Usage and Suitability of Methods for Strategic Business Process Initiatives: A Multi Case Study Research

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ABSTRACT

A key objective of strategy management is ensuring the implementation of strategies in the day-to-day operational business processes of enterprises. For this purpose, researchers and practitioners developed an enormous body of methods for strategy management. However, the tremendous variety of strategy management methods makes it difficult to choose the most appropriate methods for a given challenge. In an effort to provide guidance for practitioners and researchers, this paper provides an integrated dataset of the 50 most widespread strategy design and implementation methods and links these methods to a large body of 100 case studies. Based on this dataset, commonly utilized methods, common challenges, typical objectives, and specifics of industries are examined.

KEYWORDS

Business Process Management, Case Study, Methods, Strategy Implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation

The major objective of Business Process Management (BPM) is to ensure the consistent execution of processes and to find room for further improvements (Dumas, 2013). Strategy determines the objectives (e.g., focus on innovation or cost cutting) that have to be achieved as well as the position at which the company is aiming. In literature and business practice, there is a consensus that without intensive collaboration and BPM-based integration between strategy development and strategy implementation, the company’s success might be at risk (Brenes, Mena, & Molina, 2008).

1.2 Related Work

The extant literature provides a comprehensive range of methods and approaches examining how to perform tasks and processes. Yet their contribution is limited to a partial analysis. What is missing is an integrated and encompassing overview of methods for analysing the situation and providing solutions (Bruin, Verschut, & Wiestar, 2000). Typically, the focus of the business process is on certain characteristics, including performance management, information technologies, or human resources. What is needed is the understanding of the main challenges behind, which can include increasing of customer satisfaction, developing new services or boosting efficiency and effectiveness.

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The coordination between business strategy and process objectives is covered frequently in the literature. However, a precise reproducible pattern along with appropriate approaches and methodologies for achieving this goal is not clearly defined and identified (Lederer & Schott, 2012). Isolated management practices for linking strategy to BPM are presented in the management literature, but they are neither integrated nor structured in a holistic framework for application (Lederer, 2013). Performance measurement tools and methodologies are not able to integrate methods and tools from process management, human resource management, and workflow management. As a result, the strategic performance indicators are not linked with organizational and individual goals leading to a deterioration of the strategy (Glykas, 2011). Apart from that, business process analysts are often uncertain which method to choose for a certain project (Kettinger, Teng, & Subashish, 1997).

1.3 Research Questions

In order to overcome the challenges presented above, this contribution aims to answer the following research questions in the specific context of BPM:

- Which methods are commonly utilized in strategy implementation projects?
- Which methods are typically used in which industries?
- What are typical objectives for strategy implementation projects?
- Which methods are used to implement specific objectives?

2. Research Design

This research follows the case study methodology. A pool of case study reports serves as the basis to answer the research questions. In general, the insights of a single case study are limited due to the uniqueness of its attributes and its specific context (Yin, 2009). Translated to the field of BPM, this suggests that a single case focuses on one or a couple of methods which are applied to a specific company in specific conditions. However, the analytical benefit from a larger body of cases is expected to be greater (Yin, 2009).

The literature review conducted for this article suggests there is no truly comprehensive evaluation of the applied methods in real-life scenarios. This gap provides the opportunity to extend the research beyond a particular instrument or company and to provide a critical reflection of the theoretical models and their application. Furthermore, the majority of case studies focuses on successful examples of method applications without considering possible weak points or disadvantages. A more critical perspective is likely to be helpful for identifying possible shortcomings and avoiding unnecessary activities. It may also be valuable to evaluate the objectives and challenges accompanying the applications of the various methods. Measuring the influence of other factors such as industry, company size, process focus, and so forth will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the BPM methods and their usage in real-world business situations.

In summary, this case study-based approach is expected to be an appropriate instrument for researching complex and difficult to define situations, in which the researched object is in natural circumstances (Wilde & Hess, 2006). The research will be based exclusively on secondary data. No empirical observations, interviews, surveys, or case studies have been conducted. An exploratory study of the secondary literature will facilitate the collection of information, which has already been analysed and reported in detail (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Typical sources belonging to this group include: special, subject guides, electronic indexes, as well as books, scientific journals, conference papers, and companies’ case studies. A great percentage of the information has been extracted
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