

Social Capital and Knowledge Acquisition among New Product Development Teams

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Abstract

Using survey data from 100 technology-intensive firms based in the United Kingdom, the paper analyses the effects of social capital on the process leading teams tasked with the development of new products (NDP teams) to acquire new knowledge from other teams. Drawing from the social capital theory as well as the relational view, the paper examines the impact of a number of dimensions of social capital on knowledge acquisition among NDP teams and it suggests that social capital facilitates external knowledge acquisition from key team(s) with which the NDP team develops a preferential relationship. We differentiate between types of knowledge that the NDP teams acquire from the other team. Product knowledge is related to the product specification and encompasses technology-related and market-related knowledge, while process knowledge is related to the procedures and techniques used to develop new products. Our results suggest that social interaction and network ties dimensions of social capital are indeed associated with greater knowledge acquisition in the case of process knowledge, but in the case of product knowledge trust is more important than the degree of social closeness. Further, our results provide evidence that when acquiring product knowledge, both absorptive capacity and cognitive ability play a positive mediating role; vice versa absorptive capacity does not facilitate the acquisition of process knowledge.

Keywords: *absorptive capacity; NPD knowledge acquisition; social capital theory*

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