Editorial

Information systems strategy as practice: Micro strategy and strategizing for IS

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The “rigor versus relevance” debate and the questioning of the practical relevance of much contemporary research are recurring themes not just in the field of Information Systems (IS) (Straub and Ang, 2011; Klein and Rowe, 2008; Roseman and Vessey, 2008) but in the wider field of management (c.f. Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Knights and Scarbrough, 2010; Mohrman et al., 2001; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Shrivastava, 1987). In IS in particular, this has led to some scholars questioning the practical value of much of the published research (cf. Benbasat and Zmud, 1999; Desouza et al., 2006; Keen, 1991; Lyttinen, 1999; Senn, 1998). A central premise of the arguments these protagonists present is that much research draws on methods that are inappropriate to the applied nature of the discipline (Breu and Peppard, 2003; Galliers and Land, 1987, 1988). The foundation of this argument reflects the social sciences ‘practice turn’ that sees all knowledge as existing within the fields of practice (Schatzki et al., 2001). In philosophy, the turn to pragmatism similarly values knowledge through practitioners’ eyes and places the practitioner at the center of theory development (Putnam, 1995; Rorty, 1998). This movement towards practical relevance prefers concrete micro actions rather than abstract macro analysis. People and knowledge that make a difference in practice are thus, or at least should be, central to research endeavours.

In line with these arguments, the Strategic Management field has seen the emergence of a body of research that focuses on strategizing or the ‘doing of strategy’ (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003a,b, 2007; Whittington, 1996, 2002a,b, 2006). Often referred to as the “Strategy as Practice” school, it emphasizes the actual day-to-day activities, contexts, processes and content that relate to strategic outcomes. Part of the problem is that there has been a dominant macro focus in strategic management research that is remote from practice, particularly the normative models resulting from it. Research in the Strategy as Practice genre emphasizes how people engage in the ‘real work’ of developing a strategy and strategizing. In addressing strategy as practice, the focus of research is on strategy praxis, strategy practitioners and strategy practices (e.g., Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2002a) – the work, workers and tools of strategy in other words.

In line with this movement, this Special Issue of The Journal of Strategic Information Systems explores information systems strategy and strategizing from a practice perspective. Reflecting the arguments for research relevance, the call for papers echoed Lee’s (2010: 346) recent comment that “the starting point of IS research need not be the existing theory (primarily épistême) located in the IS discipline’s own (or any other) research literature; rather, the starting point could be the technê

1 See Nicolai and Seidl (2010) for an enlightened discourse on the notion of relevance.
and phronēsis of IS professionals, managers, executives, and consultants (‘natives’) themselves...”. Yet, if we go back over two decades, Ives (1992: xii) made a similar plea in an editorial in MIS Quarterly. He wrote, “[i]f we are to re-engineer information systems research we must spend less time pouring over the archives and more time soaking in innovative organizations. It is there, rather than in the rear view mirror, that the realities of the transformation of information management will become apparent.”

It might seem that, despite the passage of time, this advice has fallen on deaf ears. Or, are their other institutional factors inherent in the discipline (i.e., journals; editorial policies; tenure requirements; dominant research methods, etc.) that are at play? As Whittington (2002a: C5) opines, “[r]eading the Strategic Management Journal would not help anybody organize a successful strategy-making event.” We wonder if the same might be true for our so-called top journals? Is our research actually helping us understand how people actually “do” IS strategy? Do we know what it takes to be a successful IS strategist or indeed whether this is even a worthwhile endeavour?

1. Information systems strategy through the ages

Of course, in exploring IS strategy, we have an immediate problem in that there is a lack of a clearly defined IS strategy concept (Chen et al., 2010; Karpovsky et al., 2014a,b; see also Reponen (1993) for an earlier conceptual analysis of SIS). Moreover, there are many fundamental issues that remain unresolved. For example, are we referring to the noun “strategy”, the outcome of some process; or the verb, “strategizing”, where the concern is more about an ongoing process (Galliers, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2011)? Is it an intellectual or social process or both? Earl (1996: 491), a highly influential IS strategy scholar, notes that key elements of his conceptual model of IS strategy are “conjectural.” It does not help that the majority of studies do not make clear their understanding of the concept, reflectively assuming that the reader understands what (the) IS strategy (process) is. Even the terminology in use is inconsistent: IS planning; IT planning; strategic IS planning (SISP); IS strategy; IT strategy, etc., all being commonly applied over the years (Karpovsky et al., 2014a,b).

