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► To cite this version:

Isabelle Walsh, Amitabh Anand. Sharing Research with Pleasure (ShaRP) and Sharing Knowledge Forward (SKF) to Peers – A SKEMA1 Initiative. 4th Knowledge Management and Intellectual Capital and Excellence Awards -An Anthology of Case Histories, 2018. halshs-02284059

HAL Id: halshs-02284059

<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02284059>

Submitted on 11 Sep 2019

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Sharing Research with Pleasure (ShaRP) and Sharing Knowledge Forward (SKF) to Peers – A SKEMA¹ Initiative

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This project is not the project of one or several professors. First and foremost, it is the project of an institution: SKEMA Business School. Through the name that was chosen for our school (SKEMA = School of Knowledge, Economy and Management), it has been made obvious that knowledge has an essential place in SKEMA and is its main driver. In such a project, it is essential to pay tribute to all direct and indirect contributors and facilitators because each "node" of the resulting knowledge network is, indeed, essential for its survival and expansion. It is also important to highlight the essential role of our Dean, Alice Guilhon. This project would never have been born if she had not seen in it much more than some unrealistic idealism, if she had not considered the possible potency of the resulting knowledge network and, also, if she had not provided the means to institutionalize and encourage the simple endeavour of a few professors. The project highlights the importance of sharing knowledge with pleasure in a peer network and how this type of network positively encourages sharing knowledge forward.

1. Introduction

Whilst there is a strong body of research into knowledge management and knowledge sharing in commercial environments, research about knowledge sharing in universities is very limited, even though academic institutions are recognized to be vastly different from other working environments (Fullwood et al, 2012).

Knowledge is considered as one of the core assets of an academic institution. Management is an applied science in essence and is taught in Business Schools (BS), which are knowledge intensive academic institutions. BS support firms and, more broadly, industries, through their research and the study of issues and challenges, in providing possible solutions. These solutions are then shared

¹ SKEMA is a French-based non-profit organization, a business school, created in 2009 as the result of a merger between two other business schools (ESC Lille and CERAM Business school).

with students through teaching and with practitioners in firms through consultancy missions but also with colleagues and other researchers through the publication of research articles, case studies etc. However, managing and sharing knowledge between professors is a challenge for academic institutions as academics are not always willing to share their knowledge with their peers, and are even less willing to do so until this knowledge is protected through scientific publication and/or patents (Nelson, 2016). This author argued that academics mostly share their knowledge to build their prestige, status, and reputation and they often avoid sharing it with their peers to avoid their "scooping" it and because it requires time and effort.

Furthermore, in the academic world, tenure is often (if not always) linked to research publication ("publish or perish" has become a motto in many universities) and there is great pressure for academics to maintain quality in teaching, which implies keeping up-to date about the knowledge and research of the field. Hence, the actual pleasure of doing research is often forgotten as publishing one's research is mostly considered as an obligation. Furthermore sharing one's research and know-how related to doing research with one's peers is mostly avoided to protect one's individual competitive advantage. In the project that is summarized here, the pleasure of doing research was pursued and discovered, or found again, by many of the participants through sharing their knowledge forward to their peers...

2. The project objectives: SKF (Sharing Knowledge Forward)

In the wake of a challenge such as making academics share their knowledge with their peers, with the only immediate reward being pleasure and gratitude, followed with infusion of generosity, one professor, Isabelle Walsh, under the leadership of Alice Guilhon, general Dean of SKEMA BS, started an initiative of "Sharing Knowledge Forward" (SKF) through the creation of an unusual research centre ShaRP (Sharing Research with Pleasure).

The idea of sharing research with pleasure was originally initiated by four professors² from various business schools, many years ago and shortly after they defended their PhD. One of these four

² Anouck Adrot, currently affiliated to Paris-Dauphine University (France), Gaetan Mourmant currently affiliated to Business Science Institute (Luxembourg), Alya Mlaiki, currently affiliated to Paris Ecole des Cadres (France) and Isabelle Walsh, currently affiliated to SKEMA BS. They named their little group at the time 'Plaisir, Partage, Entraide dans la recherche' (PPER), literally translated as 'Taking pleasure, Sharing and helping each other while doing research'.

professors, after consulting with the other three, decided early in 2016 to experiment and try implementing this idea at a larger, institutional scale to encourage research and improve publication rate in SKEMA BS. The initiative started ‘unofficially’ in SKEMA at the beginning of the year 2016 even though ShaRP’s official ‘kick off’ took place in July 2016, with the validation, encouragement and support of SKEMA’s Dean.

