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Editor's Comments

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

As this issue goes to press, U.S. commentators are beginning to see a glimmer of hope for an economic recovery. Although many University students are finishing the semester without summer internships and post-graduation jobs, recent reports suggest that IT budget cuts have subsided.

The research articles in this issue provide food-for-thought for practitioners and academics about a range of strategic IS concerns: vendor management, common systems across global business units, systems agility to respond to new organizational challenges, and effective multichannel sales & service strategies. All four articles reflect insights from the field that will be useful to IS leaders in many industries and competitive environments.

University of Memphis researchers Robin Poston, Bill Kettinger, and Judy Simon ("Managing the Vendor Set: Achieving Best Pricing and Quality Service in IT Outsourcing") share their insights about how portfolio management concepts can be applied to the selection and management of multiple outsourcing vendors. They argue that an appropriate balance between building strong collaborative relationships with vendors and leveraging market competition yields ongoing benefits. Quotations from their in-depth interviews with managers in a large client organization and its vendors are used to highlight issues that need to be carefully addressed.

Mike Williams and Brad Wheeler ("The Four Faces of Deploying Global Common Systems: Understanding Global and Local Objectives") generate lessons about managing a custom development project for a common system designed to be used across regional business units. The authors propose a 2x2 framework to help IS leaders anticipate global-local differences that may or may not be made explicit by different stakeholders. These insights are based on in-depth case study research at British American Tobacco (BAT) and these authors also provide us with rich quotations to support their arguments.

Dale Goodhue, Daniel Chen, Marie Claude Boudreau, Ashley Davis, and Justin Cochran ("Addressing Business Agility Challenges with Enterprise Systems") provide field evidence that contradicts continuing reports in the press about the barriers to organizational agility associated with packaged enterprise systems. Their findings are based on the research team's interviews with managers in 15 firms who shared their specific information systems responses to various business agility challenges that their organizations had faced. Based on challenges involving packaged enterprise system applications and non-enterprise systems, the authors provide guidelines for improving system agility capabilities whether enterprise systems are adapted or not.

The fourth article ("Leveraging Multichannel Retailing: The Experience of Tesco.com") won the Best Paper Award in the SIM 2008 competition. European researchers Albrecht Enders and Tawfik Jelassi present a multichannel retailing success story for a company that has been recently reported as surviving the economic downturn: the online business unit of Tesco. The special challenges of grocery retailing are used to draw lessons for other industries as well.

In addition to these four articles, all of which have been revised as part of the peer-review process at *MISQE*, this issue includes reports about IT-led innovations first reported in SIM-sponsored forums: "Green" IS at UPS and Social Networking Tools at IBM.

The mission of *MISQE* is not only to disseminate practice-based research that is relevant and useful, but also to encourage academic researchers to undertake such research. In the coming months your *MISQE* editors will be working with other academicians to foster the development of other research papers that have the potential to improve practice. All of us on the volunteer *MISQE* Board welcome your thoughts about how this journal can continue to achieve its mission.

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