Notwithstanding, the concept of (the) IS strategy has a genesis reaching back over 50 years. In the early days, what we might understand by IS strategy today was more typically referred to as the IS plan (here, we are, of course, assuming that the IS plan has evolved into that which we term IS strategy today). This probably reflected the fact that investments in IS were subordinate to the strategy (or in those days, the long range plan) of the organization, with little strategic significance – and the planning process, if one even existed, for determining IS requirements was reactive (Galliers, 1987a,b,c). Indeed, at that time, organizations typically talked of their plans rather than any strategy.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, developments in the IS strategy literature have tended to mirror developments in the strategic management literature, albeit lagging some years behind. Initially, in this literature, the emphasis was on financial planning, then forecast-based planning, followed by externally oriented planning, and finally strategic management (Glueck and Jauch, 1984). Indeed, the notion of strategic management was introduced in recognition of the failure of planning in the post-industrial era. Formal planning would be but one component of a much more complex socio-dynamic process that brings about strategic change in an organization. It is widely accepted today that strategy and planning are different concepts (Martin, 2014). An organization’s strategy does not specifically say how it will be achieved; that’s where the plan comes in.

The first references to strategy in relation to information systems emerged in the mid-1970s with the publication of two books, Strategic Planning of Management Information Systems (Siegal, 1975) and Strategic Planning for MIS (McLean et al., 1977). Perhaps unsure of the terrain, the notion of planning was conflated with strategy as in “strategic planning.” In fact, and as noted above, over the following years, the words “strategy”, “strategic”, “planning” and “information systems” have been joined in various combinations to refer to what seemingly is the same phenomenon.

It was only with the emergence of cases such as American Airlines (with their SABRE booking and inventory management system); Baxter Healthcare (with their ASAP ordering system); and Otis Elevators (with Otisline, where problems with elevators were automatically diagnosed and elevators “phoned” an engineer dispatch center) in the late 1970s that raised information systems to a potential source of competitive advantage. Consequently, many companies sought to emulate these early pioneers and proactively seek out opportunities. Information systems were now considered a competitive weapon (Ives and Learmonth, 1984; McFarlan, 1984; Porter and Millar, 1985; Galliers, 1993a). The notion of strategic information systems entered the vocabulary of management (Somogyi and Galliers, 1987) and Strategic Information Systems Planning (SISP) – or variously, IT strategies – entered the lexicon (Galliers, 1988; Lederer and Gardiner, 1992; Lederer and Sethi, 1988).

SISP saw, for the first time, IT being recognized for its ability to shape the strategy of a business, and tools, techniques and methodologies were suggested to help organizations in identifying potential opportunities to deploy IT with greater competitive-ness in mind (Wiseman, 1985). IS strategy was also promoted as a business management issue, as opposed to falling solely within the realm of the IT organization (Earl, 1988). This quest for strategic advantage also saw a reframing of alignment to “strategic alignment” (Henderson and Venkatraman, 1993).

Recognizing the power of technology to provide opportunities to do things differently in organizations saw the business process reengineering (BPR) movement (e.g., Hammer, 1990) emerge at the same time – warning against “paving the cow paths” and overlaying IT on existing processes and work practices. Managers were advised to seek out opportunities to rethink and redesign processes, taking into account the capabilities of the new IT. “Don’t Automate, Obliterate” was Hammer’s
testosterone-rich catch phrase. This period also saw the appearance of business change and its effective management (Benjamin and Levinson, 1993; Galliers, 1993b; Orlikowski and Hofman, 1997) as critical to the success of IT investments and benefits management (Ward et al., 1996), with organizations actively managing these investments to deliver expected benefits (Peppard et al., 2007), although the socio-technical and soft systems movements had highlighted the human and organizational dimension of information systems as early as the 1960s and 1970s (c.f., Mumford, 2006; Stowell, 1994).

At the same time, research was also highlighting that, while some companies were achieving competitive advantage from IT, for most, they were unable to move beyond the “one hit wonder” syndrome (Galliers, 1993a). Indeed, there was a strong suggestion that many successful strategic applications were due more to serendipity than any formal approach to planning (Ciborra, 1994; Senn, 1992). Research on the sustainability of competitive advantage from IT can be traced to Clemens and Row’s (1991) seminal study. Later research emphasized that sustainable competitive advantage requires an “organizational infrastructure” (Galliers, 1993b; Kettringer et al., 1994), an “IS strategic platform” (Ross et al., 1996), and that “IT alone is not enough” (Powell and Dent-Micalef, 1997).

