Chapter 2

Research Methodology

ABSTRACT

This is a review of the research methodology used for the investigation, with the normative research model providing the overall methodology and the literature review and descriptive research playing a supportive part within the normative model. Some of the concerns of strategic planning and how those concerns lead to the descriptive research are considered, and finally, there is a description of normative research and how it is applied to this investigation.

INTRODUCTION

The area of research covers the two disciplines of Information Systems and that of Management; with the focus on strategic planning which is a very difficult subject area to run as a research experiment. This chapter will review the research aims and detail the research methodology to be used to investigate various activities in the area of strategic planning. Organisations are obviously very shy of releasing their company confidential information which together with the long term nature of strategic planning and its central concern to an organisation makes it impossible to run as a more conventional experimental trial.

To overcome these difficulties it was necessary to look outside the square of conventional research methodologies and to take a look at the normative research model. Normative research is used in operations research, accounting and economics; it is particularly useful in situations requiring improvements to a process or design, as would be the case in information systems research. The case for using the normative research model is dealt with in some detail in a later section, as a solution to the difficulty of mentioned above in testing improvements to the strategic planning documentation by using information architecture to structure the document. Firstly though is a brief outline of the key steps in a normative research model.

Routio (2005) gives the typical phases of normative research in a spiral of development, which is summarised as follows:

1. Evaluative description of the initial state (defining the need for improvement).
2. Analysis of relationships and possibilities to change things.
4. Evaluation of the proposal. (p.3).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2527-3.ch002
When reviewing the literature within the two disciplines of Information Systems and Management it becomes obvious of a considerable range of opinions and approaches and this is particularly true of strategic management and strategic planning and so the research also incorporated several conventional research investigations to support the literature within the first two phases of the normative research model. Descriptive methodologies will be examined as a basis to look at some of the concerns that have been raised in strategic planning. This aspect of the research includes surveys of organisations and a close look at some instances of strategic planning documentation. The detailed review of these investigations and the resulting material is presented in chapter 8.

The normative research model will be used to provide the overarching research approach for the review and analysis of the strategic planning situation, the presentation format of the strategic plan. Within the normative research method it is necessary to review the arguments for and against strategic planning and what problems are associated with strategic planning and also with the format of the strategic plan which might lead to the opportunities to improve the presentation of information.

The normative approach with its aim of finding improvements requires a review within existing methodologies for existing ways to improve the presentation of the information contained in a strategic plan, to examine what alternative approaches may be possible. Specifically this book will examine whether the concept of information architecture can provide a framework for the planning information to improve the presentation. In order to test this proposal it is necessary to build a strategic planning reference model. This model will include a process reference model and most importantly; an information architecture reference model which will be based on information elements determined from the literature and supported by the descriptive research. The Process reference model will be derived from the most common

- Research Methodology

When reviewing the literature within the two disciplines of Information Systems and Management it becomes obvious of a considerable range of opinions and approaches and this is particularly true of strategic management and strategic planning and so the research also incorporated several conventional research investigations to support the literature within the first two phases of the normative research model. Descriptive methodologies will be examined as a basis to look at some of the concerns that have been raised in strategic planning. This aspect of the research includes surveys of organisations and a close look at some instances of strategic planning documentation. The detailed review of these investigations and the resulting material is presented in chapter 8.

The normative research model will be used to provide the overarching research approach for the review and analysis of the strategic planning situation, the presentation format of the strategic plan. Within the normative research method it is necessary to review the arguments for and against strategic planning and what problems are associated with strategic planning and also with the format of the strategic plan which might lead to the opportunities to improve the presentation of information.

The normative approach with its aim of finding improvements requires a review within existing methodologies for existing ways to improve the presentation of the information contained in a strategic plan, to examine what alternative approaches may be possible. Specifically this book will examine whether the concept of information architecture can provide a framework for the planning information to improve the presentation. In order to test this proposal it is necessary to build a strategic planning reference model. This model will include a process reference model and most importantly; an information architecture reference model which will be based on information elements determined from the literature and supported by the descriptive research. The Process reference model will be derived from the most common process steps determined from the literature reviews. The architectural principles derived from an examination of IT architecture will be used to construct the information architecture reference model. The information architecture reference model will be used in chapter 13 to reformat a section of the published strategic plan and construct an imaginary segment of a strategic plan as an instance of how the strategic plan would look if the information architecture reference model was used. The final discussion is for the evaluation of the models that were developed to provide a better solution to the presentation of information in the strategic plan.

- Research Aims and Methodology

This research covers two very distinct disciplines: Information Systems (IS) and Organisational Management, and as such it draws on a variety of research approaches and research methods. Support for the research approach using mixed methodologies comes from a number of authors. Tashkhari and Teddle (2003) discuss the qualitatively and quantitatively oriented researchers and the mixed methodologists that work with other paradigms and who are interested in both types of data. Galliers (2003) argues that “the appropriate locus of IS study is more broadly based than organizations or individuals. Societal, policy and ethical issues might reasonably be included within the ambit of the IS field”. Tashkhari and Teddle (2003) refer to the fact that some authors suggest that qualitative research questions are exploratory whereas quantitative research questions are confirmatory and say that they disagree with this dichotomy for research questions. Tashkhari and Teddle (2003) write that though these positions are often true, it does not always have to be the case and using both methods together can be of benefit such that “A major advantage of MMR is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously an-
Related Content

Strategic Decisions for Green Electricity Marketing: Learning from Past Experience
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/strategic-decisions-green-electricity-marketing/36835?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/strategic-decisions-green-electricity-marketing/36835?camid=4v1a)

New Interpretation of Some Forgotten Problems
[www.igi-global.com/article/new-interpretation-of-some-forgotten-problems/186762?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/new-interpretation-of-some-forgotten-problems/186762?camid=4v1a)

Using Strategic Planning to Improve Performance Management and Its Impact on Organizational Success: A Study of Private Sector in Iran

Research Methodology
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/research-methodology/70901?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/research-methodology/70901?camid=4v1a)