Towards Innovative IT Service Management?

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This is a report about a research project that "failed". The learning experience may be useful. During 2002 we started a research project funded by the National research Foundation of South Africa and Technikon Pretoria. The ultimate goal was to understand environmental influences of IT Service Management, with particular reference to the implications of innovation. It was found that the constructs were too complex and the probability of finding causal relationships appeared very low.

Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan [1998] suggested that dynamism of the external environment could be described very well by two components, namely stability (rate of change) and the predictability of changes. When considering the extent of each, four environment conditions are exposed: Stable, Predictable (eg. Higher Education); Stable, Unpredictable (eg. Fashion and PC manufacturers); Unstable, Unpredictable (Hi-tech R&D companies); Unstable, Predictable (Airlines and Electronic firms). Innovation would be different for each of the conditions and therefore for the industries. Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan have not yet published empirical studies to confirm this proposition.

We argued that if ICT is used for innovation, then the use of ICT would be different as well, and if the use is different, then the management of IT (and therefore IT Service Management) would be different. Then we could empirically confirm the existence of specific profiles of IT Service Management (using the ITIL framework), and we could in fact suggest benchmarks for IT Service Management in different industries. These benchmarks would save business money by giving them clear targets for deploying ITIL for IT Service Management.

In order to construct the causal link from the external environment to IT Service Management, we systematically worked from the outside to the inside of the organization through a series of propositions to determine the line of influence or cause: How exactly might businesses respond to the four different conditions with their innovation? How might service organizations in specific respond to the different conditions with their innovation? How might the management of IT service provision be different for each of the different responses by business or service units in the organization? How might IT Service Management therefore be different for each of the different conditions?

These questions made several things very clear. Firstly must one be able to very clearly measure the dynamism that the environment of IT Service Management is exposed to in order to indicate the dominant condition. Then one must also be able to distinguish between user groups of IT Service management with different pressures of dynamism, for example business clients, business departments and support departments. And finally does it appear from our argumentation, that it would be impossible to isolate environment dynamism as the major cause of a particular profile of IT Service Management. At this point we decided that it would be very costly to perform further studies, even beyond the level of likely success and possible value. Fortunately we can now say that considerations of environment dynamism would not be very useable to profile IT Service Management – open-ended research questions is advised to inquire about existing different profiles.

References

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