The sharing knowledge forward (SKF) idea underlying ShaRP can best be summarized through a somewhat contradictory position to Mauss’s (1967) gift theory. In a simplistic way, this theory may be illustrated as a ‘closed’ gift loop: during social exchange, when one person (the giver) does another (the receiver) a favor that is accepted, there is a general expectation of some future return from receiver to giver (reciprocal giving). This giving loop (one to one) feeds the social tie between giver and receiver (Mlaiki, Walsh & Kalika, 2017) (see Figure 1).

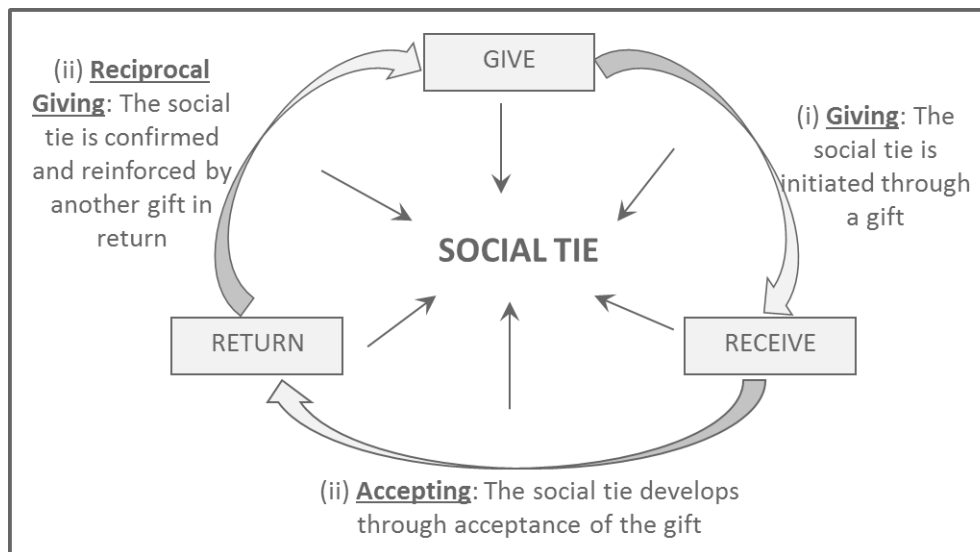


Figure 1: The giving loop in gift theory (Mlaiki et al., 2017: page 9)

However, the ‘closed’ giving loop may be ‘opened’ and the initial gift that has been received, may be returned to others (one to many). In the context of knowledge sharing, Anand and Walsh (2016) proposed an opened loop of SKF without any incentive other than pleasure and generosity: instead of sharing knowledge ‘with’ one other person while expecting some return, knowledge is shared forward ‘to’ many. We argue that, even though the giving loop is ‘opened’ and the giving back disseminated to many, the resulting ‘network ties’ that result may be very strong and, sometimes, even stronger than in a closed loop (see Figure 2).

This idea (SKF and more specifically SKF to Peers) was presented to SKEMA's Faculty by Isabelle Walsh in July 2016 and put into practice through ShaRP, which was actively implemented in SKEMA BS in September 2016 and is currently successfully running with positive results, both intangible (group climate) and tangible (increased research output, including from professors who had never published their research before).

