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Realizing the potential of industrial engineering through knowledge management

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Industrial engineering has arguably existed as a discipline since the work of Frederick Taylor pioneered scientific management over a century ago. Conversely, the practice of knowledge retention, knowledge sharing and collaboration known as knowledge management has been in existence only within the last three decades. Industrial engineering relies on scientific methods and practices to be effective; knowledge management relies on soft skills to improve outcomes. The skills required by industrial engineering practitioners are precise, and may take many years of training and application to be proficient at. For knowledge management, structure is provided in the form of governance models and detailed roles and responsibilities, along with the change management skills of the practitioner. Industrial engineers are generally a defined group of practitioners within an organization, often with advanced education to support their work. For knowledge management professionals, the requirements are far less strict, and rely upon personal influence, situational awareness, and communication skills. For this reason, current practitioners of knowledge management rarely have certification and even fewer have degrees in the field since few of either exist. Yet both practices aspire to the same outcomes: to improve efficiencies, to lower costs, to improve quality, and to increase profits (or effectiveness in the case of not-for-profit organizations). This session outlines how practitioners of each discipline can help the other, including their differences, and more importantly their commonalities.

Biography

Jim Lee is the practice leader of APQC's knowledge management practice and is responsible for leading projects from initial problem structuring through solution delivery, ensuring quality and the transfer of best practices. His experience spans more than 30 years in the manufacturing, retail, and professional services industries. Prior to joining APQC, he was a global knowledge manager at Capgemini Ernst & Young. He is a current member of the Project Management Institute and a former adjunct professor of graduate studies at two universities. He has spoken at numerous national and international conferences on project management and knowledge management since 1997.

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