Learning Through Planning: Conceptual Definition and Empirical Validation of a Planning Culture Construct

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ABSTRACT

This study postulates that an empowered workforce can rally the organization to the objective of achieving IT planning effectiveness within the premises of a planning culture geared to empowerment. The planning culture is a powerful lever to empower knowledge workers and establish a learning environment conducive to planning effectiveness. A sample of 101 IT professionals was used to look at the indirect effects of the planning culture on IT planning effectiveness through the empowerment of knowledge workers. Strong support was garnered for the three hypotheses of the study, namely: (1) empowered knowledge workers make a significant impact on the quality of planning outcomes; (2) planning cultures empower knowledge workers; hence (3) improving the quality of planning through the motivational path of knowledge workers' empowerment. Implications of the findings for organizational learning are discussed at the end.

Keywords: Organizational learning, empowerment, intrinsic motivation, planning culture, planning effectiveness, IT planning, knowledge workers.

INTRODUCTION

The information systems literature provides a wide range of models for undertaking IT planning but lacks research into the antecedents of IT planning effectiveness. Most studies have indeed focused on the mechanics of IT planning rather than on its antecedents (Brancheau et al., 1996; Rodgers, 1997; Sahraoui, 2002) and emphasis was put on the strategies, structures, and planning methodologies used to achieve effective planning rather than on the people involved in IT planning (Henderson &
Sifonis, 1988). The present study fits within the research stream on the social antecedents of IT planning effectiveness (see Nelson & Coopride, 1996; Sahraoui, 2002; Subramani et al., 1999) and postulates that an empowered workforce can rally the organization to the objective of achieving IT planning effectiveness within the premises of a planning culture geared to empowerment.

This paper will assess the catalytic effect of planning cultures on knowledge workers’ empowerment in view of achieving planning effectiveness. A literature review on IT planning, knowledge worker empowerment, and corporate cultures will provide the conceptual framework for the research model outlined in figure 1.

The paper is organized as follows: The first section will review IT planning; the second section will tackle knowledge workers empowerment with the next section introducing the concept of the planning culture. Then we will describe the research design for the empirical component of the study, unveil the study results and draw the study implications for managerial practice leading into the conclusion of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

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**IT PLANNING**

Boynton and Zmud (1987) defined IT planning as organizational activities directed towards (1) recognizing organizational opportunities for using IT, (2) determining the resource requirements to exploit these opportunities, and (3) developing strategies and action plans for realizing these opportunities. Through IT planning, organizations identify valuable IT projects that provide higher payback, have a strategic impact, and reinforce the competitive posture of the organization (Salmela et al., 2000). Planning activities can take place within a rational sequential framework of decision making but also piecemeal, adaptively, and in small increments.

Existing models of IT planning however are primarily based on comprehensive and formal planning (Salmela et al., 2000). They rarely tackle issues of knowledge workers’ participation in planning activities and are mostly concerned with methodology and tools rather than process (see Henderson & Sifonis, 1987). They hence fail to draw upon the full human potential throughout the organization (Bourgeois &
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