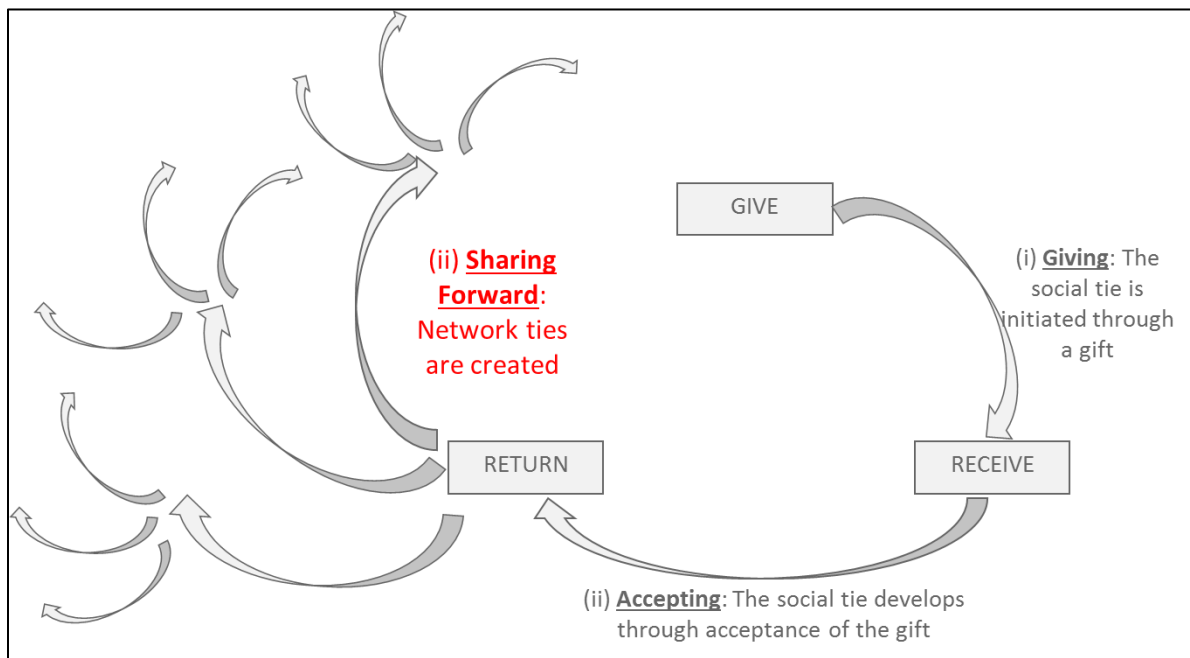


Figure 2: Creating a network where receiving means sharing forward

3. The infrastructure: ShaRP (Sharing Research with Pleasure), an unusual research group

SKEMA BS initiated a knowledge management venture to help create new knowledge and ensure effective knowledge sharing among peers through the creation of a new research group, ShaRP (Sharing research with pleasure), which was created under the guidance of Isabelle Walsh. Her role was to 1) identify all subjects potentially interested in this venture, experts in some management research domains and willing to share their knowledge, competences and research work with others 2) identify those researchers, who were in need of help towards publishing and were rejected by other research groups because of their lack of scholarly publications 3) foster the pleasure of sharing one's research and 4) inculcate the practice of sharing knowledge without

expectation other than for this knowledge to be shared forward to other researchers and 5) include researchers from all SKEMA's global campuses (France, China, Brazil, USA)

The ShaRP research group currently includes researchers (recognized senior researchers, who publish with great success, junior researchers starting their career and academics who would like to publish more effectively) from different continents and varied streams of research linked to management science (e.g. education, information systems, knowledge management, organization studies, law, project management, scientometrics, statistics, supply chain, etc.). The only requirement to be a member and/or attend any session is to come willingly and obtain some amount of pleasure and contentment through doing so. The research group is opened to various research options and new innovative methodologies. ShaRP also welcomes visiting researchers as well as practitioners, who recognize the value of our output in research and are willing to subsidize to some extent the research of our group. ShaRP organizes meetings once a month called the "needs meetings" to share concerns, questions, expectations, and best practices related to members research endeavors and their needs to be fulfilled in order for them to produce valuable research. It also organizes research seminars requested by members and always makes sure to extend the invitation to the entire school and doctoral students from other schools. During these, many well-known scholars are invited to share their research results and know-how. Finally, it organizes seminars during which members present their ongoing research to other members of our group, to get feedback, friendly reviews, funding information, new methodological contributions etc. Some members also present research that has already been accepted and/or published in top tier journals or research in progress, to help move it forward through constructive criticism.

