

## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

### THE ACADEMIC-PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIP IN IT RESEARCH

This issue of *MIS Quarterly Executive* contains three articles—one fewer than our standard count. We decided to publish this issue short an article because the intended fourth article is awaiting company approval. Like many *MISQE* articles, the article we have postponed provided an in-depth look at one IT-related business initiative at a global company. To ensure the confidentiality of companies participating in research, *MISQE* does not publish such articles without the written consent of a key executive from the participating company.

We at *MISQE* are grateful to the many companies that allow us to reveal their practices, warts and all, so that others can learn from them. For legal reasons, competitive reasons, or concerns about their reputation, most enterprises are very cautious about disseminating information on their operations or management practices. Some companies have elaborate processes for approving material to be released externally. Because we want research sites to be comfortable with any information revealed on them in *MISQE* articles, we insist that authors of case studies go through the company's sign-off process, before the article is released for publication. The sign-off process serves as not only a protection of company privacy, but it also provides an opportunity for the author to share the story with company management. In some cases, the author and research site management may debate the author's interpretation of company events. Such debates comprise a learning experience for both parties.

We do want to encourage managers from companies of all sizes and industries to participate in research when you have the opportunity. You will almost certainly find that your involvement will give you an opportunity to reflect on the impacts of what you are doing and how you are structured and managed. In addition, for in-depth cases, you will learn how your initiatives work from the point of view of an objective observer. And, of course, you will contribute to the growing body of academic research on IT management. Partnering academics and practitioners is key to the development of compelling IT research.

In this issue, we showcase three examples of academic-practitioner partnering. The Teo, Srivastava, and Choo Kian Ho article describes how Comfort Transportation, a Singaporean company, has built customer-centric enterprise systems. The authors observe that Comfort Transportation management focused on the needs of both internal (taxi drivers) and external (taxi riders) customers as it developed capabilities to provide timely and efficient service. The company delivers customer value through unique applications of an array of technologies that provide customer-preferred interfaces, dispatch the nearest cab, support a variety of payment options, ease lost article retrieval, and introduce related customer services. The authors introduce a model for designing customer-centric enterprise systems based on the Comfort experience.

Heather Smith and James McKeen describe the conclusions of a CIO focus group that debated how IT will look in the year 2010. The authors have been assembling CIO focus groups every five years since 1990. The 2005 group concluded that most of the predictions of the 2000 focus group had come true or were evolving as expected. This article describes predictions for 10 areas of interest to CIOs, ranging from IT's mission and function to staffing requirements and IT's impact on the workplace. Given the predicted increase in the strategic importance of IT and the growing list of IT responsibilities, groups of CIOs will likely want to debate the findings of this article. More importantly, they may want to consider the kinds of changes they should start introducing in their organizations today to prepare for the IT organization of the future.

The Agarwal, Brown, Ferratt, and Moore article explores alternative approaches to addressing preferred levels of IT staff retention. The authors note that companies vary in their retention objectives. For example, consulting companies often apply an up-or-out approach to personnel development that necessarily leads to high, but acceptable, employee turnover. In contrast, some firms look to make their IT professionals experts in both the business and IT. These companies usually prefer significantly lower turnover. The authors describe how management teams adopt different approaches to achieving the ideal retention rate. They discuss these different approaches

in terms of five mindsets for retaining IT staff. They observe that retaining staff can be expensive, although it can generate benefits beyond high retention. Companies targeting higher turnover can invest less in their people, although, as the authors note, the impact of not investing in IT staff may have implications beyond retention rates.

Our goal at *MIS Quarterly Executive* is to encourage practice-based research and to disseminate compelling findings. Practitioners support this goal by participating in the research and providing feedback to researchers. Academics support this goal by listening to practitioners and addressing the questions CIOs are asking through rigorous research methodology. We encourage you to become an active partner, while enjoying the contributions of our growing list of *MISQE* contributors.

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