ABSTRACT

With emerging technologies constantly creating new possibilities for organisations to manage their information resources, this chapter proposes a model for designing systems to control access to, and usage of, digital resources in organisations. The authors argue that Digital Rights Management (DRM) is a socio-technical challenge that requires a holistic approach. The resulting socio-technical forces model, titled SYNAPSIS, includes the following interdependent dimensions: Technology, Task, Structure, People, and Organisation External Forces, which act as interrelated forces. The application of the SYNAPSIS model can help identify complex interdependencies among the involved dimensions, as well as their evolution with time. Models, like the one proposed, may provide significant support on the underlying field.
INTRODUCTION

Mapping the Organisational Landscape

With the pace of change and the complexity constantly increasing and compromising productivity and performance, new organisational structures are emerging and new approaches are adopted by modern enterprises, with regards to the way they plan, structure and manage their activities, in order to gain or maintain the competitive advantage. Information technology infrastructures play a significant role in this direction. Computer networking is changing the way people work and the way organisations function, by facilitating the geographic distribution of work, including remote access to and exchange of resources and tele-collaboration (Kiesler & Hinds, 2002). Joint international ventures among companies and global expansion into new markets have become common practice.

Modern companies are drifting away from the conventional model of independent, “all-in-one”, business units and more towards dynamically interconnected organisational environments, where companies have one or multiple network identities and complex relationships and dependencies among companies exist. Networking and digital distribution enable the establishment of new business models. Around each company a larger network of partner organisations can thus be formed (Figure 1), including customers, suppliers of raw materials and/or components, providers of low-skill services (outsourced tasks) etc. Often instead of simple contractual relations, organisations are bound together by long-term strategic collaboration agreements. For example, such is the case of automobile manufacturing. While originally car manufacturers relied almost exclusively upon their in-house parts manufacturing for their production, since the late 1970s they began buying complete subassemblies from outside suppliers instead of individual components, to subsequently build around them the auto body (US Department of Commerce, 2006). As a result, today, more than ever, car manufacturers and their suppliers are closely cooperating in the design and manufacture of new cars.

Enterprises in all branches of industry are becoming increasingly customer centric. Robert H. Anderson’s vision of the “creative consumer” (Toffler, 1980) implies placing the demands and wishes

Figure 1. Business environment of organisations