Knowledge sharing occurs both at explicit and tacit levels. Those members who cannot participate in some meetings or workshops due to some other duty / constraints obtain relevant information from other members. Further, the minutes of all meetings and knowledge resources are provided on a technology platform called K2 (an internal platform created by SKEMA BS for sharing documents and information).

4. Challenges met and team building

ShaRP met initially with some resistance. Bringing recognized academics to join a heterogeneous research group in order to share their precious knowledge was a challenging task as it is evident

that not everyone might be willing to share personal expertise or ongoing research that they fear might be duplicated by others. Creating interest among the members in order for them to share knowledge, asking members to take time to engage in discussions during meetings, organising meetings with sufficient overall interest to ensure maximum voluntary participation were some other challenges faced by the leader of ShaRP.

To address these challenges, Isabelle Walsh first shared her own research and provided free training not only to the members of ShaRP but also started sharing it forward to other research groups in the school. This resulted in seeing other research group members coming and sharing knowledge with ShaRP research members and encouraging them. While some members still had some doubts as to the effectiveness of such an approach, the group grew significantly and started yielding positive results even during the first year of its implementation: increased participation, more and more members making time available to participate because they recognized the value creation for themselves, increased infusion of generosity among the group, strong collaboration in research, guidance toward publishing. People who hadn't published before in recognized research outlets and top tier conferences started doing so and enjoyed the experience through expert advice and the sharing of new techniques. Some members won prestigious awards in conferences, through publications and reviews. Furthermore, it helped young novice researchers advance their career faster through advice, training and funding support. We supply in Table 1 below, a summary of the various publishing achievements of Sharp members from 2016 till 2018. We also supply in Appendix 1 the full details.

Table 1: ShaRP Members' Publishing Achievements – 2016-2018

TYPE OF CONTRIBUTION	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
ARTICLES				
Articles published in PRJ journals ranked A		1		1
Articles published in PRJ journals ranked B	4	3	1	8
Articles published in PRJ journals ranked C	2	2	3	7
Articles published in PRJ journals ranked D	1	0	2	3
Total articles published in PRJ ranked journals	7	6	6	19
Articles published in unranked journals	28	37	26	91
Total published				110
Working papers	6	20	53	79
BOOKS				
Published	4	6	3	13

Draft			1	1
CASES				
Published	4	0	0	4
Draft	3	5	2	10
CHAPTERS				
Published	13	8	10	31
Under review, draft...		3	3	6
CONFERENCES PRESENTATIONS	35	44	19	98
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS	9	22	8	39
REPORTS	0	2	1	3
OTHER RESEARCH	9	10	4	23
AWARDS	1	1	2	4

One of the challenges that was noted in the initial stages was the 'lack of time' factor, which was causing members to participate less. However, as sessions went on, more and more members made sure to attend the meetings and then personally connect with other members towards research collaborations, which resulted in new knowledge creation.

5. Learning outcomes: PoP is dead, Long live ShaRP

With the objective of increasing the school research output, whose strategic intent is 100% of publishing professors, ShaRP became a recognized source of information and help towards building a culture of collaboration among the members of the school. ShaRP not only enhanced members' competency, it also helped develop a culture of generous behaviour.

- ✚ **Member engagement:** Members of ShaRP are now not just sharing research within the school network but also outside this network, and with pleasure (see next section)
- ✚ **Trusting Relationships:** Members started to build strong social ties with others through this platform, resulting in deep trusting relationships and collaborative research
- ✚ **Motivation and Rewards:** Members were provided with access to software for research, access to funds to participate in top conferences, access to resources and help in conducting research. Appreciation and peer recognition are common among members, which keeps the team motivated

