

Accelerating strategic fit or venture emergence: Different paths adopted by corporate accelerators

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### **Abstract**

Corporate accelerators (CAs) are a fast-emerging form of corporate engagement with startups. Equating them with independent startup accelerators and/or corporate venturing limits our understanding of how and why corporations run CA programs and to what end. In this inductive grounded theory study, we explore how corporations design and run CAs and to what effect. This study of four CAs reveals that corporations manage accelerators via one of two distinct processes: namely, accelerating strategic fit or accelerating venture emergence. Our inductive models of these corporate acceleration processes provide new insights into how CAs operate within corporations. Strategic posture and investment time horizon influence corporations' choice of acceleration path and their identification of potential ventures for acceleration. Our study deconstructs what comprises the core corporate acceleration processes and explains how the two pathways result in distinct outcomes—nurturing innovations or nurturing ecosystems. We believe these findings can open up rich research opportunities for understanding how corporations engage with entrepreneurial ventures to enhance their entrepreneurialness.

**Keywords:** - Corporate accelerators, Acceleration, Corporate innovation, Corporate entrepreneurship, Corporate-startup engagement