EDITOR'S COMMENTS

INSTITUTIONALIZING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

When we consider the impact of IT, we often focus on a key project or program, usually something intended to transform an organization. But research on major projects has found that a transformation unfolds gradually. Change happens at the rate members of the organization can unlearn old behaviors and learn new behaviors. This unlearning and learning process is hard work. Not surprisingly, then, a number of earlier *MISQE* articles have discussed how organizations learn (1) to manage IT more effectively, (2) improve strategic decisions on how technology will be used, and (3) change organizational processes to drive value from IT. But for all we know about learning to use IT more effectively, there's still much to learn.

The articles in this issue all revolve around the organizational learning challenge. In the first article, R. Ryan Nelson describes the learning benefits of project retrospectives. He notes that organizations can learn from both successful and unsuccessful projects, but management must formalize the learning process. Maintaining a history of project retrospectives allows an organization to identify repeated mistakes requiring an organizational fix. They also highlight mechanisms and techniques credited with enabling successful projects. Thus retrospectives offer a wealth of organizational learning opportunities. This article analyzes a set of 99 project retrospectives from 74 different companies, yielding both insights into common problems and approaches to addressing those problems.

Oshri, Kotlarsky, and Willcocks consider the knowledge and expertise management requirements of offshore outsourcing. They observe that offshore providers have two learning challenges: first, they must learn about the client's organization and processes; second, they must learn how to share knowledge and expertise within their own company. The authors provide eight practices that have helped Tata Consultancy Services provide offshore outsourcing services to its clients, reviewing specifically TCS's relationships with ABN AMRO. The article closes by describing how clients can benefit from their vendors' expertise management.

Venkatesh, Bala, Venkatraman, and Bates describe how the Veterans Health Administration matured its enterprise architecture. The article follows efforts dating back to 1982 as the VHA worked to standardize first its technology environment and then its processes and data. To achieve architectural maturity, the VHA had to learn new organizational processes as well as new IT management and governance practices. The payoff has been significant. Once considered to be such a poor performer that it was nearly disbanded, the VHA is now touted as a prime example of the effective use of IT in healthcare. The article closes with catalysts for achieving architecture maturity.

The final article in this issue is the first article in what will be a regular feature of *MIS Quarterly Executive*: the APC Forum. The APC is a part of the Society for Information Management, which sponsors *MISQE*. APC members, all senior IT executives, meet regularly to share their experiences and learn from both research and one another. The APC Forum will highlight a presentation by an APC member on an industry leading practice. In this issue, Madeline Weiss and Heather Smith summarize a presentation by Phiroz Darukhanavala, CTO at BP. The presentation focused on the role of the digital technology scanning team at BP, which has been instrumental in bringing in valuable new technologies to address strategic business needs. We thank Madeline and Heather, and especially Daru, for sharing BP's experience.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *MIS Quarterly Executive.*

Jeanne W. Ross
Editor-in-Chief
jross@mit.edu