THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT NETWORKS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL TEAM PERFORMANCE (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT NETWORKS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL TEAM PERFORMANCE

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Principal Topic

Previous research on team performance in the management and entrepreneurship literatures has provided weak and inconsistent justifications for the effects of a team’s conflict on its performance. We propose that absence of insight into the structure of teams’ conflict networks and the exchange and combination of resources embedded within them represents a substantive limitation in our understanding of the mechanics of conflict for achieving enhanced entrepreneurial team performance. Thus, using social capital theory as an explanatory framework, the current study addresses this shortcoming by offering more theoretically sound arguments explaining the processes through which team conflict affects the performance of knowledge intensive new venture teams. We define a conflict network as the set of conflictful dyadic exchange relationships, or ‘conflict ties,’ group members share with one another (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004).

Method

This study is part of a larger research project on early stage new venture development. The conflict network is determined by asking each member to indicate the amount of disagreement of viewpoints, ideas, or opinions that occurred between them and every other member of the team. These ratings are used to calculate the density and centralization of each team’s conflict network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Results and Implications

The present study develops a novel concept, a conflict network, and explores it in the context of entrepreneurial teams. The social capital view of conflict advanced in this research draws from and integrates several disparate yet complementary concepts from the domains of resource-based theory, knowledge transfer theory, social networks theory, and information processing theory (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). The present study provides new theory that highlights the relational, structural, and cognitive dimensions of conflict.

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