ABSTRACT

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Bridging the gap: Network activation and mobilization of boundary-spanners across the industry-academia drive

Boundary-spanners in networks have been shown to be in a privileged position to generate innovation outcomes, yet it is unclear how individuals seeking to leverage that position decide which contacts to rely on and when. This paper analyzes how individuals with dedicated boundary-spanning roles between industry and academia draw on their network resources to perform their jobs. Using a field-experiment setup we test how personality and cognition inform boundary-spanners’ decisions whether to rely on academic or industry contacts in their network in different situations. We predict that individual identification as an academic (industry) researcher will generally lead them to rely on academic (industry) contacts regardless of whether the input sought is of academic or industry nature, whereas individuals with high self-monitoring orientation would be more likely to match reliance on academic (industry) contacts to academic (industry) problems. The experimental design seeks to disentangle to what extent differences in network choices are rooted in individual cognitive ability to recall – i.e. “activate” – the full breadth of potential contacts or more deliberate behavioural preferences to “mobilize” certain contacts over others.