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SUMMARY

ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING TRANSFER: INFLUENCES ON ENTREPRENEURS' USE OF KNOWLEDGE FROM TRAINING PROCESSES

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Principal Topic

A great deal is known about what influences recurrent training effectiveness in large companies. We know less about what influences entrepreneurial training effectiveness. Most important is our need to know whether or not the knowledge gained in training is actually *transferred into practice* by the entrepreneur ("training transfer"). The study's purpose is to use what is known about training transfer in large organizations to examine those relationships in an entrepreneurial environment. Prior research suggests that an individual's transfer of training is determined by individual learner responses/performance (motivations to learn and transfer) and organizational transfer climate. We expect entrepreneurs' lack of organizational context to present different relationships.

Method

This pilot study involved 30 entrepreneurs, generating 183 opportunities for establishing/expanding ventures. The opportunity discovery training was conducted in three 2-hour sessions, one week apart, and a fourth debriefing session in week five. Entrepreneurs recorded their participation in journals, which were collected in week five. Measures for the independent variables (learning performance, motivation to learn, motivation to transfer, perceived transfer climate) are from prior training transfer research, amended to better reflect entrepreneurial settings. We measured training transfer using a 6-item Likert-type scale, recording the extent to which entrepreneurs used the training to discover each opportunity.

Results and Implications

We tested four hypotheses based on prior research in large organizations. Our results indicate that, contrary to prior research, entrepreneurs with higher motivation levels to learn did not experience higher learning performance levels (hypothesis 1). Nor did higher learning performance levels (hypothesis 2) or perceived transfer climate (hypothesis 4) predict higher levels of training transfer. However, entrepreneurs with higher motivation to transfer levels did experience higher training transfer levels (hypothesis 3: $R^2=.159$, $F=6.674$, $p=.000$, $\beta=.380$).

The results of this study enhance our knowledge of entrepreneurial training transfer and expand what we know about what influences training transfer in general, particularly in settings where organizational influences are less significant. Economic development organizations may find that the results of this study help them to better understand how to increase the chance that entrepreneurs will use what they learn in the creation and management of new ventures.

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