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NON-TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE SPILLOVER (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER SESSION

NON-TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE SPILLOVER

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Principal Topic

The knowledge based theory of the firm contends that the uniqueness of a firm’s knowledge plays a vital role in its ability to compete with firms that do not possess this knowledge. Most of the research on knowledge obtained through association with universities involves the study of technology related inventions and/or innovations that firms acquire from universities. There is little or no information or data on the importance of non-technical knowledge spillover by universities to new firm owners. By non-technical knowledge we refer to the training (via workshops, seminars, etc.) in the areas of management, marketing, sales, accounting etc., that individuals who are about to start a business could potentially receive from a university.

The research question we analyzed was: can knowledge obtained by individuals through non-technical university programs be used as a resource to gain advantage over competition? We proposed that knowledge obtained by individuals through non-technical university programs such as training and/or workshops or university sponsored consulting, can be used as a resource to gain a competitive advantage.

Method

Data for the study was gathered by way of a self report online questionnaire of Small Business Development Center’s (SBDC) clients across the country. An email was sent out to the SBDC directors across the country asking them to forward the survey link to 5-10 of their clients. We have collected 74 responses thus far.

Preliminary analysis of the data indicate that firms that made use of university knowledge financially outperformed firms in a similar industry and similar economy that have not received such knowledge. The data indicates however that university related services did not help potential entrepreneurs gain access to financial help from financial backers other than family or friends. Finally, the data revealed that firms which utilized university services did increase employment to a greater extent than did firms that did not utilize such resources.

Implications

Initial results therefore suggest that university related non-technology knowledge does indeed impact business firms gain a competitive advantage over business firms in a similar industry and in similar economies that do not make use of such resources.

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