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WILLINGNESS TO LEARN IN STARTUP TEAMS: A MULTILEVEL MODEL OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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≈ INTERACTIVE PAPER ≈

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN IN STARTUP TEAMS: A MULTILEVEL MODEL OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty and complexity. As entrepreneurs work towards establishing their ventures, including contact with stakeholders and customers, they often discover the need to change business models. In dealing with change, the willingness of entrepreneurs to learn, learn well, and learn fast, is critical. In fact, scholars argue that ‘entrepreneurship is a process of learning, and a theory of entrepreneurship requires a theory of learning’ (Minitti & Bygrave, 2001: 7). Research on willingness to learn in entrepreneurship is ad hoc and scattered with a significant lack of research at the team level (Wang & Chugh, 2014). Understanding willingness to learn at different levels of analyses is important because high growth ventures are usually started by more than one individual. Our study addresses the antecedents and outcomes of willingness to learn - defined as a learning orientation. Specifically, we address factors that influence learning orientation at the *individual* level, how individual learning orientation influences learning orientation at the *team* level, and how learning orientation impacts entrepreneurial outcomes.

Methods

We gather data from teams developing business models. Two online surveys were administered over two months. The first survey included questions on individual learning goal orientation and personal characteristics that influence this orientation such as openness to experience, proactive personality, promotion focus, entrepreneurial passion, and demographics (e.g. gender). In the second survey, participants rated themselves and their team members on behaviors such as humility, innovativeness, accountability, and proactivity. They were also asked to rate their team learning goal orientation and processes such as behavioral integration, shared purpose, voice, reflexivity, support for innovation, and team outcomes.

Results and Implications

Findings suggest that willingness to learn in startup teams are predicted by individual factors of proactive personality, promotion focus, and narcissism. Individual willingness to learn spillover to team behaviors and outcomes. Our study extends and enriches the entrepreneurial learning literature at the individual and team levels and outcomes of this learning. Knowledge of antecedents and outcomes of willingness to learn is useful to startup teams and business mentors to understand how to develop a learning culture to facilitate startup change and adaptation.

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