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Entrepreneurial Teams: An Input-Process-Outcome Framework

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Foundations and Trends® in Entrepreneurship

Published, sold and distributed by: now Publishers Inc. PO Box 1024 Hanover, MA 02339 United States Tel. +1-781-985-4510 www.nowpublishers.com sales@nowpublishers.com

Outside North America: now Publishers Inc. PO Box 179 2600 AD Delft The Netherlands Tel. +31-6-51115274

The preferred citation for this publication is

D. Bolzani, R. Fini, S. Napolitano and L. Toschi. *Entrepreneurial Teams: An Input-Process-Outcome Framework*. Foundations and Trends[®] in Entrepreneurship, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 56–258, 2019.

ISBN: 978-1-68083-571-7

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Volume 15, Issue 2, 2019

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Foundations and Trends[®] in Entrepreneurship, 2019, Volume 15, 4 issues. ISSN paper version 1551-3114. ISSN online version 1551-3122. Also available as a combined paper and online subscription.

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Methodology2.1 Data Collection2.2 Description of the Sampled Papers2.3 Data Analysis	. 6
3	Previous Reviews	22
4	Defining ETs 4.1 Not Clearly Defining the ET 4.2 ET as "Founding Team" 4.3 ET as "New Venture Team" 4.4 ET as "Top Management Team" 4.5 Toward a Definition of ET Grounded in the State-of-the Art of the Literature	. 30 . 31 . 32
5	In-Depth Review of "Inputs" Related Clusters 5.1 Individual/Team Characteristics and ET Formation	34
6	In-Depth Review of "Processes" Related Clusters	42

Full text available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/0300000077

	6.1	Team-Level Processes: Development and	
		Turnover of ETs	42
	6.2	Team-Level Processes: ETs and Cognition	50
	6.3	Team-Level Processes: Interactions in ETs	57
	6.4	Team-Level Processes: ETs and Networks	65
	6.5	Business Processes: ETs and Governance/	
		Organization	67
	6.6	Business Processes: ETs and Strategies	71
	6.7	Business Processes: ETs and Opportunity Identification	79
7	In-E	Depth Review of "Outcomes" Thematic Clusters	81
	7.1	Strategic Outcomes: ETs and New Firm Creation	81
	7.2	Strategic Outcomes: ETs and Legitimacy	85
	7.3	Strategic Outcomes: ETs and Fundraising	87
	7.4	Strategic Outcomes: ETs and Public Support	99
	7.5	Strategic Outcomes: ETs and Internationalization	102
	7.6	Market-Related Outcomes: ETs and Performance	110
В	Con	clusions and Directions for Future Research	131
	8.1	Inputs	131
	8.2	Processes	132
	8.3	Outcomes	136
9	Con	clusion	142
۸.	nero	lices	143
ľ			
Re	eferences 1		

Entrepreneurial Teams: An Input-Process-Outcome Framework

Daniela Bolzani $^1,\ {\rm Riccardo\ Fini}^2,\ {\rm Simone\ Napolitano}^3$ and Laura ${\rm Toschi}^4$

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship research emphasizes the importance of the individual entrepreneur in both venture creation and growth. However, theory and practice suggest that the vast majority of new ventures are now team-based, and teams play a key role in venture success. As the scholarly interest in this topic has substantially grown in the recent years, the literature has flourished in a rather fragmented way. In this paper, we take a holistic view and systematise more than 250 papers on entrepreneurial teams, published over 30 years. We use a process approach (i.e., Input-Process-Outcome), depicting team evolution phases, from inception to maturity, linking them to firm performance. We identify gaps, highlighting opportunities for future research.

Keywords: entrepreneurial teams; new venture teams; founding teams; startup teams; entrepreneurship; business formation; family-owned firms; opportunity recognition.

Daniela Bolzani, Riccardo Fini, Simone Napolitano and Laura Toschi (2019), "Entrepreneurial Teams: An Input-Process-Outcome Framework", Foundations and Trends[®] in Entrepreneurship: Vol. 15, No. 2, pp 56–258. DOI: 10.1561/0300000077.

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1

Introduction

Entrepreneurship research has long emphasized the role of lone entrepreneurs. Although the first scientific contribution challenging this assumption dates back more than 40 years (Timmons, 1975), the individualistic and heroic representation of the entrepreneur is still used in recent entrepreneurship work. However, evidence that most new ventures are team-based should not be neglected: almost 95% of the individuals starting a business either involve others or intend to do so in the near future (Ruef, 2010). Further, about 80% of new ventures are team-based (Aldrich et al., 2004; Kollmann et al., 2016; Lechler, 2001; Ruef, 2010; Watson et al., 1995), and tend to perform better than their solo counterparts (Stockley and Birley, 2000; OECD, 2003). All this notwithstanding, scholarly research investigating the venturing processes by entrepreneurial teams (hereafter ETs) is relatively recent and characterized by specific and limited areas of attention. For instance, previous reviews on this topic have focused on: (1) the link between ET characteristics and performance (Carland and Carland, 2012; Jin et al., 2017; Klotz et al., 2014; Schjoedt and Kraus, 2009a; Vyakarnam and Handelberg, 2005), (2) the antecedents and effects of ET cognition (de Mol et al., 2015), as well as (3) the definition of ETs (Schjoedt and

3

Kraus, 2009a) and their differences compared to top-management teams (hereafter TMTs) (Huovinen and Pasanen, 2010). Although our work builds on such notable contributions, it also takes a nuanced view of the phenomenon. First, by focusing on its definition and characteristics, this work offers a comprehensive understanding of the construct "entrepreneurial team". Second, by using a process approach (i.e., Input-Process-Outcome), it depicts team evolution phases, from inception to maturity, linking these to firm performance. Our effort relies on 256 scholarly papers that were published over the last 30 years (1985–2016).

The review is structured as follows. We first outline the methodology used to search the relevant literature on the topic and to create meaningful thematic clusters. Second, we present the previous reviews on ETs and illustrate how our effort can be differentiated from these. Third, we focus on the ambiguity of the definition of ETs in previous research, providing our own definition of ETs and identifying areas for future development. Fourth, we present an in-depth analysis of the 14 thematic clusters identified according to the Input-Process-Outcome framework. In each cluster, we review the state of the art on the topic, highlighting limitations and shortcomings. For "inputs," we review papers dealing with individual/team characteristics and ET formation. For "processes," we review papers dealing with development and turnover in ETs; ETs and cognition; interactions in ETs; ETs and networks; and, finally, ETs and governance/organization, strategies, and opportunity identification. For "outcomes," we review papers dealing with ETs and new firm creation, legitimacy, fundraising, public support, internationalization, and performance. We conclude by identifying opportunities for further research, offering some suggestions on how to contribute to the state of the art of literature.

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