REAPING THEIR JUST DESSERTS? AN EXAMINATION OF HOW CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURS ARE PUNISHED AND REWARDED WITHIN THE WORKPLACE (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

Yvette P. Lopez  
*DePaul University, ylopez9@depaul.edu*

Justin W. Webb  
*Oklahoma State University*

Christopher Pryor  
*Oklahoma State University*

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Principal Topic

This research seeks to expand our understanding of the factors affecting individual entrepreneurial behavior in the firm. Individuals acting entrepreneurially in the firm introduce newness and therefore depart from existing organizational routines and behaviors. Some of these innovations may be positively perceived and rewarded while others may be negatively perceived and punished. We draw on the social learning theory, which emphasizes punishment or reward of deviance as reinforcing desired or deviant behaviors. Although research has examined the reinforcement of deviance, we know less about why differences exist in how deviance is punished or rewarded.

Method

Business graduate students will be asked to respond to two scenarios. The first scenario describes a scientist's misappropriation of firm funds to develop a new metal alloy. The second scenario describes a scientist's development of a new cancer drug as well as the drug's effectiveness. Each scenario contains several variable manipulations as well as a survey with which the respondents may rate the behavior exhibited in the scenario as destructively or constructively deviant as well as the punishment or reward they would bestow. In both scenarios, the deviant is an employee of the firm who has done something that can be described as illegitimate or illegal. The influence of the variable manipulations will be tested using a factorial design and regression analysis.

Results

This research seeks to make two theoretical contributions. While corporate entrepreneurship has been described as means through which firms may innovate, identify new market opportunities, and improve organizational processes, many corporate entrepreneurship projects may depart or violate firm norms or even legal and social expectations. Our first contribution is to examine the factors that influence whether such projects are perceived favorably or negatively, especially in ambiguous situations, where projects may violate approved means (i.e., misappropriation of funds or altering drug trial results) to achieve favorable ends (i.e., create value for customers). Our second contribution is in expanding our understanding how and why firm norms (e.g., the encouragement or discouragement of risk) influence whether deviance is negatively or positively received.

CONTACT: Yvette Lopez; ylopez9@depaul.edu; (T): 1-312-362-8329; DePaul University, Department of Management, 1 E. Jackson Blvd., DePaul Center 7044, Chicago, IL 60604.