Chapter II

Predictors of Internet Usage for Work Tasks

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INTRODUCTION

Introducing and capitalizing on the Internet for business gain is engulfing modern day business thought. Yet little is available to guide the decisions of organizational leaders on issues around workforce usage. This chapter begins to close the gap by presenting the findings of a new empirical study, which specifically targets the factors associated with Internet usage for work tasks. A framework is presented to help organizations manage the usage of the Internet. It contains both person and situation factors which are associated with higher Internet usage. This work is based on the view that implementation of the Internet into the workplace is analogous to other forms of organizational change, in that people form a key success criteria.

BACKGROUND

Internet Usage: An Employee Perspective

Discussions within organizations on the Internet invariably focus on the technology and business processes. Rarely are the actions and contributory roles of employees considered. Outside of specific Internet programs, the
question of whether and for what purpose employees are using the Internet is scarcely raised. Discussions around use of the Internet for business tend to be within the highly technical models of business-to-business electronic commerce (e-commerce), where transactions between organizations occur in purely online terms. This bounded view of the Internet means that the numerous transactions conducted by employees who have access to the Internet are not being considered. Employees are consumers of the Internet within the context of a work environment. Considering the Internet from an employee perspective provides valuable information such as the amount of wasted time in using the Internet for personal reasons and more importantly the benefits which are being reaped through its use for work tasks.

When referring to the Internet, this paper gives attention to use of the World Wide Web (WWW), a network of sites using technology which allows for the ready transfer of text, sound and images. Web usage is the particular focus of the chapter and is defined as accessing and navigating through Web sites to locate information, interact with other organizations or make transactions. Examples of such use are recruitment officers downloading updated aptitude tests, and marketing managers in manufacturing organizations accessing the Web to conduct market research and to identify revenue-generating possibilities. The range of possibilities is enormous. The empirical findings presented later in the chapter demonstrate that they are less influenced by the nature of the task compared to the initiative of the individual and encouragement of the environment.

The Internet as a Form of Organizational Change

Exploiting the Internet to gain competitive advantage requires more than just compelling technology. It is people who ultimately exploit the change for competitive advantage. History has shown that technology can not be the sole answer to commercial success. Even in what are sometimes described as the parallel events of the industrial revolution, success relied on the output of workers along with the new machines (Coyle, 1999).

Prominent models of change all include a strong orientation towards the importance of people. Models emerging from the 1980s, such as the total quality management program, and the 1990s, such as business process reengineering, place motivation, responsibility and skills of people as critical to success. An analysis of 100 companies attempting to transform themselves highlights eight lessons for organizations. Each lesson for successful change involves actions of people, whether they be the instigators of the change or the recipients (Kotter, 1998).
Information Architecture For IS Function: A Case Study
www.igi-global.com/article/information-architecture-for-is-function/115921?camid=4v1a