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Knowledge Sharing Challenges for the Anywhere Distributed Workforce

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TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

The global pandemic has expedited a transition of the workplace from traditional in-person employment to contracted, anywhere, and temporary, project-based remote workers, making commonplace various new kinds of interactions, dynamics, and structures that previously were not the norm (Kudyba, 2020). In light of these changes, the tenets of traditional knowledge management must address the following question: How can companies take full advantage of global talent while minimizing risks to intellectual property and intellectual capital of a distributed, multicultural, global workforce?

Time-tested methods of knowledge sharing and knowledge management that have shown to encourage innovation and the generation of intellectual capital may need to be transformed in light of a changing work environment (Kudyba et al., 2020b). Ideally, companies and employees of a rising and increasingly disconnected anywhere workforce could enjoy enhanced benefits due to physical and temporal flexibility. Or without change, would systems originally designed and shown to enhance collaboration and collaborative innovation now break down and even become counter-productive in light of current distributed work-from-anywhere work environments. The following detail major concerns for knowledge management practices that may need revisiting, and which will be discussed in our program:

- **Intellectual Property Threats:** Different countries have varying intellectual property regulations and norms of knowledge ownership. When hiring an increased number of contracted anywhere, independent, temporary and remote personnel, how can knowledge sharing be championed while safeguarding intellectual property from being lost or digitally stolen?

- **Global Cross-Cultural Talent:** How can companies maximize gains to intellectual capital and innovation from enhanced talent available from global, specialized gig workers may offer. Moreover, how do we ensure that anywhere workers from vastly different cultures, languages, and/ or countries are willing and capable of wholeheartedly participating in team-building, water-cooler, brainstorming, or other traditional knowledge-sharing and collaborative activities?

- **Trust, Mentorship and Advancement:** How can management best encourage creativity and collaboration through the promise of advancement? How can companies best encourage trust among remote and anywhere workers, so that they will believe advancement is possible and feel like they are able to attain the same professional development, beneficial relationships, and mentorship as their in-person counterparts?

References

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