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Editor's Comments

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

THE INTEGRATION OF THREE CAPABILITIES

If you attended the SIM Academic Workshop on the Saturday before ICIS last year, you may have noticed that there is an increasing tie between three related events. These are the SIM Paper Awards, the SIM Academic Workshop and the publication of articles in MISQE.

As I noted in our last issue, the SIM paper competition, which is underway again this year (see the SIM website) has become a fertile ground of papers for MISQE. In the last issue, we published the first and third prize papers from the 2003 competition. In this issue, we are publishing the second prize papers from both 2002 and 2003.

The SIM Academic Workshop at ICIS is now also integrally connected with MISQE and the paper competition. At the Academic Workshop, Blake Ives presented his award-winning article on Land's End's customization process (MISQE September 2003) and Peter Weill talked about his governance model. His paper on governance appears in this issue of MISQE. Mary Lacity also spoke about outsourcing through enterprise partnerships – reflecting the work also reported in the September 2003 issue of MISQE. Other speakers at the Workshop included some who were selected by Program Chairman Jeanne Ross and her committee from a competition for possible future papers in MISQE.

The combination of these three capabilities makes sense. All represent the joint efforts of SIM, which is the major society for CIOs and other information systems professionals, and the academic community. This combination led at least in part, I believe, to a very large turnout at the Academic Workshop and a program that was extremely well received. The academics with whom I talked clearly enjoyed it very much. And two SIM attendees, Ray Hoving and Steve Brilling, have subsequently recommended, in SIM publications to its members, that they attend future Workshops.

THIS ISSUE'S PRIZE PAPERS

Interestingly, both of this issue's SIM award papers deal with the provision of information to management and others in the organization. Ever since the seminal work of Michael Scott Morton on decision support systems (DSS) in the late 1960s, the issue of information and its use throughout the organization has been of significant academic interest. DSS was a much written about topic in the 1970s, followed by executive support systems (ESS) in the 1980s. More recently, balanced scorecards, knowledge management and work on employee portals have contributed to our understanding of how people at multiple levels in the organization receive and make use of information.

Now, in their article entitled *Vigilant Information Systems for Managing Enterprises in Dynamic Supply Chains: Real-Time Dashboards at Western Digital,* Robert Houghton, Omar El Sawy, Paul Gray, Craig Donegan, and Ashish Joshi have provided a fresh, and more encompassing than DSS or ESS, view of the use of information for managerial purposes. The system they report on provides information for multiple managerial levels not only routinely but, far more important, in "real time" as stored data indicates an out-of-normal condition. The concepts underlying "vigilant" information systems deserve attention.

While "knowledge management" has become its own field of study, it can be seen as just one more approach to providing information to those who need it. In their article, *Jungles and Gardens: The Evolution of Knowledge Management at J.D. Edwards,* Judy Scott, Alden Globe and Kristen Schiffner provide an eight-year history of knowledge management efforts at that company. Drawing on two stage theory models, they provide a number of lessons for each stage of knowledge management development. Some of the lessons are commonplace (executive support), but many are very insightful as they are developed in this exploration of J.D. Edwards distribution of knowledge to both employees and customers.

Governance – a Critical Capability

One of the hottest topics today in the field is the issue about how one manages the IT function from the executive level. There is a large variety of such "governance" approaches existing in organizations today. Most have grown and adapted without much deep thought on the part of the organization. Thus, it was with pleasure that I read Peter Weill's *Don't Just Lead, Govern: How Top Performing Firms Govern IT.* Drawing on a survey of some 250 firms in 23 different

countries, Weill notes that decision rights for five different areas of IT (IT principles, architecture, infrastructure, applications and investment) are assigned to six different types of managerial "archetypes". While the data in this five-by-six matrix suggests three primary patterns of success for governance, Weill takes pains to point out the reasons behind differing approaches in different organizations.

Determining Business Value

Perhaps the number one question I have received from business executives throughout the years has been "how do I know whether I am receiving value from my investment in IT?" Unfortunately, today, as always, it appears impossible to look at an existing IT capability and assess its value. One can, however, assess the value of a particular system. Rajiv Kohli and Sarv Devaraj provide a framework for doing this in their article *Realizing the Business Value of Information Technology Investments: An Organizational Process*. The authors illustrate their useful framework through a case study of the Holy Cross Health System.