- ✚ **Empowering Leadership:** Members have access to a ShaRP leader³, who is continuously engaged in providing direction, sharing information, motivating members with new ideas and organising events to be up to date with research.
- ✚ **Supporting Technology:** SKEMA BS has multi-campus sites in USA, Brasil, China and France. All members are connected through a VISIO (video conferencing) platform which enables members to share and participate from various geographical locations
- ✚ **Deepening partnership with members and other academic groups** – Over the last two years, ShaRP has conducted monthly meetings successfully, helped researchers to advance in their work, helped guide some towards publication and managed to sponsor members to get access to resources and research tools.
- ✚ **Sharing Knowledge Forward** – The notion of sharing knowledge with pleasure has truly resulted in sharing it forward by ShaRP members, who are now inclined and infused with generosity to advance the sharing initiative with others.
- ✚ **Interaction leads to Innovation** – Members of ShaRP have expressed that they have benefited with new insight toward highlighting innovation in their research. Members expressed that changes that they witnessed during continuous interactions, have led to know-how transmission.
- ✚ **Collaborative culture** – Due to frequent interactions, members expressed that collaboration among its members is constantly becoming stronger. This helps further develop positive attitudes among members (humility and openness) and a strong informal collaborative culture (SKF to peers).

Within this knowledge management initiative, producing research output is not anymore a matter related to “publish or perish” but rather a matter related to achieving pleasure through self-accomplishment and sharing with others.

The history of this project tends to confirm that managing through voluntariness rather than authority may boost innovation and success in knowledge intensive organizations, as hinted by Amar, et al (2009).

³ Even though, Isabelle Walsh has passed on the management of the group to another experienced researcher after the first year (while she still remains to this day an active member of ShaRP), the group appears to endure and continue extending, as a proof of the enduring quality of its underlying principles, which are not linked only to a given person.

6. Current developments: Broadening and strengthening the ShaRP circle through the creation of an 'open' social networking site

ShaRP has further inspired one of its members, Amitabh Anand, who has initiated a trail activity using a mobile smartphone application (WhatsApp group), inviting many eminent academics across the world to be part of the SKF network and share their research with pleasure. From very few professors sharing some common values (PPER), the initiative was institutionalized in SKEMA (ShaRP), with the support of general management (the Dean), through a person whom Anand & Walsh (2016) named the 'Primum Movens' (the ShaRP Leader, who first started to share knowledge forward to ShaRP members). It was then further broadened to an international research community (WhatsApp group). (See Figure 3).

