

STRATEGIZING FOR AGILITY: CONFRONTING INFORMATION SYSTEMS INFLEXIBILITY IN DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS

Robert D. Galliers

Over the relatively short history of Information Systems planning and strategy, a major principle that has been taken as axiomatic in the mainstream literature relates to the concept of *alignment*. This often means that information and communication technology (ICT) systems should somehow align with an organization's business strategy. This is a self-evident truth, surely? But when we come to examine this truth, we begin to uncover a number of problems and issues that need to be addressed. One such relates to the dynamic nature of an organization's business environment and the consequent need for flexible—or agile—IS. A second issue relates to our inability to foresee the future and the attendant—changing—business information requirements that will come with it. A third relates to the role that information can play in informing agile responses to changing circumstances and imperatives—a proactive, rather than reactive, role for IS, in other words.

Professor Galliers' keynote address aims to make a contribution to the conference by addressing these three issues, and by identifying what this means for agile IS strategy—or more appropriately, IS *strategizing*. His presentation will take an alternative perspective to the norm in that it will focus more on the *process* of IS strategizing rather than on the outcome of the process—the IS strategy itself. He will argue that benefit is to be gained from a more critical, inclusive, exploratory, post-modernist approach to the IS strategy process. This perspective can be contrasted with the common view, which is concerned more with exploiting the potential of ICT systems for business gain. An attempt at synthesizing the arguments arising from a consideration of the problems associated with the somewhat mechanistic treatment of alignment found in the mainstream literature will be attempted by utilizing concepts of architecture and infrastructure, of knowledge creation and sharing, and of ambidextrous organizations, with a view to refining an earlier sensemaking device of his: IS strategizing framework.

Professor Galliers joined Bentley College in the United States in July 2002 as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. At Bentley, he has overseen new developments that include the introduction of Ph.D. programs in business and in

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accountancy; internationalization of Bentley's programs by increasing the number of partnership agreements and expanding the international studies department; the creation of Bentley's Alliance for Ethics and Social Responsibility; the opportunity for business majors to take a second liberal studies major; the introduction of a joint MS + MBA degree, and a \$16 million renovation of the library that includes expansion of Bentley's physical and electronic collections.

Previously Professor of Information Systems and Research Director in the Department of Information Systems at the London School of Economics, he retains his connection with the LSE as a Visiting Professor. Before joining LSE, Professor Galliers served as Lucas Professor of Business Management Systems and Dean of the Warwick Business School in the United Kingdom, and earlier as Foundation Professor and Head of the School of Information Systems at Curtin University in Australia

Professor Galliers holds an AB degree with honors in Economics from Harvard University, an MA with distinction in Management Systems from Lancaster University, and a Ph.D. in Information Systems from the London School of Economics. He was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science degree by the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration in Finland in 1995 for his contributions to European Information Management research.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, the British Computer Society, and the Association for Information Systems, of which he was President in 1999. He has chaired previous ICIS and ECIS conferences, and has been a keynote speaker at ECIS and ACIS, among others. He is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Strategic Information Systems* and on the editorial boards of a number of other major journals. He has authored over 60 journal articles and a number of books, the most recent being *Exploring Information Systems Research Approaches* (Routledge, 2006) with Lynne Markus and Sue Newell, the third edition of the best-selling *Strategic Information Management* (Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003) with Dorothy Leidner, and *Rethinking Management Information Systems* (Oxford University Press, 1999) with Wendy Currie.

BUSINESS RESILIENCE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Rory O'Connor

Mr. O'Connor's presentation will cover four basic themes.

- **Doing Business—Doing Business Globally.** Mr. O'Connor will discuss the challenges of doing business in today's global economy. Following a quick look at the anatomy of any business, he will review some of the structural and implementation choices available to the global business player today.
- **The Impact of Modern Information and Communications Technology.** Mr. O'Connor will review the impact that modern information systems and communications technology is having on our ability to access, manage, and control information and what that means in terms of choice for business success.

- The Importance of the “Tribe.” Mr. O’Connor will move on to look at the importance of identity to all of the stakeholders in business and how that influences strategic choices.
- Strategic Business Innovation—The MNC/Indigenous Challenge. “Keepin’ on keepin’ on”—finally, Mr. O’Connor will put forward some ideas on the need for new business models to resolve the cul-de-sac of “task-only” outsourced MNC activity. Using Ireland as an example, he will look at how we might forge new collaborative structures which will benefit not only the MNC but substantially transform indigenous industry.

Mr. O’Connor is Managing Director of Hewlett-Packard’s European Software Centre. He is a 30-year veteran of the ICT sector, 15 of those years with the *Irish Times* where he played a leading role as IT manager in the delivery of the “new technology” in the 1970s. He joined Digital in 1986 as Ireland IS manager and moved to his first European role based in Galway in 1990. He was Worldwide Technology manager for Compaq’s Software Manufacturing & Distribution business from 1995 to 2000 and was appointed Managing Director of the European Software Centre in 2001. The Galway operation has continued to develop its technology and business operations in HP. The center specializes in R&D in high performance technical computing, semantic Web technology and systems management tools and processes, software publishing services for the software industry, and software and Web management services for large multi-national enterprises.