success stories for sustaining the KM effort. The people who do the KM are the experts in their particular field. For smaller businesses Intellectual Capital is vital and also we learned there is more benefit from innovatively collaborating with potential competitors than closing your doors to the rest of the world. Some of the tools used by the larger organizations are certainly appropriate for use by smaller organizations.

Next Steps: KM Study Tour Asia 2010

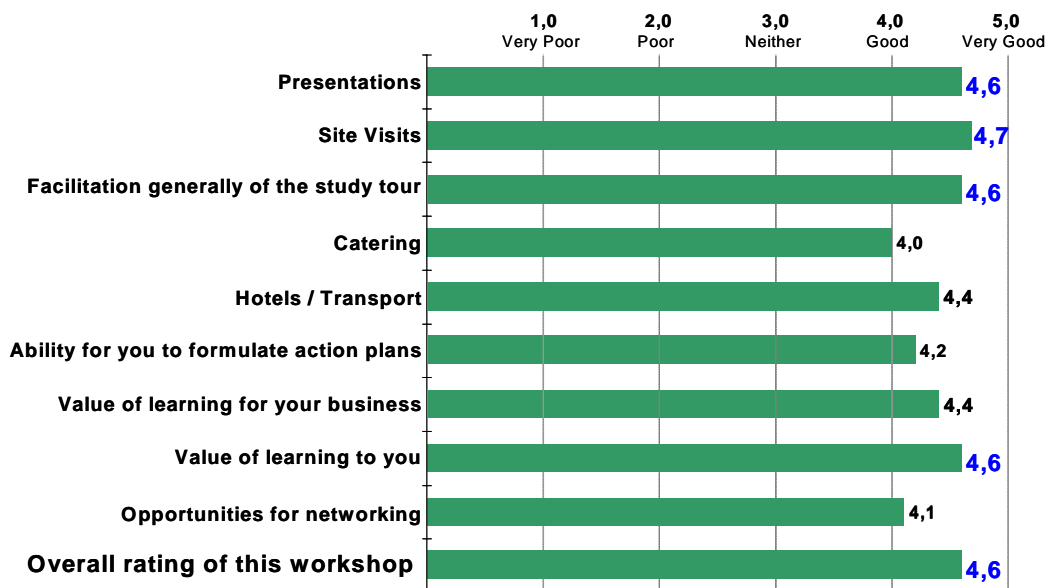


We are planning a KM tour in Asia for next year and other activities to share and learn best practices in KM the meantime. Please contact us if you would like to participate and let us know your key learning needs and what you can share too. Referring to the picture above taken at our first hotel in Bremen (with a Star Wars theme) – from left to right - Dr Peter Heisig – peter.heisig@eureki.org; Bruce Searles – bruce@benchmarkingpartnerships.com.au, Brenda and Terry Pilcher – BCSMgt@aol.com ; and Ms. Duangthip Chomprang, APO Program Officer.

DELEGATE FEEDBACK

100% of the people who responded advised that they would recommend a similar Benchmarking Study Mission to others.

Evaluation of KM Study Tour Germany 2009



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On a scale of 1=Very poor, 2= Poor, 3= Neither, 4=Good, 5 = Very good, the above responses were received from the 18 feedback forms submitted:

Strengths of the KM Tour

- *Well structured*
- *Broad exposure*
- *Well facilitated*
- *Focused on KM and practitioners*
- *Best practice examples*
- *Various knowledge came from presenters who are very good*
- *This is one of the many ways to collect more new knowledge and experiences*
- *A learning experience*
- *Experience of the experts*
- *Good company examples*
- ***Having the chance to visit the benchmarking companies of knowledge management***
- ***Well organised***
- ***In-depth knowledge***
- ***Two way interactions***
- ***Active discussions***
- ***Opportunity to learn first hand***
- ***Well established KM process in German companies***
- ***Knowledgeable and committed people***
- ***Factory site visits***
- ***Many lectures on a variety of functions***
- ***Many best practice companies on this study mission***
- ***Program is broad and comprehensive***
- ***Learned more than expected***
- *Much knowledge provided*
- ***Study mission covered well selected corporate KM practitioners***
- *Very good event well facilitated*
- *Learned how to set up KM*
- *Good examples of KM on the Tour*
- *Companies visited*
- *Good presentations*
- ***Review sessions and action planning sessions after every visit***
- ***Debriefing and overall summarization of key findings by facilitators and participants***



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- *Site visits that provided a practical perspective*
- *Well organised and facilitated*
- ***Good choice of location – Germany and visiting excellent companies***
- ***Well structured and organised***
- *Very fruitful*
- *Well done*
- ***The Tour positively influences one to look into and interpret KM within and apply the learned experiences of our knowledge partners eg study KM in our business to keep knowledge updated and accessible for efficient use in the business***
- ***Knowledge is good for person, industry, country and world – please continue to provide the same tour all over Asia and the World***
- *Thanks APO from India*
- ***The amount of practical KM sharing was phenomenal, and I only realise the extent thereof now as I report back to my colleagues on what I have learned and revisiting the presentations in the tour manual***

Opportunities from and to improve the KM Tour

- ***For networking in KM session should spend more time in this session because it is good time for networking to exchange knowledge and experiences with each other***
- *Utilize experience of participants*
- *Open innovation*
- *Examples of IT software*
- *To have the knowledge and get some know-how to set up knowledge management*
- *To develop KM*
- *To explore network*
- ***More in-depth analysis***
- *The experience to develop new KM companies in India*
- *Networking for training, conferences, publications etc*
- ***To organize a similar program to other than Germany eg England, the Netherlands, Sweden etc***
- *Could increase exposure to many organizations*
- *Could listen to people from many disciplines*
- ***Study mission on KM measurement of impact assessment may be needed***
- *To set up KM in my company*
- *To teach / lecture KM to our customers*
- ***Should be more focused on how to apply KM – not only case study***
- *Time constraints*
- *Culture sharing*

Sun April 26th to Thur April 30th 2009



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- ***Soft copy of materials (pdf is fine)***
- *How to apply KM tools and techniques in practice*
- *Study tour on other areas*
- ***Thinking out of the box to see other structures and ideas***
- *Sharing the experiences of experts in global best practices*
- *Understanding KM and interacting with colleagues from other Asian countries*
- *Learning from global experts*
- ***It is worth to be longer than 5 days (the study mission on KM is outstanding)***
- *Case studies to show KM has actually rescued a business in times of crisis or in competition*
- *Have participants whose command of English is average to poor benefited fully?*
- ***KM helps to become global enterprise***
- ***Social, cultural and economical growth of country***