In the Strategic Management field at the time, it was the resource-based view (RBV) that was dominating much of the research (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), and IS scholars looked to explore sustainable competitive advantage with this in mind (Mata et al., 1995). There was also a call for organizations to move beyond the search for strategic information systems and develop an IS capability (Peppard and Ward, 2004). This capability had been defined as a firm’s “ability to mobilize and deploy IT-based resources in combination or copresent with other resources and capabilities” (Bharadwaj, 2000: 171).

The most recent discourse in IS strategy focuses on the concept of strategizing (Galliers, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2011). Strategizing about IS is promoted as a part of a larger dynamic, iterative process. As well as having an exploration and exploitation dimension (c.f. Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996), strategizing comprises human beings who can make sense of data provided by both the formal and informal systems via the application of their (situated) knowledge (Galliers and Newell, 2003a,b). This reflects “usage” being a critical dimension in the performance of IT (Devaraj and Kohli, 2003; Marchand et al., 2000). The notion of strategic alignment has also evolved with “co-evolution”, proposed as a more appropriate description where business and IT strategies co-evolve (Peppard and Breu, 2003).

Most recently, the concept of “digital business strategy” has been introduced to reflect a fusion between IT strategy and business strategy, advocating no distinction between business strategy and IS strategy (Bharadwaj et al., 2013) where the IS strategy is the business strategy (Galliers, 2011). This view acknowledges that IS can shape business models and are embedded in customer interactions and experiences; business operations and supply chains; products and services, and in relationships with regulators and investors. It is unlikely, for example, that the marketing strategy or the supply chain strategy will not have a digital component. With the ever-increasing digitization of business, leading organizations now seek to build digital business platforms and to future proof strategic moves by providing digital options (Sambamurthy et al., 2003).

Acknowledging the many problems of trying to distil 50 years of work into a single exhibit, Table 1 attempts to provide a summary of key developments in the IS strategy literature. It identifies five specific movements in the comprehensive area of IS strategy research. We use the notion of movement in a broad sense to capture a group of people (i.e., researchers) working together to advance their shared ideas or interest. What is of particular interest for this Special Issue are the commentaries around praxis, practices and practitioners associated with each movement. As the table illustrates, there are clear gaps and omissions in our understanding.

2. IS strategy as a social process?

From the table, we can see that most of the extent research focuses on the techniques; tools; frameworks, and methodologies of IS strategy. Studies eliciting the micro processes of IS strategy (or strategizing) are absent, with little research considering IS strategy as a social process. There is little or no research in more recent times reporting on the people engaged in the real work of IS strategy, with the actual practice(s) of strategy similarly ignored, despite earlier interest (e.g., Galliers, 1987a).

For example, there are studies:

- of the implementation of SISP methodologies (Lederer and Sethi, 1988; Premkumar and King, 1991);
- of the use of SISP approaches (Flynn and Goleniewska, 1993);
- evaluating the relative success of alternative SISP approaches (Doherty et al., 1999);
- of the factors facilitating the use of IT for competitive advantage (Neo, 1988);
- of the organizational characteristics of IS planning (Premkumar and King, 1994);
- of IS planning in a turbulent environment (Salmela et al., 2000);
- of profiles of strategic IS planning (Segars and Grover, 1999);
- of problems in launching the IS strategy process (Lederer and Mendelow, 1987; Teo and Ang, 2001; Flynn and Goleniewska, 1993);

Although some were warning about the pitfalls of unthinkingly joining the BPR bandwagon (e.g., Davenport, 1996; Galliers, 1995, 1997; Galliers and Swan, 1999).

