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Knowledge Transfer Between Academia and Industry: an oil company point of view.

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ABSTRACT

An environment and culture has been developed within the UK that enables both the oil industry and academic researchers to work easily together. Research providers in the UK are generally well organised into JIP or consortia in which a number of oil companies sponsor and advise on the same project. Research facilitators, such as ITF and ITI, play a key role in bring together Universities and companies that have common research interests. The weak link in this chain however, is the transfer of knowledge from one part to the other. Identifiable drawbacks come in the form of the usefulness and quality of the deliverables provided. On the other-hand, even if the results are efficient, industry partners do not always allocate sufficient time and staff to promote the added value of this research. Staff working in an operational environment often solve problems on a day-today basis. They try to solve their current and recurrent problems using "simple" and immediate solutions. They have a need for solutions that are both accurate but yet quick to apply. It is into this environment that we have to transfer the knowledge generated by the research JIP and consortia. Is this a role for the universities or for each company?

Total opened the Geoscience Research Centre (GRC), 15 years ago, in the UK to support corporate R&D through a direct link with UK-based Universities. The GRC has four main objectives, i) operate research projects in geoscience and engineering, ii) co-operate with UK-based universities and innovative companies on research projects, iii) provide technical support to the UK subsidiary and iv) offer opportunities to young geoscientists and engineers. The GRC must play a role as the conveyor belt transferring needs and knowledge between the customer (industry) and supplier (Universities and SMEs). We also have to ensure that research will meet both our current and future needs. Ensuring that Universities provide efficient results in an easily manageable format. Recently the increased use of web-based deliverables has improved the ease of knowledge transfer. This is not enough however, we have to ensure that the results will look accessible to the non-specialist and guide them to the information they are after, also that any software that might result from a project can be easily included into our reservoir modelling workflows (programme plug-ins provide a solution to this point).

Here is a summary of one oil company's point of view. As research partners, universities probably have a similar list of comments from their side. We need to continue to increase our collaboration to ensure a win-win situation. Though continued collaboration between the petroleum industry and Universities our ability to transfer knowledge will improve and become smoother. We look forward to working in the future with Universities-based in the UK and around the world as a means to increase our knowledge and ability to produce increasingly more difficult and costly hydrocarbon reserves.