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Social Networking: The crucial role of R&D middle managers in facilitating ambidexterity and coping with digital transformation

Abstract – Middle managers play a crucial role in organizations linking exploitation and exploration activities (ambidexterity) by boundary spanning and networking activities. The findings from 24 interviews with middle managers in the automotive industry in Europe show that social networking supports individuals in their ambidextrous behavior. Networks used for exploration activities were more heterogeneous than those used for exploitation. Moreover, their contacts provide five benefits in particular to facilitate ambidexterity and to cope with the challenges of digital transformation: providing information, developing new ideas, power promotion, assessment of work and estimation of feasibility

Keywords: **ambidexterity, network ties, R&D middle managers, exploitation, exploration**

(JEL: L26, L81, M14, M53, Z13)

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