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Editors' Comments - Special Issue on IS Capabilities

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

We are pleased to present the results of an experiment: an *MISQE* issue with papers submitted in response to a call for research on the theme of *IS capabilities*.

So what do we mean by IS capabilities? *An IS capability is the ability to repeatedly deploy both technology and business resources to perform an IS-related task or activity.* The papers selected for this issue address "what" capabilities are critical today for superior IS organization performance, as well as "how" to evolve them.

In the first article, Willcocks, Reynolds, and Feeny describe their findings for how organizations can develop *nine "core" IS capabilities* derived from a model previously published by two of the authors a decade ago. Case studies show how three companies specifically used structures, processes, and HR/cultural mechanisms in different ways to develop and evolve their IS capabilities. Two caveats should be noted when applying their four success factors: all three companies sought to leverage the IT services markets available to them, and all three used the authors' IS capabilities model as an assessment tool.

C. Ranganathan and S. Balaji reinforce some of the core outsourcing capabilities discussed in the first paper, but also take a major step forward in identifying ten specific capabilities associated with effective *offshore outsourcing for application* development. The authors enrich their discussions by providing selected quotations from the managers interviewed, and present a checklist that organizations can use to assess their level of capabilities in offshore outsourcing for application development.

Luftman and Kempaiah address multiple, interrelated capabilities associated with an issue that continues to be at the top of the critical IS issue lists (including the annual SIM member survey): *IT-business alignment*. Similar to the first paper, the findings are derived from a previously published model by the first author that assesses six components associated with IT-business alignment. Based on survey results from mostly Global 1000 companies, the authors compare the alignment patterns for companies at three different maturity levels. In addition to providing these benchmarks, the authors also report finding higher alignment maturity in organizations where the senior IT executive reports to the organization's top executive (CEO, president, chairman) and in those with a federated IT organization design.

The fourth IS capabilities paper selected for this issue looks into the future. In this paper, Mark P. McDonald describes an *enterprise capability organization* in which the capabilities of a functional IT organization are integrated with those of other corporate units and business divisions under a chief capability officer. Given that only a few leading-edge organizations are known to have evolved an enterprise capability organization, this *MISQE* issue also includes responses to the McDonald paper by three members of the journal's CIO Advisory Board under Jack Rockart: Dinesh Kumar, Leo P. Gilmore, Sr., and Sam Valanju.

The journey for the development of this "themed" issue began about a year ago with our call for presentations at our SIM Academic Workshop held in December 2006 just prior to the ICIS conference in Milwaukee, which attracted over 50 attendees. In all, more than 30 authors submitted abstracts or papers and more than 10 *MISQE* editors and editorial board members provided feedback to the authors, which led to the acceptance of the four papers for this issue as well as other papers in the pipeline for future *MISQE* issues. We therefore wish to extend our deep gratitude to all of our colleagues who participated in the process.

Carol V. Brown and Christina Soh
Guest Editors
MISQE Special Issue on IS Capabilities

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A big thank you to Carol Brown and Christina Soh for serving as guest editors of our first special issue. Carol initiated the effort over a year ago when she took on the role of Program Chair for the SIM Academic Conference in Milwaukee and put together an outstanding program that explored IS capabilities. Christina then added her considerable talent and energy to help produce this issue of *MISQ Executive* with its four provocative articles on how companies build and drive value from IS capabilities.

We are delighted by the number of authors who submitted papers for both the SIM Workshop and the special issue. And we are pleased to offer this issue of *MISQE* to our readers. Building on this success, Ritu Agarwal and V. Sambamurthy are heading up the 2007 SIM Academic Workshop and a special issue of *MISQ Executive* on the topic of IT alignment. This next special issue will be published in December 2008.

Jeanne W. Ross
Editor-in-Chief