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Exploring the Emergence of a University-Based Accelerator

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Abstract

This paper explores the creation and development process of an accelerator by an Italian business university, investigating the factors that led the university to found its own accelerator and that guided its set up process in terms of choice of focal activities and governance structure, as well as the mechanisms through which it creates value for its internal and external ecosystem. Relying on an in-depth case study approach, we conducted several interviews with members of the accelerator, key university stakeholders and external partners. Our empirical evidence points to the existence of both internal and external drivers that led to the emergence of the university accelerator and suggests that its operating and governance structures were strategically designed to leverage the university's internal strengths and resources. It also underscores the key roles played by the top management of the university and by the internal champion in aligning views, building consensus, and negotiating solutions in this process. Finally, it reveals how by strategically orchestrating the relationships with internal and external stakeholders a university accelerator can successfully balance the need of creating value for both the university and the broader ecosystem in which it operates.



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