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TOWARD A PROCESS MODEL FOR CREATIVITY IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CONTEXT: A CASE FOR CONTINGENT SERENDIPITY (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

TOWARD A PROCESS MODEL FOR CREATIVITY IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CONTEXT: A CASE FOR CONTINGENT SERENDIPITY

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Principal Topic

Creativity lies at the heart of the cognitive soul of the entrepreneur. Yet what specific creativity strategies do entrepreneurs employ? Creativity is the interplay between ability and process by which an individual produces an outcome or product that is both novel (a new combination) and is useful (economic utility) (Plucker, 2004). This study proposes three questions: do entrepreneurs when searching for a viable opportunity to pursue, utilize more generalized creative divergent thinking heuristics that can lead to those serendipitous “a-ha” moments? Or do entrepreneurs employ a deeper knowledge dependent systematic cognitive process in order to recognize patterns that develop into new combinations with marketplace potential? Can reproducible conditions be identified that influence creative productivity that enhance the ability of entrepreneurs to see and recognize opportunity?

Method

Creative “brainstorming” output from four groups of respondents were evaluated in this study. Cells included employees (n=92) of corporate new business venture teams that were balanced with participants with both domain general and specific technical or business knowledge to the creative task; creative professionals (n=26) with enhanced general nonspecific abilities in creative “brainstorming” and ideation techniques; novice participants (n=125) with neither “expert” standing in either general creativity or the technology domain of the specified task; and novice participants (n=84) which were given training in divergent thinking skills prior to the creative task challenge. A mix of survey, personal interview, and content analysis were analyzed.

Results and Implications

The results raise important questions about the role of domain specific or prior knowledge in the opportunity creation or identification event. There were situations where increased knowledge inhibited not only number of ideas created but also their novelty. These entrepreneurs employed more comparison recall discovery or missing combination heuristics than serendipitous discovery. The use of domain independent diverse stimuli in the creative tasks was found to aid serendipitous discovery independent of degree of specific knowledge by all groups. The results support a dynamic process model that creates a set of “idea frames” internally assigned with initial perceived contingent outcomes until they are recognized to satisfy a perceived threshold (basis) for realizing extrinsic or intrinsic reward.

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