Foreword

During the past two decades, advances in computer technologies combined with telecommunication technologies have had tremendous impact on every facet of life. These technologies have offered many new opportunities to organizations of all types and sizes. No longer is computing considered the main use of computer technologies, instead today the primary use is in the area of communications and information retrieval and sharing. In recent years, through the use of Web-enabled technologies, businesses have managed to identify new ways of doing business and reaching customers and suppliers through the use of E-commerce; educational institutions have developed new ways of delivering education programs through distance learning programs; government entities have learned how to conduct their business and information sharing through E-government concepts; and libraries have begun disseminating vast library information resources electronically to all remote sites.

In the area of educational technologies, many colleges and universities worldwide now can offer academic programs and courses regardless of distance and location. Through the use of information technologies the communication gap between providers and receivers of education has been closing and narrowing. Many of the traditional students who could not previously attend campus-based educational programs now can attend educational programs that are either offered through various Web-based programs or offered through different distance learning technologies. In addition, these technologies have allowed students to be able to collaborate with each other more effectively and easily. Today, Web-enabled technologies allow everyone regardless of age, gender, and location around the world to have access to a vast number of Web-based sources of information knowledge. No longer is information or knowledge the domain of only a few entities with limited access due to their location limitation and restrictions. The idea of virtual libraries which until a few years ago was not even imagined now is a reality. Information technology now is the most effective facilitator of information and knowledge dissemination around the world, and as a result, the accumulation of knowledge related to all topics is multiplying by the second rather than the traditional pace of every year or two.

These technologies have been beneficial not only to academic programs but also to organizations and their training and knowledge management efforts. Through the use of collaborative learning technologies, organizations of all types and sizes now can collaborate in different organizational learning and developments. In reality, all
organizations are knowledge–based entities that require constant processing, utilization and updating of their knowledge regarding different products, services, functions, and procedures. Information technologies of the modern years have allowed organizations to develop much more effective techniques and methodologies in managing organizational knowledge and information. Obviously, the collaborative technologies of recent years have been very instrumental toward organizational knowledge management and learning processes. Furthermore, these technologies have been utilized effectively in support of learning new and innovative ways of dealing with modern organizational reengineering and downsizing, paving the way toward more leaner and efficient organizations.

Like many other new technologies, these technologies are not free of controversies and challenges. Many of the technology related challenges are not technically oriented but instead they are related to the non-technical components—most in the area of human aspects. Perhaps we can argue that most challenges impacting the overall utilization and management of information technologies are “people-related challenges.” These challenges range from training-related issues to overall innovation and adoption of emerging modern technologies in organizations. Modern organizational theorists should understand the true organization and management of these technologies and devise ways for contemporary organizations to cope more effectively with the issues of information technology management. No longer can effective organizations afford to place the majority of their focus on hardware and software technologies and ignore the “people” side of these technologies. It is time to place the major focus on the human side of technology and to recognize the true man-machine relationships.

The influence and impact of information technologies on organizations during the past two decades have far exceeded the majority of organizational scholars’ and managers’ imagination and foresight. No longer should information technology be viewed as technologies in support of organizational functions and day-to-day functions and operations, but, instead, successful organizations have been utilizing information technologies of modern years as major strategic tools. Information technology can reshape the overall focus and mission of the organizations in ways that were never imagined and envisioned. The biggest challenge facing organization leaders today is to understand the strategic values of information technology and to view the ways that technology can bring their organization cost savings methods, facilitate customer service, and identify new markets and growth areas. Information technology can be a very powerful strategic tool if it is correctly positioned and utilized within the overall organization structure.

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