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Middle Managers' Searching for Knowledge: the Repository-Interpersonal Dilemma

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**MIDDLE MANAGERS' SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE: THE REPOSITORY -
INTERPERSONAL DILEMMA**

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MIDDLE MANAGERS' SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE: THE REPOSITORY - INTERPERSONAL DILEMMA

Abstract

Drawing on the organizational memory and strategy for managing knowledge literatures to develop a theoretical framework, we empirically examined the organizational memory contexts – interpersonal and repository logic - that set the broader conditions for middle managers' knowledge searching. Contrary to most studies which examine knowledge storage processes, with the help of multiple case studies, we examined middle managers' actual activities. Our findings reveal that in the interpersonal logic middle managers more actively engage in knowledge circulation and knowledge co-creation processes. In the repository logic instead, middle managers' potential seemed to become confined because of cognitive inertia, leading to a tendency to search for ready-made solutions, and to use own experience in a siloed problem-solving effort that may have limited suitability to dealing with novel challenges.

Keywords: middle managers, knowledge searching, activity perspective, organizational memory

This is a working paper. Please contact the first author for more information.