4 See Piccoli and Ives (2005) for a review of this theme.

5 The use of the verb aligning in more recent treatments of the topic mirrors research on strategizing (Wilson et al., 2013).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IS strategy movements</th>
<th>Praxis</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc bottom-up approach to determining IS</td>
<td>Ad hoc approach to determining EDP and computing requirements</td>
<td>IT staffs</td>
<td>Most emphasis on building systems rather than determining strategy</td>
<td>Ad hoc, bottom up, primarily driven by technology requirements. IS plan operational in focus, for the most part identifying individual applications (cf. Galliers and Sutherland, 1991)</td>
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<td>IS planning</td>
<td>Top down approach to determining IS needs to meet business goals Shared group understanding of a few key individuals (Ciborra, 1994)</td>
<td>IT staffs</td>
<td>Planning based on an informal network of a few key individuals (Pyburn, 1983; Earl, 1993)</td>
<td>Formal top down planning for IS. IS plans reactive to business plans. Aligning to business goals (Kriebel, 1968; Zani, 1970; McFarlan, 1971; King and Cleland, 1975; Zachman, 1978; King, 1978)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic planning for information systems (SPIS)</td>
<td>Team approach (Mentzas, 1997) Involving multiple stakeholders (Earl, 1993) Importance of feedback in assessing IS planning effectiveness (Baker, 1995)</td>
<td>IS strategy promoted as a business management issue (Earl, 1989) Senior management and IT staffs</td>
<td>Focus on themes (Earl, 1993) IS plans periodically reviewed to adapt to changing circumstances (Earl, 1993; Sambamurthy et al., 1993; Galliers, 1987a)</td>
<td>Proactively seeking opportunities for competitive advantage from IT (McFarlan, 1984; Porter and Millar, 1985; Earl, 1989)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building an IS capability</td>
<td>IS capability embedded in fabric of the organization</td>
<td>All employees have a role to play</td>
<td>Influenced by organizational culture; and information orientation of organization (Marchand et al., 2000)</td>
<td>Acknowledging that having a strategy is only part of what is required. Ability to continually identify opportunities, deploy technology, implement change and use information and IT (Peppard and Ward, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS strategizing</td>
<td>Cognitive and intellectual dimensions. “The most important direct predictor of alignment in this study was a high level of communication between IT and business executives” (Reich and Benbasat, 2000)</td>
<td>All employees</td>
<td>Co-evolution of business and IT strategies (Benbya and McKelvey, 2006; Breu and Peppard, 2003; Galliers, 1999)</td>
<td>IS strategy something that organizations do rather than have. Integrating IS considerations into the discourse on business and knowledge strategy (Galliers, 2004, 2007, 2011). Functional strategies having a digital component; fusion of IS and business strategies – the digital strategy (Bharadwaj et al., 2013)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
of planning system dimensions, internal co-alignment and the implications for planning effectiveness (Segars and Grover, 1998);

- of the effectiveness of SISP under environmental uncertainty (Newkirk and Lederer, 2007);

- of anatomy and procedural justice in SISP (Mirchandani and Lederer, 2012);

- of problems associated with the IS strategy process (Lederer and Sethi, 1988; Teo and Ang, 2001);

- comparing methodologies for identifying strategic information systems opportunities (Bergeron et al., 1991);

- of the design of IT planning systems for varying organizational contexts (Sambamurthy et al., 1993);

- of the value of SIS planning (Henderson and Sifonis, 1988);

- of IS planning success measure (Fitzgerald, 1993);

- of barriers to success (Earl, 1993; Wilson, 1989); and

- investigating the enablers of and inhibitors to alignment (Luftman et al., 1999) and those influencing the achievement of the social dimension of alignment between business and IT objectives (Reich and Benbasat, 2000).

Except for some very limited attempts (e.g., Pyburn, 1983; Galliers, 1987a,b,c; Earl, 1993), there has been little research that considers and reports on the real work of IS strategy. Teubner (2007) has presented a case study of SISP in a financial services company but failed to “get into the weeds” of IS strategy and process, while Sabherwal and King (1995) have proposed a taxonomy of decision making processes concerning strategic applications of IS. Essentially, the process(es) of IS strategy is(are) commonly treated as a “black box” by researchers for the most part, with studies skirting around the real work of practitioners as they engage in strategy formation (cf. Mintzberg, 1978) and strategizing.

From another perspective, we can see that some limited research has focused on content (e.g., what is IS strategy) with the majority focusing on the context (e.g., success factors, barriers, value of, enablers, etc.) of IS strategy. Our understanding of process is for the most part limited to prescriptive methodologies or means of evaluating that which the reported research considers ‘best’. From an early date, much of the research focuses on presenting prescriptions on “how to” undertake IS strategy – normative approaches in other words. Examples include, “systems planning in the information age” (Sullivan, 1985); “linking the MIS plan with corporate strategy” (Pyburn, 1983), and the “4 cycle” method introduced by Salmela and Spil (2002). Despite all the IS strategy research, however – and the above treatment is by no means comprehensive – it has been asserted “that practitioners largely ignore academic literature and do not use it in support of their SISP endeavours” (Teubner, 2007: 105).

