

Foreword

Strategy is about predicting the future and ensuring we know where we want to go, so that we can develop the appropriate plans to move in that direction.

In this fast changing world, it is not easy to predict the future. To fully grasp the way the Internet has changed our lives, consider how you worked and lived ten years ago and compare that to your current habits. Now try to extrapolate into the future and imagine living in this world in the year 2018.

Amazingly, in 1946 a science fiction author using the nom de plume of 'Murray Leinster' introduced the concept of the Internet in his short story 'A Logic Named Joe'. As highlighted by Franson (2001), Leinster's story included desktop computers in virtually all homes and businesses with country-wide networked databases (including video), keyboards and vision screens, natural language interface, interactive customizable software, and online financial and weather reports. Unfortunately we do not all have Leinster's crystal ball and so we need to take a formal approach to strategic planning.

The provision of IT services to business is more complex then ever before. Many organisations engage in an intricate network of contracts involving providers of software, services, infrastructure, and data sources. The global economy has opened endless options include outsourcing and off-shoring IT development and service management. There are many stakeholders involved in IT today – no longer does IT focus on supporting back-office processes. Increasingly, thanks to the Internet, customers and suppliers have direct access to corporate data, systems and services.

It has become more important than ever before for IT management to participate in business strategy formulation. An organisation's ability to implement corporate strategies and achieve corporate goals depends on its capacity to effectively use IT. Investment in IT, and especially in web technologies can provide six strategic business objectives: operational excellence; new products, services and business models; customer and supplier intimacy; better decision making; competitive advantage; and ultimately, survival (Laudon & Laudon 2006).

Organisations find it challenging to ensure adequate governance and compliance requirements are met whilst retaining the flexibility and agility to respond to changes in the market. It is difficult to balance the temptation to adopt 'bleeding' edge business models and technology while remaining cognizant of concerns about the business value and risks of such investment.

This book provides a wealth of information across the lifecycle of web-enabled business processes from strategy through design to implementation. Managers need to be aware of new technologies such as RFID and mobile devices which have the potential to extend the reach and richness of information to enhance the relationship between the organisations and its customers.

Another important contribution of this book is in its presentation of rigorous recent academic research to the practitioner community. Many chapters offer insights by describing real-life applications which span public and private sectors. These case studies describe best practices and also provide valuable les-

sons learned to industry leaders. Others suggest innovative business models and frameworks to evaluate the business benefits from web-based business systems.

I hope that this book provides valuable and timely assistance to researchers, IT practitioners and business managers to look to the future and see the possibilities from the increasing trends of Internet adoption and web-based applications.

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Laudon, KC & Laudon, JP 2006, *Management Information Systems: Managing the Digital Firm*, 10 edn, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.