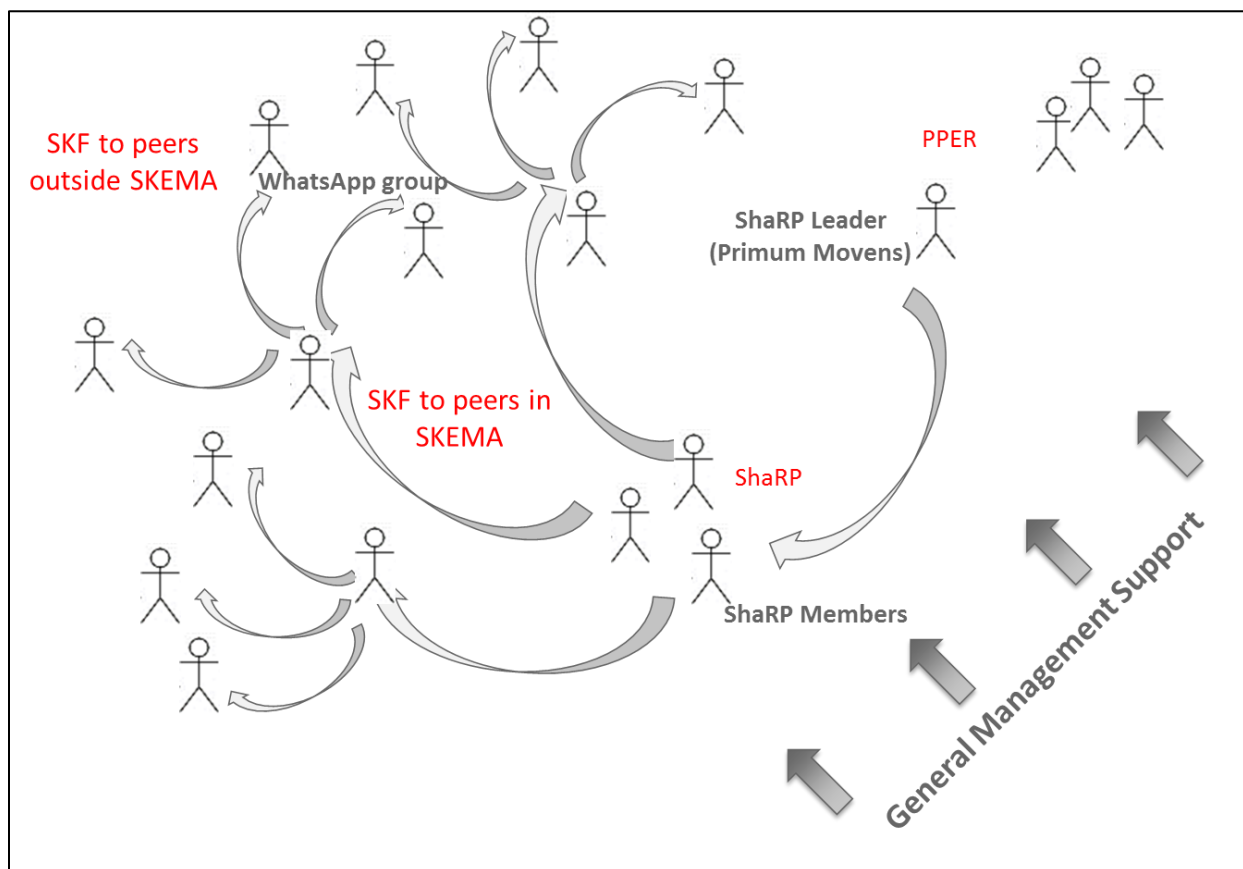
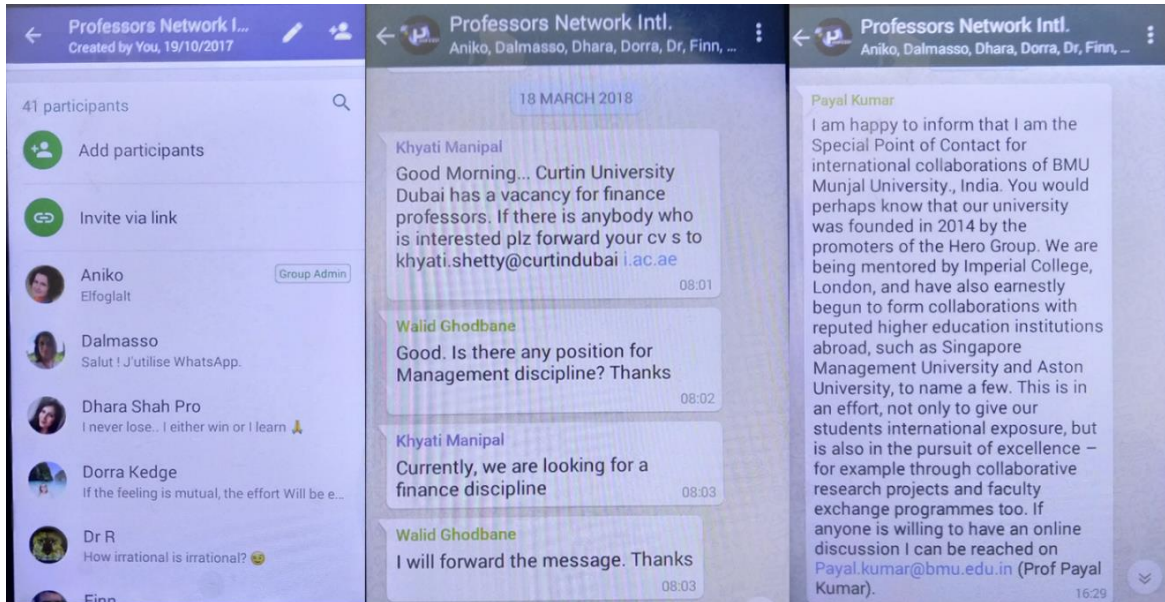


Figure 3: A broadened SKF research network

WhatsApp is a low-cost smartphone application, used for sending instant messages and currently the most popular social media network with over 350 million users (Nitza and Roman, 2016). This



application creates a feeling of community and family, and confidentiality is maintained, unlike in many other social networks (Church & de Oliveria, 2013).

