

## **Preface**

Developing innovative services and launching them successfully in international markets – these are major challenges for enterprises and national economies which aim to benefit from the opportunities of the service sector by achieving more growth and employment. Those enterprises and sites which succeed in creating “a special service experience” by offering outstanding service solutions and by excellent performance in service delivery to the customer will be successful in competition. Nevertheless, it is exactly the current discussion about innovation, particularly in Germany, which reveals that we do not primarily suffer from a lack of good ideas but rather that the translation of new findings and ideas into new services, products and processes must be substantially improved.

All in all, it is obviously very urgent to increase innovative ability and to accelerate the speed of innovation. Progress on this path can be accelerated if science and research increasingly face up to the challenges of how to improve innovative power in the service sector. In my opinion, service innovations address very different fields of innovation such as, for example, linking not only new technologies and services, performance and process innovations, but also market-related innovations, for example, for the establishment of new distribution channels. On the one hand, distinct improvements have occurred in the past few years with regard to the willingness to also invest in research and development in the domain of services in order to meet these challenges and, on the other hand, the boundaries of the research disciplines are more and more often transcended for an interdisciplinary and international cooperation and for a holistic view.

Accordingly, the international workshops at the Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) in Stuttgart were not only an attempt to devise a roadmap for future R&D activities but also to present different views of the challenges of improving innovative ability in the service sector from the point of view of various disciplines of research – ranging from service marketing and management to service engineering. This book documents many of the opinions presented by the experts during these workshops and as such will hopefully provide valuable input to the community.

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