

EDITORIAL PREFACE

Strategic Information and Outputs: Increasingly Varied and Critical to 21st Firms – Introduction to the Issue

Caroline Howard, HC Consulting, USA

The strategic importance of information technology is especially apparent in this issue. While technology and its application differ widely as demonstrated by the articles included, the technologies along with the outputs play an increasingly strategic role in many organizations. The articles provide a glimpse into the innovative and creative nature of strategic information technologies as shown.

First, Kasten describes a model of an organization's knowledge strategy as an important mitigating factor between management decisions and the manner in which they are communicated to others in the firm. The article, "Knowledge Strategy: Its Mitigating Effects on the Organization" defines knowledge strategy as a set of philosophies and guidelines to guide the firm's knowledge-based activities, including the gathering, development, storage, and utilization of knowledge. Their paper extends the research included in a prior article by the authors, describing a metaphor of knowledge strategy as a lens. These papers develop new perspectives for viewing knowledge strategy in contrast to early literature, which Kasten explains, defined the role of knowledge strategy as driving and being driven by, organizational structure along with human resource and technology strategies.

In "A Systemic Framework for Accelerating Collaboration-Centered Knowledge Management Strategy," Bragge and Kivijärvi present an approach, *Collaboration Engineering*, for facilitating utilization of knowledge in organizations. The article discusses knowledge as a critical, but the least accessible, resource for many organizations. The authors argue that organizations need a strategy for managing of knowledge resources due to the difficulty of sharing, storing, imitating, buying, selling, and evaluating knowledge. They describe a collaboration-centered strategy built on the idea that personal knowledge can be captured and transferred, and then, used to create new knowledge through a facilitation process to manage tasks, people, and technology.

Next, Spruit and Abdat describe how Software as a Service (SaaS) is increasingly popular as an alternative to purchasing new, on-premise software and outsourcing. Due to the popularity of SaaS, numerous small-to-medium vendors have emerged but many quickly disappear from the market due to the lack of a mature pricing strategy. In "The Pricing Strategy Guideline Framework for SaaS Vendors," Spruit and Abdat present guidelines to assist SaaS vendors in ensuring five layers that need to be considered to price software. These include price structure,

value creation, price and value communication, price level, and price policy. To validate the PSGF, it is evaluated using a case study of a Dutch SaaS vendor in the Finance sector.

Chen, Liu, Zeng, and Azevedo describe how franchising is gaining popularity as a global growth strategy, particularly in emerging markets. In their article, “E-Business Strategy in Franchise Relationship Management”, the authors reveal how China is the largest franchise market in the world with more than 2,600 franchise brands in more than 80 sectors with 200,000 franchised retail stores. A new e-business model, Netchising, is described which combines the power of the Internet to manage global demand and supply processes with local franchises to achieve local responsiveness. The paper describes how the model can be used to manage the franchisor/franchisee relationship, harness e-business strategy, align the e-business strategy with application service providers, and

provide a framework for franchisee training.

Finally, while much research focuses on Electronic Payment Systems, little research is focused on the merchant perspective. In “Electronic Payment Systems Evaluation: A Case Study to Examine System Selection Criteria and Impacts,” Peterson and Howard develop and validate the Electronic Payment Efficacy Quotient (EPEQ), a performance-based tool, designed to help merchants select an appropriate EPS and measure its effectiveness. The article presents findings from a case study of a single source Internet Service Provider (ISP), which uses historical data to determine and test the validity of the EPEQ measures.

Caroline Howard
Editor-in-Chief
IJSITA

Caroline Howard (PhD) is an author, editor, consultant, and educator. She has published a number of articles on technology and learning. Her books include the first and second editions of the Encyclopedia of Distance Learning (2005 and 2009), Winning the Net Game: Becoming Profitable Now that the Web Rules have Changed (Entrepreneur Press, 2002), The Design and Management of Effective Distance Learning Programs (2002), and Distance Learning and University Effectiveness: Changing Educational Paradigms for Online Learning (2005). Caroline holds an MBA from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and a PhD in management information systems from the University of California - Irvine where she received honors for her teaching and research.