Figure 3 : A Snapshot of the WhatsApp SKF platform

This new and broadened SKF network currently includes 41 members from various universities across the world, who share their research with pleasure. This group has also plans to reach out from the individual to the institutional level in order to try and link institutions. Any relevant information from this network is reciprocated back to ShaRP members. The group is now operated by two moderators who continuously engage in sharing forward information and knowledge about research, visiting talk opportunities, conference deadlines, collaboration for exchange and joint publications etc.

7. Conclusion

As part of the school strategy, which is centred on people, ShaRP has been highly successful in connecting people from various disciplines towards sharing their research and encouraging young and upcoming researchers towards publishing. Since its inception, ShaRP has addressed members' issues and needs related to research and organised intellectually stimulating events to infuse

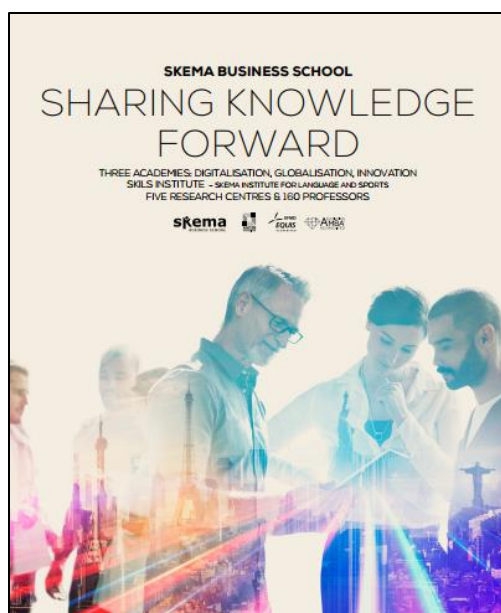
research contributions. This initiative defines and illustrates the concept of SKF not only amongst ShaRP members but also within a broader networked research community. In this expanding community, researchers have the opportunity to express their needs, obtain support, and help in their turn in a timely fashion but with pleasure.

Through such initiatives of knowledge sharing, the intellectual capital and creativity of any higher education institution may be enhanced. Our case tends to suggest that some important prerequisites are essential to support such initiatives: strong leadership support from top management, well-organized IT infrastructure to connect geographically dispersed members across the globe, a strong sharing culture, initiated and enacted through leadership, which supports people interested to take part in the initiative and facilitates attitudinal and behavioural change.

Knowledge sharing should be continuously promoted, more particularly in academic environments, and used as a strategy by schools to create an intrinsically rewarding culture of sharing research with pleasure. Since most knowledge sharing activities happened on a voluntary basis, the approach adopted by SKEMA BS has proven to be more motivating than if these activities had been enforced. It has encouraged and empowered professors to share their knowledge with their peers. Through a system of internal communication and posters relating their publishing achievements, all members of ShaRP feel respected, appreciated, and thus increase their citizenship behaviour toward the school. Knowledge is part of SKEMA's core values and

the broad concept of SKF (to students and peers alike) tends to become its motto as witnessed by the fact that SKEMA is considering linking it to its brand name (See Figure 4).

In this project, sharing knowledge that was gained from both successes and mistakes helped others perform better. It encouraged individuals to continuously engage in learning and create new knowledge. This project increased the efficiency of SKEMA while promoting a new culture and helped position it in a competitive



environment through this rather 'unlikely' competitive advantage...

Figure 4: SKF in SKEMA

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Authors biographies



Isabelle Walsh received her PhD and HDR (Habilitation to supervise research) in Management from Paris-Dauphine University in France. She also has extensive corporate and consulting experience. She is Distinguished Professor at SKEMA Business School, Université Côte d'Azur, France. Her research deals with sociocultural aspects and methodological issues within the Information Systems and Management research fields. Her research work, for which she has won several awards, has been published in various international and renowned outlets.



Amitabh Anand received his PhD from NEOMA Business School France. Presently he is the head of International Business and e-Business specialization program for BBA at SKEMA Business School. He is one of the few authors to address the value of virtues in knowledge management. His research work focuses more specifically on small enterprises emphasizing on the management and sharing of knowledge. He has won a scholarship and several awards for his research and administrative activities. He is an active speaker in international conferences and visiting faculty in several universities.