Study: Individual Personal Ties Strengthen Teams' Overall Creativity

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(PhysOrg.com) -- With more employees working in teams, it's critical for companies to find ways to enable these teams be more creative in their work.

Although creative ideas occur in the minds of individuals, ways of thinking about and approaching problems can be jointly developed by the team, according to a recent article in the *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* by Christina Shalley, professor of organizational behavior at Georgia Tech, and Jill Perry-Smith, assistant professor of organization and management at Emory University.

Titled "The emergence of team creative cognition: the role of diverse outside ties, sociocognitive network centrality, and team evolution," their article explores how imagination, insight, and creative ideas develop, evolve, and spread from one team member to another, ultimately increasing the team's ability to think creatively about a range of problems.

In essence, there is a team mindset that is greater than the sum of individual team members. When this synergistic process occurs, teams have the capacity to achieve high levels of creativity.

Shalley and Perry-Smith develop the concept of "team creative cognition," which refers to a shared repertoire of cognitive processes among team members that provides a framework for how the team approaches problems creatively.

"Specifically, we propose that diverse personal ties outside of the team shape and strengthen individual team member's creative muscle, and that this individual creative cognition is infused within the team ultimately resulting in team creative cognition," write the authors.

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