Chapter XIII
Guidelines for Preparing Organizations in Developing Countries for Standards–Based B2B

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ABSTRACT

B2B development has been faster in the developed world comparing to developing countries. This chapter proposes a "tool" for managing CSF in B2B settings. The tool is in the form of guidelines, which are concrete and detailed, and which enable a more clear view of actions needed during the preparation stage of B2B projects. We argue that developing countries seldom have the luxury of affording failure in new B2B ventures, but that they instead must learn from the mistakes already made by the developed countries. Thus, our proposed guidelines are based on an existing framework and experiences made in the developed countries. The guidelines are furthermore discussed with regard to the specific problems and conditions that developing countries face. Much work still remains, and problems still must be resolved. From a global perspective, this is important for all of us!

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that electronic business between organizations (B2B) is constantly picking up speed and adoption throughout the world. B2B can be defined as the use of Internet and Web-technologies for conducting interorganizational business transactions (Teo and Ranganathan, 2004). So

far, its development has been faster in the developed world than in developing countries (Hawk, 2004; García-Murillo, 2004; Uzoka and Seleka, 2006). In the former, B2B is adopted and used for competitive and collaborative reasons to a larger extent than in developing countries. In particular, the developing world often lacks the infrastructural, economic and socio-political framework to develop e-commerce in comparison to the developed countries (Uzoka and Seleka, 2006). Furthermore, power distance must be considered, since it indicates the ability for organizations to affect change in government. The higher the distance, the faster industry – including e-commerce – can grow (Sparks et al, 2007).

Through the use of B2B, companies in developing countries can create and sustain competitive advantage, get access to new and better suppliers and customers, etc (Wood, 2004). Proper attention to specific conditions of these countries can prevent negative effects and slow e-business adoption (García-Murillo, 2004). However, a successful B2B development project requires proper management of different types of Critical Success Factors (CSF). CSF are: "*the conditions that need to be met to assure success of the system*" (Poon and Wagner, 2001, p.395). CSFs can be categorised as emerging from economic, technological or organizational issues (Ewusi-Mensah and Przasnyski, 1994). Planning considerations should focus on important organizational factors, because they influence the other factors. Circumstances in the developing countries also reveal the importance of trying to resolve organizational factors such as confidence and trust in order to establish a corporate culture where the benefits of sharing are viewed as important and natural. Leaders initiate this process by imposing his/her beliefs, values, and assumptions, but culture only arises when the assumptions of individuals lead to shared experiences (Schein, 2004). Thus, developing a culture is a long-term process, and the importance of planning and preparation is clear. Currently, the lack of means for dealing with CSF is accentuated

by the fact that many B2B projects fail. Additionally, specific conditions in developing countries such as capacity of organizations to absorb, use, and adapt advances in science and technology must be studied (Salman, 2004). Organizations in developing countries must prepare themselves well to avoid pitfalls and achieve the full benefits of B2B. This is no different compared to developed countries. The difference is that developing countries lack suitable resources for such preparations, with regard to poverty, and inadequacy and instability of various resources in developing countries (Agoulu, 1997; Roy and Biswas, 2007; Purcell and Toland, 2004), together with low B2B maturity. There are barriers to e-commerce such as: low income levels, low literacy rates, lack of payment systems that support online transactions, and cultural resistance to online transaction-making (Ho et al, 2005). Our work contributes to better preparatory routines in organizations in developing countries.

This chapter proposes a "tool" for managing CSF in B2B settings. The tool is in the form of guidelines, which are concrete and detailed, and which enable a more clear view of actions needed during the preparation stage of B2B projects. The guidelines can be used during the planning stage of B2B in order to prepare the organization for managing CSF in this context. They are built on experiences in developed countries, and will hence enable organizations in developing countries to avoid redoing the same mistakes. The specific conditions of developing countries are taken into consideration by specific referencing when each guideline is discussed in terms of how they help to alleviate problems. The target audience is B2B project managers, since they are in charge of making the B2B venture happen.

BACKGROUND

Collaboration is a necessity to survive in the business world regardless of geographical location.

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