Moreover, less attention has been paid to implementation issues in IS strategy discussions (Teubner and Mocker, 2008). This is not to ignore the research that has explored (post) implementation experiences, particularly of enterprise systems (Wagner and Newell, 2007; Wagner et al., 2011), but this has not been tied back to strategy, with the treatment of the phenomenon of interest being in isolation of (any) IS strategy. Indeed, research reveals that many projects defined as part of the IS strategy have not been implemented (Lederer and Sethi, 1988; Gottschalk, 1999), and those that do go ahead have a high failure rate in achieving expected business outcomes (Brynjolfsson and Yang, 1996).

We also cannot ignore the body of research that has highlighted the emergent nature of strategy (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Yet, at the same time, the peculiarities of IT require that it is given some guidance and direction, even if implicit. This raises a particular conundrum: in the absence of some guiding vision, it can be difficult if not impossible to determine what is to be achieved. Perhaps this is one explanation as to what investments in IS either fail or underachieve (cf. Brynjolfsson and Hitt, 1998). Building and deploying systems could, and still can, take many months and even years, particularly in a global context. Even in a domestic market where legacy systems are being replaced, considerable time can be required. Consider Nationwide in the UK, where it took four years to move the bank off its legacy Unisys system onto a SAP platform: one year of decision-making to get board approval and select a supplier; two years of building, developing and testing, and a further 12 months of implementation before the system went live, in 2012. During this time, an organization’s business environment can change drastically, as well might its strategy.

While the RBV is an attractive perspective for understanding the sustainability of competitive advantage and contributing factors (e.g. Rivard et al., 2006), it is still essentially a theoretical notion with little empirical basis. This observation is made not just with IS in mind but also for the wider domain of strategic management. Perhaps this is because it is actually very difficult to research the constellations of capabilities and competencies. Even strategizing has received little empirical attention. These are “messy” areas of scholarship demanding that the researcher get deep into understanding the social processes of organization and the human and cognitive dimension. From a practice perspective, IS strategy is a social process that is dynamic, iterative, interactive and continuous. We can only surmise that activities, contexts, processes and content all relate to strategic outcomes.

Yet, if we are really going to understand these micro processes and the actual practice of IS strategy then researchers will have to get their hands dirty. Methodologies such as ethnography, grounded theory and action research will be more appropriate than quantitative endeavours. Uncovering these micro processes will require deep immersion in organisations, and will need to be conducted longitudinally. Splitter and Seidl (2011) argue that for researchers to conduct rigorous research that is conceptually relevant to practice they need to develop a particular kind of reflexivity by engaging in “participant objectifica-

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6 For a treatment of various approaches that might be employed in researching information systems in different contexts, see Galliers et al. (2007) and Doherty and Fulford (2006).
tion.” We know that (the) IS strategy is something that organizations do and/or have, even if implicitly. The problem is, we just
do not adequately know how strategizing takes place. Indeed, we would suggest that perhaps we still do not know what the
phenomenon of interest really is. Without this latter understanding, how can we begin to research it? Although not in the IS strategy area, there are some few studies in the IS field that point towards the adoption of a practice
perspective. Examples include, Orlikowski’s (2000) discourse on using a practice lens for studying technology in organiza-
tions; Schultzze and Orlikowski’s (2004) study illustrating how the macro level phenomena of inter firm relations are created
and recreated through the micro level practices and actions taken by firm members; Vaast and Walsham’s (2005) study of how
practices change with IT use; Levina and Vaast’s (2008) study of strategic IS sourcing; and Ashurst et al.’s (2008) ident-
ification of socially defined practices underpinning an organization’s capability to realize value from its IT investments. This
special issue will hopefully add more fuel to the Information Systems strategy-as-practice fire, building on the foundations
that JSIS has established over its 20-year and more history (Galiers et al., 2012).

3. Articles in this special issue

The first paper in this special issue is by Ola Henfridsson and Mikael Lind. Titled “Information Systems Strategizing, Orga-
nizational Sub-Communities, and the Emergence of a Sustainability Strategy”, Henfridsson and Lind contribute to the overall
micro-strategizing theme of this special issue by examining how “initiatives that build on local technology-mediated prac-
tices may develop into IS efforts of strategic importance”. The setting for their study is a European car manufacturer. They
provide an interpretive case study of a sustainability strategy that emerged from the on-going work of four sub-communities
in the company. The paper builds on Mintzberg’s seminal work concerning his categorization of strategy as deliberate, emer-
gent and realized, and demonstrates how the day-to-day activities of the sub-communities studied contributed to the com-
pany’s realized strategy of sustainability – a topic that itself is an important aspect of JSIS’s on-going agenda (see for example,
Berthon and Donnellan, 2011). Specifically, a key contribution of the paper is the development of a process model that brings
to life Mintzberg’s categorization of strategy – as practice. As importantly, Henfridsson and Lind employ the work of Jar-
zabkowski (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), and her characterization of organizational sub-commu-
nities, in illustrating how sub-community actors “may contribute to the production and realization of strategy contents.”

