



FELLOWS

Nina Kollars

SOFWERX's Return on Collision: Measuring Open Collaborative Innovation

Kollar's article examines SOFWERX's structure and function and argues that while SOFWERX exists as a traditional bureaucratic bypass for technology sourcing and development, its greater contribution to innovation will be in harnessing its knowledge 'return on collision.' That is to say, that the knowledge created and managed by that entity will be its most important asset. As such, proponents of the space would do well to establish metrics that measure 'collision' as well as systems that can manage that knowledge.

Fellow Discoveries

SOFWERX would do well to gain feedback on the facilitation of the interactions. The emerging understanding of why some open collaborations work and others do not, tends to reduce one thing- the humans who work there. David Beach of Stanford Design School's Product Realization Lab argues vehemently that the value of open collaborative spaces is not the result of laser cutters, foundries, or 3D printers, it is the people who inhabit that space. Those capabilities certainly attract the people who ultimately collide, but ensuring positive collision is the key strength of a good facilitator. Measuring that can be done in follow-up surveys or, more casually, in a conversation between the director and its visitors.

Fellow Outcomes

Effective creation and management knowledge that fosters collision creates an army of divergent thinkers and a catalogue of intellectual capabilities with unlimited potential application. In this way, knowledge creation is more than pleasant academic inquiry. It is the foundation of a nation's capacity to new solutions. For matters of national security, paying closer attention to knowledge creation rather than (or at a minimum in addition to) machines created is arguably a more balanced approach to the myriad of technological solutions available in the marketplace.