Managing Firm Resources at the Digital Technology Frontier

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Managing Firm Resources at the Digital Technology Frontier
The Case of Finland’s Artificial Intelligence Accelerator
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Constantly evolving and advancing digital technologies force firms to manage their resources actively [1]. This process is fraught with uncertainties, especially when dealing with innovations at the technology frontier. In this study, we investigate how firms participating in Finland’s Artificial Intelligence Accelerator (FAIA) collaborated and managed their resources to advance their use of AI. Unlike traditional start-up accelerators catering to early-stage companies, FAIA focused on facilitating AI adoption by established organizations. Firms participating in FAIA included some of the largest Nordic companies, such as Elisa (telecom operator), Nordea (bank), Posti (Finnish national postal services), S-group (retail chain), Telia (telecom operator), and YLE (Finnish national broadcasting company). The participating organizations formed several semi-formal groups (accelerator batches), typically with 4-8 participants each, and concentrated on specific types of AI use cases or AI-related practices. The batches met regularly throughout the acceleration period of approximately six months. The role of the government-funded FAIA team was to facilitate collaboration, stimulate AI adoption within the participating companies, and extract the key lessons and inform a broader audience of organizations in Finland.

We collected the data through participative observation of FAIA activities during the August 2018 - December 2020 period. The first author participated in most sprint workshops with companies taking part in FAIA and was present in weekly meetings of the team running FAIA. Furthermore, we have unrestricted access to the internal documentation and email correspondence between the organizing team and the participants. We intend to perform a qualitative case study analysis and contribute to resource orchestration (RO) research [1] by leveraging this in-depth data. Extant RO literature is inward-focused and provides insufficient insight into how firms manage resources in a collaborative setting. For example, based on preliminary analysis, firms participating in FAIA developed new AI-related resources through informal collaboration and without any transactions. RO theory does not sufficiently capture such phenomenon. Thus, this case study provides an opportunity to extend RO theory to new and important grounds particularly relevant to the context of rapidly evolving digital technologies.

The purpose of this TREO talk is to present preliminary findings and invite feedback from information systems scholars. The unique and in-depth dataset collected in this study provides a promising opportunity to generate both practically relevant and theoretically rich contributions to our understanding of how firms manage resources at the digital technology frontier.

References