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THE JOURNAL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TEACHING CASES

Special Issue on Business, Strategy and IT Alignment

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Alignment's importance has been well known and well documented by academics, researchers, and consultants since the 1970's. Over the years, it has persisted among the top-ranked concerns of IT and business executives. **The purpose of this special issue is to provide valuable lessons learned from cases that demonstrate best practices in Business-IT Alignment.**

The impact of IT in today's dynamic industry and technical environment may be made clearer by considering some of the ways IT can affect the business. Information Technology can help an organization by being an *enabler or driver* of success or it can hurt an organization by being an *inhibitor or bottleneck*. In the extreme, positive case, IT can have a transformational effect on a business; IT can change a business in the area of process, product, service, management, and even environment.

Alignment can be defined as the application of IT in an appropriate and timely manner, in harmony with business goals, strategies, and needs. Enablers and inhibitors are those characteristics of an organization that serve to either enhance (enable) the alignment of IT and the business goals, or reduce (inhibit) this alignment. It is important to recognize that alignment does NOT address how IT is aligned with the business; it is how IT and the business are aligned with each other.

Alignment is a prerequisite for IT to be able to transform the business and in some cases actually <u>drive</u> the business strategy. Therefore, for the student to become a leader, rather than simply a manager in an IT organization, an understanding of this key opportunity is necessary. **The issues of alignment among the business and IT organizations and how they have been addressed (especially related to implementing strategic IT initiatives) will be an important focus of this publication of cases.**

Issues surrounding the gap between business and IT functions may emanate from the technological work performed by IT people. It could be the perception of business people that IT personnel are geeks or trolls in the basement is propagated by an attitude of "technology for technology's sake" generated by IT people, and the continuous use of "technical language" when discussing opportunities. The IT world may have resisted pressure to learn how its skills and tools impact the organization's goals, and has assumed an attitude that technology is good and more technology is better. The situation is compounded by the fact that IT people have their own vocabulary, much of it consisting of acronyms, and even acronyms nested within

acronyms. Often the problem is the result of business people not understanding IT or what their role should be in leveraging IT.

IT can enable, drive, or inhibit every business activity on a daily basis. IT personnel come into contact with every aspect of the business, at every level of the organization. The business processes are mirrored by and in some cases embedded in the Information Systems that support them. Once Information Technology is embraced as an instrument of business strategy and enablement, the ability of IT to impact the entire value chain of an organization can provide Strategic Advantage.

One of the most important missions for IT management in the 21st century is to be *architects* of aligning business and IT. The metaphor of architecture is chosen because IT strategy is *not* just about technology – it is about the purposeful creation of *integrated* environments that leverage human skills, business processes, organizational structures, and technologies to transform the competitive position of the business. Offering new products and services via information technology is another important transformational vehicle. Considerable recent research has shown that the effectiveness of the linkages relating IT and business are critically important to achieving and sustaining competitive advantage in today's hyper-competitive global markets. When these areas are aligned – i.e., mutually supporting – a company's ability to respond to increasingly uncertain and evolving markets (the external environment) is significantly enhanced. This can help companies define entirely new markets or set the standard of excellence in their industry.

This special issue on IT business alignment cases will provide examples of successes and failures that demonstrate the importance of the IT business relationship. For this special issue, specific areas of interest include, but are not restricted to:

- o Best Practices in Business-IT Alignment
- o Effective Communications
- o Demonstrable Competency/Value Analytics
- o Applicable Strategic, Tactical, and Operational Governance Processes
- o Successful Partnerships
- o Deployable Leading Edge IT Services; Scope & Architecture
- o Successful Skills/HR Initiatives
- o Exemplary IT Strategy Planning Activities
- o Enablers and Inhibitors to Alignment
- o Models for Managing Change
- o Lessons in Organizational Design
- o Strategic IT Initiatives (e.g., moves to digital business)

The Teaching Case:
For examples of teaching cases we are looking for see The JIT Teaching Cases electronic journal http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jittc/ The following offers guidelines, but please enquire if you believe you have a good submission that does not follow these exactly e.g. a shorter case or unusual subject. A teaching case is usually 4000-12,000 words in length (e.g. shorter cases for undergraduate teaching or longer for postgraduate and MBA), has illustrations, and quotes where appropriate, and is based on real life circumstances. Aspects of the case may be anonymised where information is particularly sensitive, and would hinder publication otherwise. The

teaching case can be based on primary research, but also on secondary sources. We are looking for cases that are up-to-date, though they may also include the history of how the organization or events reached their present point. A teaching case should be written to promote discussion of the issues raised, setting out problem areas, giving enough history and detail, and raising questions at the end. The teaching case should be as complete as possible, and be written and presented attractively. Submission should be of the Teaching Case itself, and in a separate document a Teaching Note for the case indicating guidance for teachers including objectives, who to use it with, suggested questions, and guidelines on answers and further reading.

Submitted papers will be reviewed by the Theme Issue editors and one further expert reviewer.

Deadlines:
We are targeting the special issue publication for December 2013. The timeline is:

- Abstracts of case - March 1st 2013
- Full case and teaching note submitted - June 1st 2013
- Reviews returned - July 1st 2013
- Second submission - August 30th 2013
- Final Acceptance - September 30th 2013

Guidelines:
For guidelines on preparation of manuscripts and criteria for acceptance please follow the Journal of Information Technology Instructions for Authors (http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jit/instructions.html). The length of the teaching case should be between 4000-12000 words (including abstract and references). The teaching Note must cover objectives, questions/assignments, and a detailed discussion of how the case can be used, including frameworks, content that can be used and an analysis of the case

All submissions should be sent in MS Word format to: A.H.Yeates@lse.ac.uk and also to the special issue editors.

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