Call for Papers

Special Issue: Strategic Human Capital

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Special Issue Purpose

This special issue seeks to advance intellectual inquiry at the intersection of strategic management and the management of human capital. While the strategy and human resource management literatures acknowledge the promise that human capital holds as a source of competitive advantage, cooperation and collaboration across these literatures has been meager. As such, the primary goal of this forum is to encourage deeper theoretical and empirical exploration of human capital-based competitive advantages. Therefore, manuscripts are especially welcomed that a) are interdisciplinary and/or consider human capital at multiple levels of analysis, and b) seek to navigate new territory that has not been well explored in the extant literatures.

Background

Despite a great deal of enthusiasm about the role of human capital in creating competitive advantage, much of the resulting inquiry represents only the beginning of where this dialog might take us. For example, many studies explore policies and procedures that are directly tied to human resource departments. While these practices are often very important for performance, and in some cases, are challenging to implement, they are also typically well-codified and may be imitatable – indeed many human resource management professionals (and professional associations) actively participate in disseminating knowledge about such practices.

What this focus tends to overlook are the many critical human resource decisions and policies that are initiated outside of human resource management departments. This may include human resource management practices in entrepreneurial firms that have little or no formal HR function, or professional firms (e.g., law firms) where the responsibility for critical HR decisions often falls to line managers outside of the HR area. Perhaps most importantly, this extends to strategic HR decisions (e.g., mergers and acquisitions) that may be made by executive teams lacking HR representation.
Research Questions

The above agenda implies a variety of research questions that have the potential to redirect the literature in significant ways. While not an exhaustive list, the following are some more specific examples of topics that this special issue is intended to highlight:

1. How does the management of human capital contribute to firm performance outside of the role of the HR functional area?
   - HR decisions made by executive teams
   - Entrepreneurial firms without HR departments, or
   - Professional firms where many HR decisions may be made by line managers

2. How does human capital challenge core constructs in strategic management?
   - What is a firm? Are employees considered part of the firm or are they suppliers?
   - What is competitive advantage? If employees appropriate rent, is that value part of a firm’s competitive advantage or must rent be appropriated by shareholders?

3. How can firms purposefully create sustained competitive advantages from human capital?
   - Strategic factor markets. Why and how do competitive interactions within labor markets (e.g., talent poaching) differ from other strategic factor markets?
   - Deploying human capital. What are the challenges of deploying and utilizing human capital that enhances or detracts from its strategic properties?
   - Sustaining advantages. How do practices that enhance the strategic value of human capital diffuse? What isolation mechanisms hinder imitation by rivals?
   - Appropriation. How do firms manage the rent appropriation challenges presented by valuable and rare human capital?

4. What are the determinants of the scope and nature of human capital management processes? What determines which activities are housed within HR departments (e.g., organizational design and the theory of the firm)?

5. How does human capital emerge and interact with other forms of intellectual capital (e.g., social capital, organizational capital) to influence firm-level outcomes?

As is the case for all contributions to Journal of Management, papers should offer theoretical and/or empirical insights that substantially advance the literature. Ultimately, anticipated impact will serve to guide editorial decisions.

Deadlines and Submission Instructions:

The deadline for submission of papers is December 15, 2012. Please submit your papers online on the Journal of Management manuscript submission website (http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jom) indicating that the work is intended for this special issue. Please be sure to follow the Submission Guidelines (http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?crossRegion=nAmerica&prodId=Journal2017)

Review Process: Papers will be reviewed following the regular *Journal of Management* double-blind review process. The Guest Editors are seeking reviewers for this issue and are soliciting nominations and volunteers to participate as reviewers. Please contact Patrick Wright (pmw6@cornell.edu) to volunteer or nominate a reviewer.

**More Information**

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