The second paper – by Jimmy Huang, Sue Newell, Jingsong Huang, and Shan-ling Pan – focuses on IT-enabled practices
afforded by the day-to-day enactment of IT in organizations. In particular, the authors use the context of ambidexterity, the
capability to simultaneously explore knowledge to identify new opportunities to identify new market opportunities and ex-
plot knowledge, to capitalize on firms’ existing niches. Their research incorporates the notion of “site” (Nicolini, 2011)
to serve as the ontological boundary for theorizing the interrelationships amongst practitioners, practices and praxis in the
development and evolution of this capability. An in-depth case study of a leading ticketing company in the live performance
segment of China’s cultural industry examines how the practitioners, IT-enabled practices and praxis of ticketing interrelate
to illustrate how the bundling of IT-enabled practices and practitioners (i.e. a site of practice) shifts through on-going praxis
and how this is related to achieving ambidexterity.

The third paper – by Viktor Arvidsson, Jonny Holmström and Kalle Lyytinen – makes the important point that IS are stra-
tegic insofar as they are used to realize strategic intent and that they are successfully implemented. The research explores
how to successfully implement strategic change associated with system use, ensuring that IT capabilities enable new organi-
zational practices. The researchers ask “how and why successful organizational implementation of new IT capabilities that
align with strategic intent often leads to unexpected outcomes in that they fail to produce intended strategic effects.” They label
this outcome strategy blindness: the organizational incapability to realize the strategic intent of implemented, available IT
capabilities. They develop a multi-dimensional view of IS strategy – conceptualizing three key challenges in the IS strategy
process – to explain how and why an otherwise successful implementation of a new IT system can fail to produce intended
strategic changes in organizational practice. Using a longitudinal case study approach, with data collected at a paper mill, the
authors investigate how cognitive rigidity and associated fixity of interrelated production practices shaped the implementa-
tion of the new production system. In so doing, they elucidate how the institutionalized aversion to change, manifested
in the fixed production practices, prevented key actors from cognitively framing the strategic IS implementation as an oppor-
tunity and how they, by viewing the implementation as a risk, instead came to implement the strategic system in ways that
accommodated existing practices, effectively maintaining the status quo. Based on their findings, the paper identifies core
components and dynamics that constitute a richer, multi-dimensional view of the IS strategy implementation (alignment)
process. It also identifies and discusses three salient factors that contribute to strategy blindness during the strategic IS
implementation processes.

The fourth paper, by Jenny Leonard and Helen Higson, presents findings from an immersive qualitative study of emergent
enterprise system strategies. It identifies how different types of strategizing by managers in the course of an enterprise sys-
tem implementation affect the fluidity and extensiveness of system use. Interactive strategizing involves extensive commu-
nicaton between the executive management team and the organizational community. Procedural strategizing includes
changes to the organizations’ structure, roles and processes as the implementation proceeds. Interactive strategizing was
dominant in areas where the system could fluidly adapt to emerging change. Procedural strategizing dominated when sys-
tem use was extensive and strategically important due to legislative mandates. This paper discovers the critical role that sys-
tem custodians have in erecting a scaffolding to support implementation. The custodians established user champions, clear

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goals, outcome-oriented support, and carefully timed the training and implementation. The paper presents the specific actions taken as the strategy emerged.

This special issue ends with a commentary by Richard Whittington, one of the architects of the strategy-as-practice school in the field of Strategic Management. His contribution is both a retrospective and forward-looking piece. He sees a natural synergy between IS strategy research and the Strategy-as-Practice perspective, highlighting that the IS field includes some of the pioneers of a practice perspective within the management disciplines more widely. His commentary takes some of the contemporary theses in the IS literature and feeds it through the machinery of the Praxis–Practitioners framework, representing them in their new shapes as opportunities for joint work by IS and Strategy-as-Practice scholars. While his commentary is full of enthusiasm, he highlights that it takes hard work to take full advantages of the aforementioned synergies.

References


