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BOUNCING BACK AFTER A PERIOD OF DOUBT: DOES MENTORING HELP ENTREPRENEURS GET A SECOND WIND? (SUMMARY)

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

BOUNCING BACK AFTER A PERIOD OF DOUBT: DOES MENTORING HELP ENTREPRENEURS GET A SECOND WIND?

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Principal Topic

An entrepreneurial venture is an engagement process that involves “high” and “low” periods. The question of how this motivation evolves, and the underlying issue of loss of motivation (which we refer to as a “period of doubt”) an entrepreneur may experience right from start-up deserves further investigation. Mentoring, with the moral support, encouragement, advice and knowledge sharing it provides, is likely to help novice entrepreneurs recover the motivation they need after a career change and continue developing their business. This study focuses about the effect of mentoring on reducing entrepreneur doubt, and about the relevant mentoring parameters to consider in order to maximize doubt reduction among entrepreneurs.

Method

We collected data through the business mentoring program (*M Network*) created in 2000 in the province of Québec (Canada). We contacted novice entrepreneurs who received mentoring services by email and 360 agreed to fill-out our online questionnaire (response rate of 36.9%). We measured “period of doubt” following the work of Valéau (2006), with an assessment based on the recall of respondents about their level of doubt when they requested help from a mentor (“past period of doubt”), which was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire, and the current period of doubt, measured near the end of it. Confidence in the mentor and perceived similarities were also measured.

Results and Implications

The average for the current period of doubt is significantly lower ($p=0.000$) than the average for past period of doubt at the time of mentor-mentee pairing. Doubt is significantly reduced with both an entrepreneur mentor and a mentor with a career in another field, but that this effect is more pronounced in the entrepreneur mentor group. Where confidence in the mentor and perceived similarity were low, having a career as an entrepreneur significantly helped reduce doubt ($p=0.04$). This means that when mentors are well-accepted by entrepreneur mentees, they will be effective, regardless of their background, but where confidence and perceived similarities are low, it is best if mentors have themselves been entrepreneurs in their past career.

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