

Stepping In and Out: Formal Structures and Informal Coordination Practices in Film Crews

Abstract

This research explores the dynamic interaction between formal structures and informal practices of coordination in temporary organizations. We conduct an in-depth ethnographic study of two film production crews over a period of one year and three months respectively. Our grounded analysis reveals a cyclical team developmental process during which coordination is achieved through the emergence of practices that would appear to deviate from and challenge formal structures. We identify two transition practices and three mindful practices which enable this informal coordination, namely, an identification of initial issues and a disassembling of the revised sub-team (transition practices); and a de-embedding of past practices at the individual level, a continuous assessment and aggregation of individual actions at the team level, and role decoupling at the individual level (mindfulness practices). The key contribution of the paper is a process model of the conditions under which a team transitions from formal structures to informal practices of coordination and back, while drawing on the concept of mindfulness. We also identify the boundary conditions of our process model and discuss implications for further research on the coordination of temporary organizations.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, creative team management, coordination, mindfulness

Topic: Entrepreneurship within media sectors - Cross collaboration and team management in the media field