

December 1998

Panel 10 Telework Practice Across National Cultures

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Recommended Citation

Staples, Sandy; Borstad, Arnstein; Dusdar, Scharam; Pliskin, Nava; Romm, Celia; and Tan, Margaret, "Panel 10 Telework Practice Across National Cultures" (1998). *ICIS 1998 Proceedings*. 59.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1998/59>

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PANEL 10

TELEWORK PRACTICE ACROSS NATIONAL CULTURES

Chair: Sandy Staples, University of Melbourne, Australia

Panelists: Arnstein Borstad, Statoil Research Center, Norway
Scharam Dusdar, University of Design, Austria
Nava Pliskin, Ben Gurion University, Israel
Celia T. Romm, University of Wollongong, Australia
Margaret Tan, National University of Singapore, Singapore

The empirical research on the practice of telework indicates that there are a number of issues that seem to impede successful telework. The fear of lost managerial control is reported to be a significant factor preventing widespread adoption of telework (DeSanctis 1984; Duxbury, Higgins, and Irving 1987; Savage 1988). Managers are also concerned that telework may require them to change their management style since they cannot rely on visual contact for monitoring and control. Researchers suggest that a more results-oriented management style is needed (Duxbury, Higgins, and Irving 1987; Metzger and Von Glinow 1988; Olson 1988) and that a shift in management from being a passer of information to a leader or coach is necessary (Duxbury, Higgins, and Irving 1987; Lallande 1984; Savage 1988). Trust is suggested as being a key ingredient to effectively manage teleworkers (Duxbury, Higgins, and Irving 1987; Savage 1988). Managing perceptions of corporate culture in a remote worker is also seen as a possible obstacle, requiring additional investment from managers (Hendricks and McMains 1989; Olson 1988).

As we can see, quite a bit appears to be known about telework practice; however, most of the literature originates from English speaking countries. It is not clear to what extent the findings reflect the reality of telework in other cultures. Thus, questions such as what is the emerging reality for telework and how is this reality influenced by culture are still unanswered. Our panel will attempt to address these questions.

The objective of this panel is to explore and debate a range of issues that are related to the practice of telework and the impact of national culture on these issues.

Reflecting this objective, each member of the panel will do four things:

1. Discuss examples of successful telework initiatives in their national culture.
2. Discuss examples of unsuccessful telework initiatives in their national culture.
3. From these examples, identify barriers to telework in their culture and the impact of their national culture on telework practice.
4. Identify unique characteristics of their nation's business and social cultures and briefly compare and contrast those to the cultures discussed by prior panelists. In this way, each panelist relates differences about telework in their own culture to the other cultures represented and builds on previous panelists' comments.

Each panel member will spend 10 minutes addressing the four tasks described above. The five panelists represent five different cultures (Australia, Israel, Austria, Norway, and Singapore). The remaining time will be dedicated to an open discussion, with

the audience invited to address one or more of the panelists. An attempt will be made to encourage a debate between members of the audience, as well as between them and the panel members on all issues addressed by the panel.

BACKGROUND ON PANEL PARTICIPANTS AND MODERATOR

Arnstein J. Borstad is a Research Adviser and head of a multidisciplinary group named Coordination Technology in the Statoil Research Center. Mr. Borstad's main professional interests are in collaborative technologies and how these technologies may reshape work practices.

Scharam Dustdar is the head of the Center for Informatics (ZID) at the University of Design at Linz, Austria. His research interests are in multimedia groupware and workflow systems and their organizational and cultural impacts.

Nava Pliskin is an Associate Professor at Ben-Gurion University in Israel. Her research focuses on longitudinal analysis of information technology (IT) impacts at the global, national, organizational, and individual levels. In particular, she has collected empirical evidence and has been trying to explain the "telecommuting paradox."

Celia T. Romm is an Associate Professor at the Department of Business Systems, the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her research interests lie in the area of the impact of information systems on organizations, with particular emphasis on human resources, culture, power, and electronic commerce issues.

Sandy Staples is a Research Fellow with the Department of Information Systems at the University of Melbourne. His research interests include the enabling role of IT for virtual work and virtual organizations, business process reengineering, and assessing the effectiveness of information systems.

Margaret Tan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Decision Sciences of the Graduate School of Business at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests include the development of the national information infrastructure in Asia-Pacific region, diffusion and adoption of electronic commerce, creation of the digital economy, teleworking, and the virtual workplace.

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