

Corporate Social Capital and Liability

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What enables some organizations to routinely perform better than others? Conversely, what makes some firms consistently perform worse than their competitors? Within a single corporation, what enables some teams or individual firm members to outperform their counterparts? Through the concept of social capital, this book addresses these questions by studying the effects of relationship networks on the ability of corporate players (firms and their members) to attain their professional goals. The idea of social capital has become one of the premier approaches to studying networks in the context of organizations but the literature still lacks a conceptual paradigm that connects the various approaches, definitions and measure of social capital into an integrated analytical model. By explicitly connecting social networks to the goals of corporate players, this book provides a unifying framework to the study of social capital in an organizational context. In this volume 'social capital' is defined as the resources that accrue to an actor through his or her social relationships and that aid in the attainment of goals. The book introduces the new notion of 'social liability' as a framework to analyze the negative effects social networks can have on the attainment of goals by firms and/or their members. Corporate Social Capital and Liability thus presents a new way to tie together findings and approaches in the literature by explicitly addressing the distinction between networks and outcomes, the distinction between networks at the level of firms and networks at the level of individuals, and the distinction between positive outcomes of social structure (social capital) and negative outcomes (social liability). The book's contributors are forty-six acclaimed scholars from around the world with backgrounds in management, business and sociology. Together, they describe how social relationships within and between firms positively affect the ability of corporations to achieve fruitful alliances; gain access to information, resources, knowledge and financial capital; and recruit qualified personnel. The book makes an explicit distinction between networks at the level of firms and networks at the level of individuals. The outcomes of networks are also considered at these different analytical levels by addressing such questions as: how do social relationships between firms assist firms and individuals in the attainment of their goals? How do these relationships obstruct goals? What is the effect of networks between individuals (within and between firms) on the performance of these individuals and the firms they work for? Can networks be managed to yield social capital rather than social liability? The unifying framework of social capital and social liability is helpful in studying business enterprises, and also useful in other disciplines which analyze social networks and organizations, such as community studies, economics, and political science.

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